Navigating Through Disappointment & Defeat

1. Warm up: Jeff began Sunday's sermon by telling how when he tried to make yeast rolls for the first time, the rolls ended up with perfectly fossilized kittycat footprints in them – and he hasn't tried again since. Tell us about one of your worst cooking disasters.

2. Our cooking mishaps are merely a metaphor for life. We get a vision (yeast rolls), we make a plan (the recipe), we execute the plan, but then oftentimes the unforeseen happens – failure. In prior weeks in our study of Bishop Budde's book *How We Learn to Be Brave*, we've talked about decisive moments in life – The Decision to Go, The Decision to Stay, The Decision to Start, The Decision to Accept What We Do Not Choose, and The Decision to Step Up to the Plate. As we make these life-changing decisions, inevitably we're going to experience some significant missteps, wrong decisions, disappointments, and defeats. So, in her sixth chapter, Bishop Budde offers us a three-step spiritual formula for how to triumph over our disappointments and defeats. She begins by pointing our attention to a Gospel story. Let's read Matthew 16:13-23, as printed on p. 3.

    a. When Jesus told Peter that he was going to be the rock on which he was going to build his church movement, what do you think he meant? In what sense was Peter going to be the rock of the church movement?

    b. When Peter heard Jesus say he was going to be the rock upon which Jesus would build his church movement, what did this reveal about how Jesus felt about Peter? And how do you think that made Peter feel?

    c. For Peter, being chosen by Jesus to lead the early church movement must have been a spiritual mountaintop moment. Looking back across your life, tell us about a spiritual mountaintop moment for you.

    d. Ironically, at the very moment Peter was flying high spiritually, he turned around and did something profoundly wrong. When Jesus explained he would soon be leaving his disciples because he was going to be killed in Jerusalem, Peter took Jesus aside and "rebuked" him. Imagine having the hutzpah to rebuke Jesus! Basically, Peter told Jesus to get this crazy dying thing out of his head. Jesus replied by calling Peter "Satan." Ouch! In other words, Jesus accused Peter of letting Satan use him to try to convince Jesus to veer from the course that would lead to the cross. Talk about spiritual whiplash! In this one short story, Peter is both a Saint (at the start of the story) and Satan (by the end of the story). So that Peter becomes an example of how even deeply spiritual people can (and do) make tragic mistakes. Tell us about a genuinely spiritual person you've known who's nevertheless made a big mistake in their life. What did they do?

    e. Peter's story contains a powerful lesson for all of us. Every single one of us, no matter how saintly, no matter how good we are, every single one of us is going to fail in some catastrophic ways. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." I John 4:8 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." How does it feel to be called a

"sinner"? Do you embrace that label? Is it part of your self-identity? Why or why not?

3. The fact that Peter was both a saint and sinner didn't keep Jesus from appointing him to be the key leader of the early church movement because Jesus recognized that good people and bad people both fail. The difference is that good people humbly own their failure, while bad people deflect, rationalize, and deny. From this Bishop Budde draws the first step in her three-part formula for triumphing over failure. **If you don't want your failures to define and defeat you, you have to be strong enough to humbly own your failures, own your humanity, and acknowledge your mistakes.**

    a. Why is that? Why is it so important that we own our failures?

    b. Why is it so hard to own our failures?

    c. James 5:16 says, "Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed." What do you think that means?

    d. Bishop Budde tells about a time when she messed up big time as a spiritual leader and had to own her failure, apologize for it, and work hard to make amends. Tell us about a time you messed up really bad, but then stepped up to the plate to own your failure. After you owned it, how did you feel?

4. Owning our failure is just the first step in triumphing over it. The second step is equally important. **When you fall down, get back up again. Never, never, never give up!**

    a. Proverbs 24:16 says, "Though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again." What do you think that means?

    b. Tell us about a time you gave up, but now regret doing so.

    c. Tell us about a time you fell flat on your face, but got back up again. How did that feel?

5. Bishop Budde's third step for triumphing over our failures is: **Learn from your failures, so you can come back stronger and better.** As Oswald Avery once said, "When you fall, pick something up." With that in mind, Jeff closed Sunday's sermon by telling us about one of his greatest regrets/failures in life, *i.e.*, the time he "abandoned" his dog Yazi to go to college, leaving her isolated and alone. Jeff described the pain he both caused and experienced in that failure, and what he feels he learned from it. Think about some things that would be on your list of Top Five Regrets/Failures. Is there one of them you'd be comfortable sharing with us? If so, what happened? And most importantly, what did you learn from it?

Matthew 16:13-23

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’
[14]And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ [15]He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’
[16]Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ [17]And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. [18]And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. [19]I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’ [20]Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.
21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. [22]And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.’
[23]But Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.’