

# life group study guide

## SIFTED

March 31, 2013



### Sifted: Taking Serious the Strategies of Satan and the Work of Christ

Luke 22:31-34; 22:54-62; John 21

**Discussion question:** What comes to mind when you hear the word 'sifted'?

**Introduction:** Peter is told by Jesus that Satan has asked to 'sift' or test him. We all wish Jesus had said 'no.' Instead Jesus gives Peter that news that he will fail but that won't be the end. Peter will turn back and encourage the others. This story serves as a powerful reminder to us that God knows we will be tested. He knows when and how we will be tested; He knows if we will pass or fail the test; He loves us anyway! His message after failure is always the same: Turn back and use your story for other's good. The challenge for all of us is to repent, return to God, and let God use our failures for His glory. This is easy enough to say in a Life Group but a bit more difficult throughout the week.

#### Read Luke 23: 31-34

- 1) "Simon, Simon" says Jesus. But his name is Peter now, not Simon. One wonders why Jesus refers to his old identity rather than his new. Judas has already been influenced by Satan and has "turned aside to go to his own place" (Acts 1:25). It appears Peter's faith is in real trouble (see Luke 8:12). Does Satan attack believers today in the same way? How serious should, or do, you take those attacks?
- 2) Judas was a thief whose primary concern was money. So, that's how Satan attacked him (see John 12:6). He traded the Lord for the price of a slave, 30 pieces of silver (cf. Exodus 21:32). Peter seems to have been a man that was quick to speak up but not always strong enough to follow through. Here again, we see Satan playing on the weakness of man. Have you noticed how often you are attacked in areas of weakness? Or, is it merely coincidence?

"Satan has demanded to have *you*" (22:31 ESV). Here the '*you*' is plural. In other words, Satan demanded to have *all* the apostles for sifting. Jesus doesn't inform Peter of what awaits in the days ahead for the others, but turns the discussion to a personal one when he states: "...but I have prayed for *you* that your faith may not fail." This time the '*you*' is singular; indicating he has prayed specifically for Peter.

- 3) How are you comforted knowing Jesus prays for you regularly?
- 4) Does Jesus continue to take the needs of his followers to the Father? Is he really that involved in our lives? Also see Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25
- 5) Explain a way this effects, or should effect your life on a daily basis.
- 6) Examine v. 32. Jesus indicates two remedies for the onslaught of satanic attack.
  - a. Trust in Jesus' prayer for you
  - b. Turn back (repent)

#### Read Luke 22:54-62

- 7) Remember Peter's bravado just a few hours earlier (see v.33)? Why do you think he responds so

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differently now?

- 8) We talk with incredible confidence when we are surrounded by likeminded friends. Explain how autonomy can be dangerous in the life of a Christian.
- 9) Verse 62 shows Peter's great remorse when he realizes his sin. Judas also feels great remorse (see Matthew 27:3-5). What is the difference?

John 21 records Peter's restoration. What Satan has meant for destruction, Jesus will use for refinement. Jesus resets the scene of the crime. Jesus has a charcoal fire on the beach (v.9). Interestingly, the only other time a 'charcoal' fire is mentioned in the New Testament is the very fire where Peter denied his Lord (see John 18:18). Jesus will make his point crystal clear and Peter will never be the same.

### **Read John 21: 15-17**

Peter is ecstatic to see Jesus (see v.7). What a pleasure it must have been for these friends to be united again for a nice fish breakfast. In a situation like this it might have been easy way is to let bygones be bygones. Love however, demands more. Jesus loves Peter far too much to allow him to just go on and possibly take the denial further next time.

- 10) Three times Jesus asks if Peter loves him. This is clearly a painful moment for Peter but Jesus presses the point. How is Peter to demonstrate his love for Jesus?
- 11) Jesus was abandoned by his closest friends at the toughest moment a person could experience. Yet Jesus doesn't hang it over Peter's head. How does Jesus set the standard for dealing with friends who cause us pain?
- 12) Describe a time when Jesus has used a difficult situation in your life to help others.

Though completely guilty, he is forgiven. In spite of Peter's absolute denial of the Lord, Jesus restores Peter totally. But he doesn't stop there. Notice Jesus' words, 'tend' and 'feed.' Jesus calls for Peter to show his love by doing not being. Peter's love for Christ will be demonstrated by serving the church. This radical forgiveness and participation in God's Kingdom work provides genuine hope to those who feel as though they have abandoned or 'walked out' on Christ. He has plans for you! He calls only for repentance and love.

### **Personal reflection**

Sifting comes in many forms. It can, and often does come through our sin. Sometimes it comes by way of our weakness. Other times, it may have nothing to do with anything we have done. Remember, Satan prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). Examine your life. Is Satan attacking you now? Is there an area where you have neglected repentance? Spend some time in a different sort of prayer. Ask the Lord two things: 1) ask him to help you trust in his intercession for you; 2) ask him to show you ways in which your own sifting can be used to help others.