

## Need A Fresh Start? Welcome To Easter

**Intro:** City Slickers clip: Your life's a "do over".

Don't you wish sometimes your life could be a "do over"? Wouldn't it be nice to just be able to start over after a huge mistake...or a series of them? Unfortunately, we rarely get that chance. There was a guy named Peter in the bible who wished for that. He blew it so bad that He never dreamed He'd get another chance to do it right. That's what I like about the Bible...it has no problem sharing about the mistakes of others.

- Summarize Jesus' arrest and Peter's denial. Luke 22:47-62 – Peter is one of Jesus' closest friends and it is hours before His crucifixion (share of denial) But this isn't the end of the story...
- After the resurrection, the Lord had a private appearance with Peter....Luke 24:34... "*The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter.*" (NLT) Why do you think Jesus had a private meeting with Peter? Just think about the shame and guilt Peter was packing around?
- Can you imagine what this private meeting with Jesus was like? Jesus didn't condemn Peter...He gave Peter a fresh start. Peter's life is never the same. A month later he's fearlessly speaking to 1000s of people about Jesus. How is that possible? It was like he was a different person! Welcome to Easter! Easter is all about fresh starts.
- Maybe you're in need of a fresh start. Maybe you feel overwhelmed by the choices you've made in life and the regret you feel...If so, then Easter is all for you!

Let me give you 3 simple reasons why Easter is all about fresh starts and how you can have one.

### I. Everyone Has Made Mistakes They Regret

- It starts early in life too! Putting pins in the tire of a neighbor girl when I was 6. / Teasing a girl so much on the bus she poured carton of milk over my head.
- Unfortunately, our regrets get more intense as we get older because our choices have greater consequences.
- We have 2 basic options for dealing with our mistakes we regrets

#### A. We live with our regrets

*Rom. 7:24 "Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?" (NLT)*

*Daniel 9:4 "...but all we have to show for our lives is guilt and shame..." (Message)*

1. We just live with this internal misery of guilt and shame. We pack it around like an emotional weight upon our hearts that never goes away. It goes with us everywhere...into every relationship / every environment / it's on us.
2. I'm sure this is what Peter was dealing with. Knowing that he would have to live with the regret and guilt of denying his Lord and friend at the moment of His

greatest need. How does one move on from this?

3. Most people believe you have to just live with your regrets. There's nothing you can do about them...right? Therefore we create ways to function despite the guilt and shame we feel for the mistakes we've made. Like what? (Can't let anyone see!)
  - Avoid close relationships (I can't disappoint someone if I'm not close)
  - Highly skilled at wearing the mask (project an image you want people to see)
  - Hectic activity (Just stay so busy you never have time to think about it)
  - Numb the pain (alcohol /illegal drugs / prescription drugs / sex / suicide / food – recent study says junk food is as addictive as cocaine and heroin?)
  - Self-punishment (you believe you deserve punishment therefore it is self-inflicted.
4. The problem with all these methods is they don't work. They may mask or temporarily numb our regrets, but they can't heal the wounding of our hearts.

#### B. We deny our regrets

1. We begin to deny that anything bothers us anymore. It's all "no big deal". At least, that's what we tell ourselves. And we begin down a very dark mental and emotional road. WHY? Because we begin to shut down our conscience.

2. The Bible warns us about people with a dead conscience.

*I Tim. 4:2 "These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead." (NLT)*

3. God put a conscience inside us to be a moral compass in this life. This is why we experience regret...guilt...because we have violated our conscience. That conscience is a good thing.

4. Unfortunately, sometimes our mistakes so violate our conscience that the pain and remorse is just too difficult to live with; therefore, we shut it down. We deny it's influence.

5. This doesn't happen with a one-time event, but over time we continue to deny the voice of our conscience. We continue to tell ourselves it was no big deal. AND, with every choice, your conscience gets a little more faint...a little less clear...to where eventually, you don't even hear it anymore. It's dead!

6. You might be thinking what's the big deal? What are you capable of without a moral compass in your life? This is a scary road to walk down.

7. Some of you may be walking down this road and you don't even know it. You're on a path that is making you harder by the day. I want you to know that whether you're trying to live with your regrets or trying to deny them, God has a better solution for you!

## II. Easter Makes Those Mistakes Powerless

- The regret and guilt from our mistakes has tremendous power over our lives, but Easter removes this power. HOW?

## A. Jesus paid the price for all our mistakes

*1 Peter 1:18-19* “For you know that God **paid a ransom** to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.” (NLT)

*Eph. 1:7* “He is so rich in kindness and grace that he **purchased our freedom** with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.” (NLT)

1. Why was there a price paid for all our mistakes? Part of what makes up the human conscience is a belief in justice. If your conscience is alive and functioning, we have this internal drive...even a need for justice.
- This is why almost all people are so frustrated when they do not see it (news / etc...
    2. This is why one of the methods of trying to deal with guilt is some form of self-punishment. We all believe that wrong behavior should have some form of consequence. It's hard-wired into our humanity.
    3. God was the One who created us with a conscience that requires justice. WHY? Because He is a God of justice. Part of being made in the image of God is that He created us with a conscience that reflects who He is.
    4. Easter is all about satisfying the justice of God and satisfying the need in our own conscience for punishment.
    5. This is why Jesus died on a cross. It was to satisfy justice. It was a payment for all your mistakes / all the sins of humanity. God couldn't just ignore sin. If He did, He wouldn't be a just God.
    6. The punishment for sin was Jesus' death on the cross. Your sin and my sin was placed on Jesus as He hung on the cross so that justice was satisfied. His resurrection 3 days later was the proof that God's justice was served.
  - Now that the justice of God has been satisfied, He pours out His mercy on us who have been controlled by our regrets. Since justice is satisfied, forgiveness is extended to everyone who wants it.

## B. Jesus releases us from our mistakes

- God not only forgives us through Jesus, He releases us from the power of our regrets. Our guilt and shame no longer has any right to our lives!
  1. God promises to NEVER bring up your failures / mistakes / sins ever again! They are no longer part of your identity. They are no longer attached to you. They no longer have any power over your life.

*Ps. 103:12* “He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.” (NLT)

*Heb. 8:12* “And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.” (NLT)

2. You may be thinking; “That's great that God doesn't remember my sins anymore, but I do. How do I get rid of them?” You embrace this next verse.

*Heb. 10:22* “Let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean...” (NLT)

3. You can't heal your wounded conscience...only God can. As you go to Him every day and trust Him that you are completely forgiven, God will release you of your guilt and remorse that weighs you down. (Trust in His forgiveness!)
4. He will transform and release you from any power your past has on your life. He will make your mistakes powerless. This is what Easter is all about! Freedom!!!

### III. Easter Grants Everyone A Fresh Start

#### How?

##### A. Having a fresh start is about a person not your performance

- It's time to stop looking at your performance and start focusing on the Person who can give you the fresh start you need.
- Getting a fresh start from God isn't something you earn, it's a free gift. Peter didn't earn His fresh start. It was a gift directly from a person.

*Gal. 3:22 "But the Scriptures declare that we are all prisoners of sin, so we receive God's promise of freedom **only** by believing in Jesus Christ." (NLT)*

1. So many people make the mistake of trying to start over by trying harder, only to fail miserably again. A fresh start in life is NOT about the investment in effort but in the trust of a person...Jesus.
2. If you will simply stop trying so hard to get your life together and simply give your life to Jesus...simply embrace His forgiveness as yours and embrace Him, look at what He promises.

*II Cor. 5:17-18 "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ." (NLT)*

3. How's that for a great deal! The old life of regret / remorse / guilt and shame can be gone. A new life begins that He creates. The very thing we all crave to have comes from a person not from your performance. What a gift!
- How do I experience this gift?

##### B. Having a fresh start is about choosing a relationship not religion

1. The gift of a fresh start comes through a relationship with Jesus not through some type of religious activity. People make the same mistake today they made 2000 years ago with Jesus. Religion getting in the way of relationship.

*John 5:39-40 "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life." (NLT)*

2. Jesus has always been wanting to give people a fresh start, but they have to go to Him. It's a relational issue. It's a relational choice. By choosing the relationship, the fresh start is part of the package deal. (Forgiveness / healing / freedom.)
3. Some of you are so weighed down by your past. You live every day with regret. You're haunted by the decisions and choices you've made. Jesus wants you to know that you don't have to live this way any longer. He is offering you a fresh start with

Him today.

4. Some of you walked away from Jesus a long time ago and maybe you feel He wouldn't ever want you back. That's simply not true. He offers you a fresh start today as well. He's been waiting all along for this day...the day you decided to come home.
5. There are so many people here at Foothills who have embraced this fresh start from Jesus. I want you to listen to someone who took Jesus up on His offer.

Testimony: Amy Pierce