

## **“Broken Promises Can Break Hearts”**

### **Matthew 26:31-35**

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August 5, 2007

#### **Communion Devotion**

Do you remember the first promise you broke? Were you surprised that you did not keep it? What happened? What did you learn from that experience about yourself and life?

I'm not sure if Peter could tell us the first promise he broke, but I am confident that he could tell us the most memorable one. It occurred the night Jesus was arrested prior to his crucifixion. Three times Peter denied even knowing Jesus when confronted by people that tried to link him to the Lord. What made these denials more devastating for Peter was that they happened after he so boldly and proudly predicted he would never do such a thing.

*“Then Jesus told them, ‘This very night you will all fall away on account of me for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.’ But, after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.’*

*Peter replied, ‘Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.’ ‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘this very night before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.’ Peter declared, ‘Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.’ And all the other disciples said the same” Matthew 26:31-35.*

I am convinced that Peter meant every word he said. He wanted to be a faithful disciple and was willing to die for Jesus, until he got the chance.

This stings a bit, doesn't it? I see too much of myself in Peter to be comfortable. I know what it is like to have good intentions but not follow through with them. This is why I need to consider some lessons from Peter's mistake.

**Be careful what you promise.** Every commitment comes with a price because each promise made in the security of friends will be tested in a hostile environment. Once you make a promise, get ready to be tested in ways you never imagined and at times you never expected.

When Peter reflected upon this dark night of his soul, as I'm sure he did many times, what do you think surprised him the most? It was probably the fact that the catalyst for that first denial was a question from an obscure servant girl. It was not Pilate, the Sanhedrin nor the angry mob that threatened him, but an unknown maiden that unnerved him. Don't get caught by surprise like Peter.

**When someone sees danger ahead of you and tries to warn you, don't ignore them or go into denial.** Ask them what they see and why you should be concerned.

I wonder what Peter would have done later that night had he replied to Jesus' surprising prediction of his denial by asking, “Lord, tell me why you believe all of us will abandon you. What do you know that we don't? What do you see that we are overlooking? How can we avoid letting you down and making the biggest mistake of our lives?”

Have you ever asked anyone these questions? Do you wish you had? It takes a mature person and good listener to pick up on warnings and proceed with caution. I think this story, which is not the least bit flattering to Peter, is here to teach us this. What do you think?

I wonder this morning what others see in your future that you are unable or unwilling to see? A mature and responsible person will find out. There is too much at stake not to and he or she knows it. No one wants to go weeping bitterly into the night, burdened by guilt and shame like Peter. By God's grace and others' help, we don't have to.

**Stay close to Jesus and rely upon him for the desire and ability to keep your promises.** The one who was faithful all the way to the cross will help you keep your promises.

William Barclay has a word for us about this. “We are safe only when we replace a confidence that boasts with a humility that knows our weaknesses and depends not on self, but

Christ.” The secret to keeping promises is in inviting Jesus along your journey to help you stay on guard, listen to others, remain humble and resist overconfidence. Having him as a traveling companion and seeking his counsel can make all the difference in the world.

On a mountainside the wind was blowing fiercely. A wise Alpine guide grabbed a climber and shouted, “On your knees, on your knees! It is not safe here except on your knees.” I know many places and times when this is true.

**What if you have broken promises and are reeling in disbelief like Peter was that awful night?** Is there any hope? I am glad to say there is. Our Lord is an expert at healing wounds that broken promises have caused. He is also good at helping us to forgive ourselves so that we are not paralyzed by guilt and shame.

Do you need to be forgiven today and given another chance? Do you need to give someone that has hurt you another chance? Jesus will help you, just ask Peter.