

Week Beginning: 3rd November 2019

Worship Series: #1 in series: **Shhh.**

WE DON'T
TALK ABOUT...

living sharing growing

Theme Verse

I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

-Ezekiel 34:15-16

Remember This Week

When the Church fails, Christ does not. When the Church hurts, Christ does not. When the Church is unmoved, Christ is not. When the Church is absent, Christ is not. Scandal may rock the Church, bring the good news into disrepute, or even close the doors for Gospel work but it will never frustrate Christ's unchanging purpose or his mighty power to build a people through whom he is at work to bring justice, love, mercy and healing to the world.



For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Psalms 139:13-16

Almighty God, you are our Father in Heaven. You created us and know each of us intimately. Pour your Holy Spirit out on us as we gather around your Word, so that we might come to know you more intimately and learn to trust you more completely. Empower us to always live as your children, bringing glory and praise to you. Amen



1. *Share your highs and lows since you last met with one another.*
2. *Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?*
3. *What is the most disappointing purchase you ever made? Why was it disappointing?*
4. *Who is your most reliable friend? What is it about them that makes them reliable?*
5. *If you had to provide a warranty for a relationship, what kinds of things would it need to cover?*

The Church's failures. We don't have to look far to find them. We've seen them. We've experienced them. The media have highlighted them for all the world to see. There's abuse from those in power, both physical and spiritual. There's the cover-ups and secrecy that have ensued. There's the failure to respond to people's needs, or minister effectively. The failure to speak the truth or show compassion when called for. How do we view the failures of the Church? Or when the people of God fail to live up to the standards they proclaim? How do you respond when the Church fails you, disappoints you, lets you down? What happens when people come to Church to find Jesus and sometimes all they find is us. Join us today as we no longer remain silent but open up and talk honestly about the Church's failures.

Read 1 Peter 5:1-4

6. *What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?*
7. *Have you ever thought of yourself as an elder?*
8. *Each of us can be an elder/mentor for those who follow behind us in the faith. In light of this fact, read the verse again and share what the verse is saying to you.*

People look to their leaders, elders or mentors for wisdom and advice. They look to them for an example to follow. They turn to them for encouragement and support during difficult times and challenges. Yet most of us know the feeling of having our leaders or mentors, heroes or role-models disappoint us and let us down. It happens in every sphere of life. Sports heroes, entertainment personalities, politicians, church leaders. Some manage to recover from their





failures and others often don't.

9. *What do you look for and expect from your leaders? What characteristics do you value?*
10. *The church (that's you) is called to represent Jesus in the world. How well do you think that is going? Should we be proud or disappointed?*

The crazy thing is that God often seems to do some of his best work through fairly flawed people? Moses was a murderer and unable to speak confidently in public, yet God used him to deliver the nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt. His brother Aaron, was largely responsible for the idea of the golden calf, yet he became high priest of Israel. King David was a simple shepherd boy, whose own father didn't even consider him for the job of being king, yet he was one of the greatest kings of Israel. God used Jonah, to deliver Nineveh from destruction, even though he ran the other way, and he used Saul, a well known persecutor of Christians and made him into Paul, the apostle, evangelist and missionary to the gentiles, and writer of large chunks of the New Testament.

11. *Why do you think God so often chooses to work through deeply flawed people?*

Read 1 Corinthians 12:9-10

Paul accomplished many things in his life as an apostle and evangelist. Yet he was constantly reminded of his own frailty and imperfection. God reminded him that His power is perfected in weakness.

12. *How can the goodness and power of God be more evident through broken and unholy disciples?*
13. *The life of faith in Jesus is one in which the world is turned upside down. The weak are strong, the first are last, and the servants are lords. How can we operate like this in a world that is 'all about the self'?*
14. *God's greatest triumph was a victory won through death. God himself died, so that we might live. What looked like a failure was, in fact, a victory. What difference does this make to how you view success and failure?*

In Matthew 19:23-26, Jesus explains again to his disciples, that salvation is impossible for man, but with God all things are possible. The Church's failures occur when we try to do things apart from God. When we overstep our authority and instead of representing Christ and his message, we serve our own interests and promote our own message. We should not hide from our weaknesses, we should acknowledge them, like Paul, and give God the opportunity to address our mistakes and to bring his healing and forgiveness to the lives of those we may have hurt.

15. *How does your attitude to failure change when you know that God can redeem our failures and still bring hope and salvation? Does it give you greater confidence to share his Good News?*

Our failures have potential to deeply wound others. When we fail to show Jesus love, when we fail to act with compassion, when we mistreat others, we potentially drive a wedge and widen the gap between people and a right relationship with God. The power of God is in forgiveness. Extending and being prepared to ask for forgiveness is one way God can really shine among our mistakes and failures.

16. *Is there someone in your life whom you have found difficult to forgive? Spend some time in prayer this week and ask for help in forgiving that person.*
17. *God's victory for you, through Jesus death on the cross, is always effective. No failure is so big that the death of Jesus can not overcome it. At the end of each day, try presenting the failures of the day to Jesus and receive his forgiveness for yourself.*

- * Praise God for his power which is made perfect in our weakness.
- * Ask God for forgiveness, for those times when the church has failed to show the love and light of Christ in the world.
- * Pray for those have been hurt or disappointed by the failures of the church.
- * Pray for each other - for hearts that are ready to forgive and for the Holy Spirit to empower you to live lives that flow from the love and life of Jesus.

Turn to the person next to you and make the sign of the cross on the palm of their hand or forehead as you say:

Name, Christ will never fail you. Amen.

