

Forgiven

The Gospel in Motion

[Acts 1:15-26](#)

As we enter this fourth week in our study of Acts, we look at the final verses of chapter one. It's easy for us to take this passage and reduce it to the two primary individuals and their characteristics: Peter, the hero, and Judas, the villain. Though this mindset might help us quickly identify who to imitate or avoid, we can be robbed of learning the depth of a person's humanity. Both Peter and Judas left everything to follow Jesus. Both had moments of faith and failure. **Why do you think we are tempted to simplify people's lives into "heroes" and "villains"?**

Peter denied Jesus three times; Judas betrayed Him once. Even though both made devastating choices, Peter came back, asked Jesus for forgiveness, embraced grace, and was restored by Jesus. Judas, on the other hand, does what so many of us do – his brokenness takes him to hiding, and costs him - as it will us too if we do the same.

In what ways do you identify with Peter's denial or Judas' betrayal?

Imagine if Judas had approached Jesus after the resurrection and begged for forgiveness.

Do you think Jesus would have turned him away?

How do you usually respond when you've failed—by hiding in shame, or by seeking restoration?

Forgiveness is not passive - it must be claimed. Jesus met Peter in his failure, invited him to name his sin, and affirmed his love. Judas, however, could not accept forgiveness and was consumed by shame. The same choice lies before us: to remain in our brokenness or to let God's grace wipe our slate clean. **What makes it difficult for you to fully accept God's forgiveness? How might your life look different if you truly lived as someone who is forgiven and free?**

We are all a mixture of faith and failure, hero and villain, but the good news is that God meets us in the whole of who we are. His response is not rejection but open arms. The invitation before us is to claim the freedom of forgiveness and live without shame. **What practices can help you move from shame into the liberating embrace of God's forgiveness?**