

Reality Carpinteria - Pastor Britt Merrick
Mark 14:26-31
5 Steps to Misery
(10JULY2005)

Context of our passage:

Jesus and His disciples have just finished the Last Supper. The last message on the Book of Mark we talked about Communion. There, at the Passover meal, Jesus instituted Communion.

Mark 14:26-31; 72

²⁶ After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

- Historically speaking, we can surmise that they were probably singing together Psalm 118, maybe even Psalm 115 through Psalm 118, as they went to the Mount of Olives.
 - Read these Psalms and share the moment with Jesus.
 - What a great picture of Jesus Christ worshiping the Father with His disciples.

Mark ²⁷ And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.'

- Note that they've been through a very eventful time.
 - They just finished a wonderful meal
 - They had the Last Supper
 - Jesus instituted Communion
 - Judas has left to betray Jesus
 - The disciples were still a bit confused as to the reason he had left the table.
 - They've finished singing a hymn together.
- Jesus drops them another bomb.
 - Earlier that night, Jesus had said that **one** of them would betray Him.
 - Now, He says, **all** of them will fall away. And then He quotes **Zachariah 13:27**. "I will strike down the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered."
 - A prophecy about the Messiah that He would be struck on the cross and some of the sheep, His disciples, would flee His side.

Mark ²⁸ "But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." ²⁹ But Peter said to Jesus, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not." ³⁰ And Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, that you yourself this very night, before a rooster crows twice, shall deny Me three times." ³¹ But Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all were saying the same thing, too.

Mark ⁷² Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

- We have before us the denial of Jesus Christ by Simon Peter.

Note: we will be taking a couple of weeks to study this event that took place in Gethsemane. We will be talking about the Lord's Prayer, the Arrest and so forth. Today, we will narrow in on Peter's denial of Jesus Christ.

Peter's Denial of Jesus

- Jesus and His disciples have gone from having supper together, to singing a hymn, to Peter saying, "Everyone else might bail out on You, but I will never fall away, Lord. I'm willing to go to prison and to death for You."
 - In Jerusalem, cocks usually crow three times between midnight and dawn. Before the cock crowed twice, Peter would deny Jesus three times.
 - The end result was that Peter went out and wept bitterly.
 - The kind of weeping where your chest is heaving and convulsing.

- That uncontrollable sobbing that occurs when your heart is breaking.
- Peter's denial happened literally overnight.
 - It was not a sudden thing.
 - But, it did happen over the course of one evening.
- We shall see that a series of seemingly small compromises led to his downfall.
 - In and of themselves they were relatively harmless. But, put them together they led to disaster and misery for Peter.
- Using our text, we are going to be looking at 5 steps to misery.
 - As we look at them, we'll grasp the seemingly progressive nature of sin.
 - Sin is like an investment.
 - It always builds upon itself.
 - It does not happen in a vacuum.
 - It does not stand alone.
 - It has a progressive destructive nature.
 - In one evening, Peter goes from "I will **never deny** You!" to "I **never knew** Him!"

What can you do as you look at the fall of Peter.

- Take stock of our own life very carefully.
- Open up your heart.
- Humble yourself before the Holy Spirit.
 - Tell the Lord who knows your heart, "Lord, I am allowing You - - I am asking You, I am begging of You, Lord, to fire warning shots across my bow. Lord, if I am heading in the wrong direction, I want to know about it. If I am going down a road that is destructive; if I am compromising in little ways; if I am engaging in sins that are building upon sin, I want to know about it. Lord, Show me."

The 1st Step to Misery: Self-Confidence

- Peter's problem at the onset was that he was quite self-confident.
 - **Mark 14** ²⁹ But Peter said to Jesus, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not."
 - **Mark 14** ³¹ But Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"
 - This verse ends by saying that they were all saying the same thing, but it was only Peter who went through with denying the Lord.
 - If you are listening with "worldly" ears, if your ears have not been infiltrated with the Word of God, you immediately say, "What's wrong with being self-confident?"
 - The philosophy of the world is:
 - Believe in yourself.
 - Be confident in yourself.
 - In hard times, look within, look to yourself, draw from your inner strength.
 - The Bible says that there is nothing good in you. The Lord is to be our rock, our fortress, our tower and our strength. He is to be our security, our anchor, the hope of our soul.
 - A parallel account of Mark 14:29,31 is found in **Luke 22:31-32** "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."
 - Put your name in place of Simon's and hear Jesus warn you that Satan wants to sift you like wheat, but that He (Jesus) has prayed that during that time your faith will not fail you. In other words, Jesus is going to let him do it!
 - The Lord doesn't say that He **denied** Satan's request.
 - The Lord tells Peter that He's **praying** for him.

Nothing happens in your life that does not first pass through the sovereign lens of God.

- When Satan wanted to mess with Job, he had to ask permission from God.
 - Satan is on a leash from God.
 - God will allow Satan some activity in our lives solely for our **refining**.
- “Satan wants to sift you like wheat.”
 - Much like grating blades rubbing together. It is a sifting process that gets rid of all impurities, all the junk and all the chaff.
 - A very violent picture
 - A very sobering warning
- “Simon, Simon”.
 - Notice that Jesus does not call him Peter, but refers to him by his old name, Simon.
 - In **John 1:42**, Jesus told Peter, “Your name is Simon, but from now on you shall be called Cephas (Peter).”
 - Peter means rock.
 - We see that in Peter’s natural character he was anything but the Rock.
 - Peter was impetuous, vacillating, and flaky.
 - In God’s eyes we are different.
 - God sees the potential, the finished product. God sees the man or the woman whom He is determined to make you into.
 - **Philippians 1:6** says, “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.”
 - Part of the work that had to happen to Peter was that he would come under the temptation of the enemy.
 - Peter’s old name (Simon) means *here*.
 - It’s as if, when the Lord stops calling him Peter later in the Gospels and starts to call him Simon, Jesus is saying, “Listen, watch out for that old nature, Peter. Remember the old you; the one that is not the Rock. You’re going to get sifted!”
 - “But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, and when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”
 - Jesus is pronouncing a prophecy here.
 - In other words, Jesus is saying to Peter, “You will be **stronger** from having gone through this, than you are tonight. It will be the worse thing you’ll ever experience. It will be a tremendous battle and a tremendous trial, but when you go through it, you will be able to strengthen your brothers.”
 - Indeed, Peter became the pillar of the Early Church.
 - It’s good to know that Jesus was praying that Peter’s faith would not fail him.
 - Peter failed in the sense that he denied the Lord, but he did not fail like Judas failed.
 - Judas betrayed the Lord and went out and hung himself.
 - Peter denied the Lord and wept. He was restored to the Lord. He made his way to Galilee to be restored on the shore of the Sea of Galilee by Jesus Christ.
 - The proper response from Peter to Jesus’ warning should have been, “Oh, no. Lord, help me! Strengthen me. Protect me. Lord, what should I do?”
 - Instead Peter negates the Lord’s words.
 - This is the second time that he contradicts the word of God.”

- In Caesarea, Philippi in northern Israel above the Sea of Galilee, Jesus said, "I'm going to the cross." Peter said to Him, "May it never be!" And Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan"
 - Peter was buying into the lies of Satan.
 - Peter was thinking the thoughts of Satan and not the thoughts of God.
- Peter points out that any one of the disciples would be capable of denying Jesus first before Peter would ever do something like that.
 - Very, very self-confident!
 - Peter was not listening to the warnings of the Lord.
 - If you are not reading the Word, you are not hearing. God speaks very loudly through His word. He also speaks directly to us and warns us by His Holy Spirit.

Don't expect the Spirit to give you revelation if you ignore the revelation that is already written in God's Word.

If you are not reading the Word, you are not going to hear the warning of God.

- The Bible will point out behaviors that do not line up with the Word of God.
 - Your response should be, "Lord, help me. Help me now to bring this to an area of correction."
- There ought to be a godly fear in your life.
 - The last thing you'd ever want to do is offend a Holy God.
- **1 Co. 10:13**, "No temptation has overtaken you except for that which is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."
 - We are all tempted in the same way.
 - We think no one has ever been through what we've been through.
 - Yes. Everyone knows.
 - Everyone goes through the same kind of stuff.
 - But God is faithful. He won't let you be tempted beyond what you are able to handle.
 - God has put parameters around temptation.
 - God has the enemy, the tempter, the liar on a short leash.
 - The promise is that we do not have to fail in those moments of temptation.
 - Peter would be stronger having gone through the denial, but Peter would have been stronger had he **never** denied the Lord and **stood up** under the temptation!
 - Peter didn't have to fail!
 - This is bad news for the Christian who would even consider using "woe is me, I'm a failure" as a crutch.

There is nothing and no one who can make us fail - - - not even the devil.

Satan has no power over you.

You choose to sin!

**The Christian life requires the power of God to sustain him or her.
You cannot live a Christian life without relying upon the power of God.**

- This requires daily feeding upon the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ."
 - Jesus is to be our sustenance.

- If you are to flourish in Christianity. If you are to blossom, bloom and grow, then you must feed upon the person of Jesus.
- You can't do it on your own. You can't take God's warnings lightly and say you're okay - - you're not!
- **I Corinthians 10:12**, "Therefore let him who *thinks* he stands take heed lest he fall." Be warned!
- We need the **power** of the Holy Spirit.
 - He is the promise of the Father.
 - He is the power by which we can be witnesses.
 - He is the power by which we can cry out, "Abba, Father."
 - He is the power by which we can walk in obedience and bear the fruit of the Spirit.
 - We should be asking God daily for the power of His Spirit.
- We ought to be longing for the pure milk of the Word.
 - This is the way a Christian receives nourishment and strength.
- We ought to be basking in the love of the Father.
 - As His children, we should be dependent on Him for everything.
 - We should have child-like faith.
 - Certainly not childish faith!
 - We ought to realize that we are needy.
 - We are to rely upon the Father and seek the Father.
 - But, being reliant and submissive is contrary to the philosophy of the world.
 - The world says to be self-confident and look within.
- If we are relying upon ourselves, we are in big trouble. Look for these warning signs:
 - You find no need for reading the Bible, God's Word
 - No need for fellowship (home-groups) with other Christians
 - No need for accountability.
 - Another Christian brother or sister who can get in your face and call you out lovingly on sin in your life.
 - No need for prayer. You don't schedule it or even think about it each day.
- How you live reveals how you really feel as a Christian.
 - The schedules and choices you make, betray what you think are necessary and valuable.
 - When you're hungry, you get food.
 - When you're thirsty, you drink.
 - When you're suffocating, you breathe.
 - The importance you place on prayer in your life.

2nd Step to Misery - Prayerlessness

Mark 14: ³⁷ And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? ³⁸ "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

- Jesus had already warned Simon Peter that Satan wanted to sift him like wheat.
- Now, He has taken three of the disciples, including Peter, further into the garden with Him and has asked them to watch and pray.
 - This is the time when Jesus was sweating blood, an actual condition called Hematidrosis.
 - A condition caused by severe stress.
 - Jesus knew the cross was laid before Him.
 - Jesus knew that our sins would be poured upon Him and this would separate Him from the Father.

- When He returns, Jesus again asks them to keep watching and praying so that they don't come into temptation.
- We are told that this happened three times.
 - Three times Jesus asked them to pray. Three times He caught them sleeping.
 - Jesus repeatedly warns them that there is a spiritual battle going on around them.
- The last time Jesus returns and finds them sleeping, He told them, "Enough! The hour is ahead."
 - Jesus was letting them know that **their** will would be done.
 - This is the worst thing God can ever say to us. In other words, "Have it your way."
 - If we persist in sin, God's Spirit will not always strive with us.
 - There comes a point and it is mentioned in **Romans 1:28**, where God will turn you over to your sin.
 - God will repeatedly warn you, but there will come a time when He'll let it be as you desire
 - Because of prayerlessness, the battle was now lost for Peter.
 - Jesus had asked him to pray. For Peter not to do it is a sin!
 - **Luke 18:1**, Jesus taught that men ought to pray at all times.
 - **2 Thessalonians 5: 17**, Paul writes that we are to pray without ceasing.
 - **1 Timothy 2:1**, Paul writes that we ought to offer up prayers for all men.
 - The thrust of the Bible is that the Christian ought to be in an attitude of prayer at all time.
 - Because it is a command: If we don't pray, we are in sin!
 - It doesn't mean that we should have our eyes closed and hands folded at all times.
 - To pray is simply defined as, "To go to." To go to God!
 - It is going to God in an attitude of Communion, of reliance upon Him.
 - "Lord, I need You for everything in my life today."
 - Praying without ceasing.
 - This keeps us spiritually alert.

Pray. Or, be prey - - - for Satan!

- **1 Peter 5:8**, "Be sober, be alert because your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour."
- There was an intense spiritual battle going on in the Garden of Gethsemane that night.
 - Satan was tempting the Lord to skip the cross.
 - Jesus was aware of the cross. On His face He prayed to the Father, sweating blood.
 - Peter and the boys were sleeping during all of this.
 - **Hebrews 3:12-13** "Take care (be alert, be careful), brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."
 - We begin to see from this passage and the way that it is phrased, the **progressive** nature of sin.
 - Peter was just too self-confident. He didn't think that what Jesus was telling him was that important.
 - He thought he was okay. He and his buddies were just fine. So instead of encouraging each other to pray, they encouraged each other to sleep.

You need to be spiritually alert!

- Prayer is something that requires attention. It requires effort. It doesn't come easy. Prayer does not come natural.
 - Every time you go to pray, your body will fight against it. It will find better things to do. This is guaranteed!
 - Every time you go to pray, you will recall everything you need to do for that week. You have to call somebody, pay a bill, do this, that and the other!

- Chuck Smith says, “Go and pray, and when those things come to mind, write them in a to-do list. Then put the list aside and begin to pray.”
- The enemy will always try to stop you from praying.
 - **James 4:7**, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”
 - The enemy will always point out why you shouldn’t be praying. Once you agree with him, you’ve lost! But, if you resist him and stand firm in the truth, he will leave you alone.
 - Martin Luther said, “ I have so many things to do today that I must spend the first three hours in prayer.”
 - This is contrary to our thinking. We’re so busy we don’t have time to pray or read the Word.
- As Peter continues to resist praying and listening to Jesus, he starts acting out in his flesh in the midst of a difficult time.
 - **Mark 14:** ⁴⁷ But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.
 - **John 18:10** tells us it was Peter who did this and the servant was named Malchus.
 - No one aims for an ear with the sword. Peter was most probably trying to cut his head and like a spas he cut Malchus’ ear off.
 - Obviously, Peter is acting in his own nature and under his own will.
 - Jesus told Peter to put away his sword and that all who live by the sword would die by the sword. He added, “Peter, don’t you think that I could the Father and He would send twelve legions of angels!”
 - One legion equals over 6,000 troops.
 - Every resource in heaven is available to Jesus. **Matthew 26:51-54**
 - This is what happens when we begin to be self-confident and prayerless. We get to that place of not being spiritually alert and things get very chaotic for us.
 - Peter must have felt pretty dumb when Jesus bent down and restored the servant’s ear. (**Luke 22:51**)

3rd Step to Misery - Following at a Distance

- **Mark 14** ⁵⁴ Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire.
 - Not more than a couple of hours ago, Peter had said he was willing to go to the death with Jesus, that he would never leave Jesus. Now, he is following Jesus at a distance.

**Jesus has called you to walk with Him in intimacy.
He died on the cross that you might be with Him and relate to Him intimately.**

**You should be relying upon His strength.
Seeking His Face daily.
Feasting upon the Bread of Life.
Calling upon the power of the Holy Spirit.
Relying and resting in the Father’s love.**

- When we follow at a distance, we are still Christians. Like Peter, we may even be heading in the same general direction.
 - But, we are no longer walking side by side with Jesus. We’ve fallen away.
- Little compromises can easily progress us further and further away from God.
 - It’s always the small things that will do this so effectively.
 - Satan is wise in this matter.
 - Satan will never tempt us with the big things. He will never point out to you the end result, the shame, the loss, the pain and destruction that that one little sin will produce in your life.

- Instead, he entices you with the moment's pleasure and the instant gratification that your little actions will bring your way. He'll assure you no one's looking, no one will ever know. He starts you on small and almost insignificant temptations. Another high, another escape, another pleasure other than Jesus.
- When you give in to those small compromises, Satan hooks you and begins to reel you in.
 - It starts with just a small step that becomes one in a series of small steps that finally lead you to destruction and heart ache.
- Poor Peter, he was just a self-confident, loudmouth guy. He forgot to pray and slept a little bit. Now he's following in a distance.

4th Step to Misery - Warming Yourself at the Enemy's Fire

- **Mark 14 54b** “. . . and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire.”
- These are the people who were going to crucify Jesus. They would soon be yelling “Kill Him!” They have been plotting against Jesus. These are the ones who gave Judas the money. These are the ones who would kill the Lord.
 - Tragically, Peter is warming himself at their fire. He is warming himself at the enemy's fire.
 - If we are not careful, we can find ourselves warming ourselves at the enemy's fire.
 - The enemy is Satan. He is the god of this world.
 - The fire is a picture of this world. The things of this world are all that Satan has to tempt you with.
 - At this point, Peter is now walking at a distant from Jesus. He has broken fellowship with Him. There is no intimacy or communion with Him. Peter is no longer relating to Jesus through prayer.
 - Consequently, Peter finds the camp of the enemy attractive and comfortable.
 - 24 hours earlier, Peter would not have even considered it. He would never have been caught dead standing around the enemy's fire!

**If you are in love with the Lord, actively cultivating your walk with Him,
the world holds no attraction for you.**

**If you are following Jesus at a distance,
Satan is able to make the things of the world very attractive.
He'll offer you the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life.
All the things you richly deserve.**

**If you are warming yourself or flirting with the things of the world,
Christian, today is your day to repent!**

- **John 18:18** “. . . and Peter was **also with** them....”
 - Peter was **with** the enemy.
 - Only a few hours earlier, Peter had emphatically said to Jesus, “I am willing to go **with** you...”
 - Peter probably thought he was still right with God.
 - **Matthew 12:30** Jesus said, “You are either for Me or against Me.”
 - Jesus said, “If you are not gathering with Me, then you are scattering.”

Step #5 - Denials and Disassociations

- We see that it all started with:
 - Self-confidence - it didn't **seem** bad.
 - Prayerlessness – maybe one night of sleeping when you should have been praying.

- Following Jesus at a distance – “ It’s not like I went backsliding for a week. It was just an evening!”
- Finding yourself at the enemy’s fire – the things of the world begin to attract you.
- **Mark 14 66-72** ⁶⁶ As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, ⁶⁷ and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene."
 - She was quite right, He was with Jesus, but he wasn’t anymore.
 - Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, lies to a servant girl. She was someone, who in that culture was very inconsequential.
- ⁶⁸ But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about."
 - Peter denied it. “Jesus who?”
- And he went out onto the porch. ⁶⁹ The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is one of them!" ⁷⁰ But again he denied it and after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too." ⁷¹ But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!"
 - This does not mean that he used foul language. In that culture, it means that he put upon himself a curse if he was lying.
 - The same as if we were to say, “ May God kill me and damn me if I am lying. ***I don’t know Jesus!***”
 - Peter had just had supper with Jesus.
 - He had stated that he was willing to die for Him - - even willing to go to prison for Jesus.
 - He had been with Jesus for three years!
 - He had seen Jesus raise the dead and walk on water.
 - He had seen Jesus raise a little girl and young men from the dead.
 - He had seen Him loosen the lips of the mute, open the ears of the deaf, and heal the legs of the lame.

**If you had told Peter that He would say this about Jesus Christ,
he probably would have cut your head off.
It would have *absolutely offended* him.
Yet, he found himself doing just that.**

Please be aware of the progressive nature of sin!

1. ***Self-confidence* as a Christian**
 2. ***A neglectful prayer life***
 3. ***Lagging behind in your intimacy and devotional time with the Lord***
 4. ***Flirting with the things of the world***
 5. ***The denial of your Lord***
- Our denial of God does not necessarily have to be a verbal denial.
 - We deny Him when we disobey Him.
 - We deny Him when we don’t take a stand for Him.
 - We deny Him when we simply say, “No.”
 - “Sorry, Lord, but I’m not going to change.”
 - **Mark 14:** ⁷² “Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, ‘Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.’ And he began to weep.”
 - Peter’s heart was broken. He began to weep bitterly.
 - His chest was heaving. His body was convulsing. His heart was wrenching.

Pastor Britt's Testimony: "When I attended Carpinteria High, that's what I was, high. One day some LSD was found in my car. I was using drugs and I was selling. The school's security guard found them. He was a great guy who was nice to the kids, but if you got in trouble, he came for you. The last thing you ever wanted was for him to come to your classroom and call you out. If he called you by your last name, it was over. That day, he came in, walked right past the teacher, pointed at me and said, "Merrick!" I knew it was over.

He took me to the office. They told me someone had ratted me out. They knew I was selling drugs on campus. They were calling the cops. I thought, "Cops? No sweat, call the cops!" And, . . . they were going to call my mom. "No! Don't call my mama! Call the FBI, the KGB, the CIA, anybody but my mama!" I've always been a mama's boy. I love my mom. I didn't want my mom to know.

My mom and the cops came. The cops questioned me and finally asked me to stand up. They began to read me my rights. I'm sixteen years old. My mom is standing just to the side of me. The last thing I wanted to see was my mom. They put my hands behind my back. They put the handcuffs on so tight. I remember saying, "Why do you have to put them on so tight. I'm not going to do anything." And, I was doing everything not to look at my mom. In an instant, before I could think to close my eyes, they swung me around toward my mom. My eyes met hers. My heart has never broken as it broke that day. Because, the eyes of my mom said, "Son, I love you. You're still my baby boy. Son, you may blow it and leave me, but I will never leave you. This doesn't change anything." All of that was spoken through the eyes of my mother.

- We are told in the parallel account of **Luke 22:6**, "*At the moment the cocked crowed, Jesus turned and He looked at Peter. And the eyes of Peter met the eyes of His Lord.*"
 - I'll tell you what the eyes of Jesus said, "Son, I love you. I knew that you would leave me. But, I'll never leave you. I will never forsake you. Peter, I will meet you in Galilee in a few days. We'll be best friends again."
 - **That's our Jesus!**
 - Jesus would restore Peter and make him ten times the man he ever was.
 - Jesus would never call him Simon again, but Peter the Rock. .

Pastor's Closing Prayer:

Lord, we thank You for loving us, even though You see our hearts, even though You know our failures, even as You did Peter. I pray today for those of us who have had a warning shot fired across our bow. That You would look upon us, Lord. That You would shed Your love upon us. That You would draw us to repentance with Your lovingkindness. That You would speak to our hearts once again, "Son, daughter, I love you. I knew you'd leave Me. But, I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you. I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands. Another may forget their nursing child, but I will never forget you." Speak that to us, Lord. And, draw us to repentance. That we would repent. That we would go beyond saying, "Lord, I'm sorry." That we would change our mind. That we would come to You and say, "Father, transform me. I'm changing my mind today about that sin. God, change my heart. God, by the power of your Holy Spirit, renew me, transform me, refresh me, and forgive me. I want to be God-reliant. God-confident. I want to be prayerful. I want to be intimate. I want to receive all of my warmth and comfort from You. I want to confess You and never deny You."

If you need to repent today, listen to me, **DO NOT** take this lightly. If the Lord is calling you to do some business with Him, you do business. If you have someone around you, confess and pray for one another. The Bible says that you will be healed when you do that. Come forward. Get on your face before the Lord. Let's do business with Jesus Christ!

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. When you read the word and there is a behavior that does not line up with the Word of God, what is your response? Are you able to hear the warnings of the Lord?
2. Many of us use all sorts of things to help us schedule our busy lives. Are you making adequate room for God in your life?
3. What value do you put on prayer in your life? As obvious as it may seem, are you really putting prayer and time with the Lord as a priority in your daily life?
4. Jesus warns us to watch and pray. Be honest with yourself. Are you praying like Jesus or sleeping like Peter?

5. Where are you in your walk with Jesus Christ today? Are you walking with Him or following Him at a distance? This is something that can be easily faked. Only you and the Spirit of God know the answer.
6. Have you ever found yourself flirting with temptation and before you know it you find yourself completely involved in sin? Can you remember the subtle steps that got you to that point? Memorize the 5 steps to misery and ask God for the power of His Holy Spirit to always keep you God-reliant.