

Broken and Given Back

A 10-Day Reading Plan on Failure and Restoration

The failure is not the final word. God restores men who come back.

10 Days · 8-12 min/day · All levels · NKJV

The men in this plan all failed. Not small, private failures — the kind recorded in Scripture for the entire world to see. David's sin with Bathsheba is in 2 Samuel. Peter's denial is in all four Gospels. Jonah ran from God and needed a fish to stop him. Elijah asked God to kill him under a tree. What they have in common is not that they got it right. It is that the God they failed did not let the failure be the last word.

This plan does not minimize failure. It traces exactly how God met each broken man in the aftermath — with honest confrontation, with food and water, with a question around a charcoal fire, with a second call to the man who ran. Come honestly. Bring the actual failure, not the managed version.

DAYS 1–3 · DAVID

The Fall and the Return

David's sin is the most studied moral failure in the Old Testament. What follows it is equally instructive: a prayer so honest it became the model for every man who has failed and wondered if the path back still exists.

DAY 1 · DAVID · THE ANATOMY OF A FALL

Remained at Jerusalem

2 Samuel 11:1–5; 12:9

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

2 Samuel 11:1–5; 12:9

"And it came to pass, in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem." ... [Nathan:] "You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife."

New King James Version (NKJV)

REFLECTION

The first line is the most overlooked sentence in the story: "at the time when kings go out to battle, David remained at Jerusalem." He was supposed to be somewhere else. The idleness was the opening. The evening walk on the roof was the opportunity. The inquiring was the first step. The taking was the fall. David's failure is instructive in how ordinary it looks in the early stages.

"A man after My own heart, who will do all My will." Those words had been spoken about David — the anointed king, the giant-killer, the man faithful in the cave. And still he fell. This matters not because it makes sin understandable, but because it destroys the comfortable distance we create from our own capacity for it. If David could end up where he ended up, no man reading this is immune.

PRAYER

"Lord, I am honest with You about what happened. No minimizing. No managing the impression. Here is what I did, and here is where I am. I have sinned. I am before You, and I need what only You can give. Amen."

Journal prompt:

What is the "remained at Jerusalem" in your story — the place of idleness or wrong position that became the opening for something larger? Write honestly about how the fall begins in your specific, recurring temptations.

DAY 2 · DAVID · PSALM 51

Create in Me a Clean Heart

Psalm 51:1–4, 10–13

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 51:1–4, 10–13

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness... For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." ... "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me."

New King James Version (NKJV)

REFLECTION

Psalm 51 was written after Nathan confronted David — the record of a man who has been seen, who has had the thing he thought was hidden named clearly to his face, and who has come apart in the right direction. "For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me." No minimizing. No qualifying. No mention of the circumstances.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God." The Hebrew word *bara* is the same word used in Genesis 1 for God's act of creation from nothing. David is not asking for renovation — he is asking for creation. He knows that

what he needs is beyond what he can manage, confess, or earn his way back from. This is the prayer of a man who has taken the full measure of what he has done — and found the only door that actually opens.

PRAYER

"Lord, create in me a clean heart. Not repair — not renovation — create, from what is broken and beyond my ability to fix, something new. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. That is what I cannot afford to lose. Amen."

Journal prompt:

Write your own Psalm 51 — not the poetic version, the honest one. Begin: "For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me." Name what needs to be named. Then write: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." What specifically are you asking God to make new?

DAY 3 · DAVID · THE NAME GOD GAVE

Beloved

2 Samuel 12:13, 24–25; Acts 13:22

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

2 Samuel 12:13, 24–25; Acts 13:22

"So David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' And Nathan said to David, 'The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.' ... 'So she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Now the LORD loved him, and He sent word by the hand of Nathan the prophet: so he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.' ... 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'"

New King James Version (NKJV)

REFLECTION

"The LORD also has put away your sin." Four words answering four words: "I have sinned against the LORD." The correspondence is exact — the acknowledgment and the forgiveness match in size. Not "God will probably forgive you eventually" — the LORD has put away your sin. Past tense, immediate, complete. The consequences would remain. But the sin itself was put away.

The son born to David and Bathsheba after their grief was also named Jedidiah — "beloved of the LORD." God named the child born from the most publicly disgraced chapter of David's life "beloved." And centuries later, Paul described David not as a cautionary tale, but as "a man after My own heart." The

description survived. The calling was not revoked. God rewrites what failure wrote as the last word.

PRAYER

"Lord, You have put away my sin. You name what comes after the failure "beloved." You look at the chapter I am most ashamed of and You call me, still, a man after Your own heart. I receive that — not cheaply, not lightly — but I receive it. Let the calling survive what I have done to it. Amen."

Journal prompt:

Has God ever brought something good out of the chapter of your life you are most ashamed of? Write about it. And what would it mean to believe that your calling — the description God placed on your life — has not been revoked by your worst failure?

DAYS 4-6 · PETER

Denied, Grieving, Restored

Peter denied Jesus three times around a charcoal fire. He ran to the empty tomb and came back empty. He went back to fishing. Then Jesus appeared on the shore, cooked breakfast, and asked him three times the question that restored him.

DAY 4 · PETER · THE DENIAL

And He Wept Bitterly

Luke 22:54-62

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Luke 22:54-62

"But Peter followed at a distance... And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, 'This man was also with Him.' But he denied Him, saying, 'Woman, I do not know Him.'" ... "And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord... So Peter went out and wept bitterly."

New King James Version (NKJV)

REFLECTION

Peter had said hours before that he would go to prison and to death with Jesus — and meant it. Then, by a charcoal fire in a courtyard, three times, to three people with no authority, he denied ever knowing the man he had called the Christ. Not once. Three times. Each time the pressure escalated, he went further from the truth.

"And the Lord turned and looked at Peter." At the moment of the third denial, Jesus turned and looked at him from across the courtyard. We don't know what the look communicated. But Peter knew. He remembered. And he went out and wept bitterly. The most instructive thing about Peter's failure is not that he denied — it is that he felt it fully. He didn't minimize. He went out and wept bitterly. The man who weeps bitterly over his failure has already begun his restoration.

PRAYER

"Lord, I have distanced myself from what I believed when the cost of owning it became real. I am not minimizing it. I am going out to weep bitterly — to feel the full weight. And I am trusting that the look You gave Peter was not only accusation. It was also the beginning of what comes next. Amen."

Journal prompt:

When have you denied something you believed — distanced yourself from a commitment or a person — when the social cost became real? Write about it honestly. Don't minimize. Then sit with the detail: "the Lord turned and looked at Peter." What do you believe was in that look?

DAY 5 · PETER · THE EMPTY MAN

I Am Going Fishing

John 20:3–7; 21:3

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 20:3–7; 21:3

"Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter... Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there." ... [Three days later] "Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We are going with you also.' They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing."

New King James Version (NKJV)

REFLECTION

Peter ran to the tomb — that detail matters. Despite everything, he ran toward where Jesus had been. But what he found was an empty tomb and folded grave clothes, and the text records his reaction without comment: he saw, and he went away. The resurrection had happened and Peter was too fractured, too burdened by what he had done, to fully receive it.

"I am going fishing." Three words that contain an entire interior state. Peter reverting — going back to what he knew before Jesus, the identity he had before the call, what doesn't require him to be the person who failed. Men who have failed in the areas they were most called to often do this. Peter is in the boat. The nets are out. He is catching nothing.

PRAYER

"Lord, I have gone fishing — retreated to an old identity, a place where I could be competent without being the person who failed You. I am in the boat, catching nothing. I need You to appear on the shore. I need to hear my name called across the water. Amen."

Journal prompt:

Have you ever "gone fishing" — retreated to an old version of yourself after a significant failure? What was the "boat" you went back to? And what has it produced?

DAY 6 · PETER · THE RESTORATION

Do You Love Me?

John 21:15–19

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 21:15–19

""So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.'" ... "He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep.'""

New King James Version (NKJV)

REFLECTION

Three questions around a charcoal fire — the same number, the same element as the denial. Restoration is specific. The three denials need three responses. Jesus does not offer Peter general forgiveness and a fresh start. He meets him exactly where the failure happened and asks him, at that exact point, the only question that matters: do you love Me?

"Feed My lambs. Tend My sheep. Feed My sheep." Each question is met with a commission. The restoration is back to the specific calling. The man who denied Jesus three times became the man who preached at Pentecost and turned a city. Jesus does not promote people despite their failures. Sometimes He promotes them through them — because the shape of the failure becomes the shape of the compassion that makes the restored man useful in ways the unbroken man never could be.

PRAYER

"Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You. Commission me again. Feed someone through me. I am here. Amen."

Journal prompt:

Jesus asked "do you love Me?" three times, and the third time Peter was grieved. Answer it honestly, in your own words — not the polished version, the true one. And write what it means to you that the commission followed each answer.

DAYS 7-8 · JONAH

The Running and the Second Call

Jonah ran from God and needed a fish to stop him. Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time — the same man, the same assignment, sent again.

DAY 7 · JONAH · THE RUNNING

But the LORD Had Prepared

Jonah 1:1-5, 17

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Jonah 1:1-5, 17

"Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah... saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it.' But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD... Then the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep." ... "Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah."

New King James Version (NKJV)

REFLECTION

Jonah is the only prophet who, when given a clear word from God, turned and ran in the opposite direction. He booked passage to Tarshish — the farthest known point in the opposite direction from Nineveh. Then, in the hold of a ship with a storm raging, with the vessel about to break apart, he fell asleep. The sleep of a man who has run far enough to dissociate from the consequences of his running.

"Now the LORD had prepared a great fish." The fish was not punishment — it was provision. Jonah was in the water, sinking toward drowning, when the fish arrived. The belly of the fish was dark and undignified — and the thing that kept him alive. Sometimes the thing God uses to stop our running looks like judgment but is actually rescue. The three days gave Jonah the only thing the running had been avoiding: a moment of total stillness with nowhere left to go and nothing to do but pray.

PRAYER

"Lord, You prepared the fish. The thing that stopped me and cornered me and removed all my options — maybe that was You, rescuing me from where the running was taking me. I am in the belly. There is nowhere left to go. I am listening now. Amen."

Journal prompt:

What has been the "fish" in your story — the thing that stopped your running and held you in a dark place until you had no choice but to pray? Write about it. Can you see the provision in it now — the way the stopping was actually rescue?

DAY 8 · JONAH · THE SECOND CHANCE

The Word Came the Second Time

Jonah 3:1–5

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Jonah 3:1–5

"Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.' So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD." ... "And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them."

New King James Version (NKJV)

REFLECTION

"Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time." Ten words containing more grace than most of us know what to do with. God did not replace Jonah. He did not find a more reliable prophet. He gave the same man the same assignment and sent him again. The second call is the most astonishing thing in the book of Jonah — more astonishing than the fish, more astonishing than the city's repentance.

"So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD." No resistance recorded. The most reluctant message delivered in the most minimal way — five Hebrew words, the bare minimum of prophetic proclamation — produced the largest recorded revival in the Old Testament. The entire city believed God and fasted. God used the reluctant, broken, recently-fish-vomited prophet to turn a city. He

tends to work that way.

PRAYER

"Lord, give me what Jonah received: the second call. Not a different call — the same one, given again to the same man who ran from it. I am ready this time. Not because I am stronger — because I have been in the fish, and I know now what running costs. I will arise and go. Amen."

Journal prompt:

Has God ever called you a second time to something you ran from the first time? Write about it. If the second call hasn't come yet — what would it mean to believe that God does not replace the runners?

DAYS 9–10 · ELIJAH

Under the Tree and Back on the Road

Elijah asked God to kill him under a juniper tree one day after the greatest victory of his ministry. God's response: food, water, sleep, and a still small voice.

DAY 9 · ELIJAH · THE JUNIPER TREE

It Is Enough

1 Kings 19:1–8

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 19:1–8

"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!'" ...
"Then as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, 'Arise and eat.'" ...
"And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, 'Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for you.'"

New King James Version (NKJV)

REFLECTION

One day before this, Elijah had called down fire from heaven on Mount Carmel, outrun Ahab's chariot, and seen the prophets of Baal destroyed. He was at the apex of his ministry. And then one threat from Jezebel sent him running into the wilderness asking God to kill him. "It is enough. Now, LORD, take my life." The same prophet who stood alone against 450 false prophets had been undone by a single letter.

God's response to the suicidal prophet is not rebuke — it is food and water, then sleep, then food and water again. "The journey is too great for you." Before any word about what Elijah should do next, God fed him. Before the correction, before the recommissioning, before the still small voice — God baked a cake and let him sleep. He tends to His broken servants before He redeployes them.

PRAYER

"Lord, I am under the juniper tree — in the exhausted, "it is enough" way that comes after spending everything and finding that threats still come. Feed me. Let me sleep. Touch me and say: arise and eat, because the journey is too great for me alone. Amen."

Journal prompt:

Have you ever been under the "juniper tree" — more depleted than expected after a season of significant effort, asking for relief? Write about it. What does it tell you about how God treats the burned-out man that His first response to Elijah was food, water, and sleep?

DAY 10 · ELIJAH · THE STILL SMALL VOICE

What Are You Doing Here?

1 Kings 19:9–13, 15–16, 18

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 19:9–13, 15–16, 18

"And there he went into a cave... and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" ... "And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains... but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice." ... "Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal."

New King James Version (NKJV)

REFLECTION

"What are you doing here, Elijah?" Asked twice — once at the cave door, once after the wind and earthquake and fire. Both times Elijah gives the same answer: I alone am left. He has constructed an internal narrative of complete isolation, complete failure. God let the dramatic things pass — as if to demonstrate that what Elijah was expecting God to arrive in, He was not in. He was in the silence. He was in the thing Elijah had to stop all his noise to hear.

"Go, return on your way." The command is to return — not to sit in the cave permanently. The feeding and the questioning and the still small voice were all in service of the redeployment. And then the correction to the isolation narrative: "I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal." You are not alone, Elijah. You were never alone. Your assessment was wrong because your exhaustion had altered your perception.

PRAYER

"Lord, speak to me in the still small voice. Ask me Your question: What are you doing here? Let me be honest about the answer — the narrative of isolation I have constructed, the size I have made the failure. There are seven thousand. The story is larger than I can see from the cave. Amen."

Journal prompt:

What is the "I alone am left" narrative you have been living under? Write it. Then write God's correction: "I have reserved seven thousand." What might the seven thousand look like in your situation? And: what are you doing here?

"The LORD also has put away your sin."

2 Samuel 12:13 · New King James Version (NKJV)

The failure is not the final word.

God restores men who come back.

Broken and Given Back · A 10-Day Men of the Bible Reading Plan · Christian Book Digest