

middle school



Lesson 5 / March 30, 2025

Love in Spite of Failure

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1 

Lesson 5

Focus:

Jesus loves us in spite of our failure.

Lesson 5

Bible Basis:

John 21:3-17

Lesson 5

Memory Verse:

"I have loved you with an everlasting love: I have drawn you with unfailing kindness."
—Jeremiah 31:3b

Students will watch a video about celebrities who started out unsuccessfully as they explore how their Savior loves them in spite of their failures.

Materials:

- Internet access
- Paper (1 sheet ONLY per student)
- Scissors
- Whiteboard and marker (or screenshared document)

As students join your group time, hand each person a sheet of crisp paper (or invite students to have supplies ready at home). Don't give students any specific instructions other than to let them know that they will be making a paper airplane out of this sheet of paper. Scissors aren't necessary; however, you may want to have a few pairs of scissors available for students who want to cut their papers smaller, etc. Don't let students have additional sheets of paper to retry making their airplanes if they fail to fly. *One try is all they get.*

Draw a target on the whiteboard or set up some other object in the room as a focal point. (If your class is meeting online, you can display an image of a target on the screen.) Let students know their objective is to fly their paper from a certain spot and have it land on or near the target/object. Give each student only one try to throw their paper airplane and attempt to have it land on or near the target. Forming a line may be the most efficient way to orchestrate this part of the activity.

Regroup. Ask students to raise their hands if they think they succeeded at creating a paper airplane that flew well and also if they were able to come close to flying their airplane near the target. Next, ask the students who were not successful and experienced failure at making and flying their airplane to explain what they think went wrong.

Making a paper airplane and getting it to fly properly is not an easy task. Some of us experienced success; others experienced failure. Thankfully, this activity doesn't have much of a consequence either way. It was just for fun and to see if we could accomplish something.

In life, failures often have severe consequences. Failure can lead to feelings of inadequacy and even depression if they happen repeatedly. The following video clip is about famous people who started out by failing in some way at school. Put yourself in their shoes and think about how you might have felt if you were the one failing. Would you have been able to try again?

Share this short video clip with your students:

Famous Celebrities That Failed School

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/MXoligrQgSo>

- **Whose failure surprised you the most?** (Answers will vary.)
- **Why is it good to deal with failure but also keep trying?** (Answers will vary. Giving up and quitting are not how people get ahead in life.)
- **How do you think these celebrities' parents felt when they were told their child wouldn't succeed?** (Answers will vary. Obviously, these parents did not give up on their children. Even though these celebrities may not have done well in school, they still made successful careers for themselves.)
- **What can you learn about failure from knowing successful people like the ones in the video have failed?** (Answers will vary, but may include, failure doesn't have to be the end of your story.)

Today we'll look at ourselves and our failures and discover we don't have to be perfect or successful to find Jesus' favor. Let's dig into today's lesson and look at how this concept can affect our lives.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

Love in Spite of Failure

for use as
STEP 4 

Lesson 5**Focus:**

Jesus loves us in spite of our failure.

Lesson 5**Bible Basis:**

John 21:3-17

Lesson 5**Memory Verse:**

“I have loved you with an everlasting love: I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.”
—Jeremiah 31:3b

Materials:

- Pens/pencils
- Index cards
- Envelopes

If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring supplies with them to class.

In John 21:3–14, Simon Peter fished all night, yet caught nothing. Not only that, but he had invited his friends to come along. Everyone witnessed Peter—the expert fisherman—and his failed fishing attempt. The next morning when Someone challenged them to try again, they obeyed. Perhaps they thought, *What can it hurt? We’ve already had one big failure of a fishing trip.* Regardless of their motives, the new outcome was amazing. Right away they knew it was Jesus who had commanded them to try again.

Simon Peter was so overwhelmed when his failure became a success that he swam to the shore. There he met up with Jesus who had already made a fire for their morning’s breakfast. Jesus had not focused on His disciples’ failure. Rather, He loved His disciples in spite of their failure.

Jesus went even further to show His love for Simon Peter. Jesus didn’t condemn Peter for his failure to be a good disciple when he denied Jesus three times. Instead, He reinstated Peter as His disciple and asked Peter to take care of future believers.

➤ **What do you think Jesus was asking when He asked Peter over and over to feed His lambs and sheep?** (Answers will vary. Help students see that Jesus wasn’t belittling Peter, rather He was showing Peter that He loved and needed him as His disciple. Jesus trusted Peter to care for the followers of Jesus that he would encounter. Jesus had already forgiven Peter for his cowardly acts at the cross.)

Jesus loves us in spite of our failure. Have students turn to page 8 of *The Rock* and read today’s memory verse as a large group. “I have loved you with an everlasting love: I have drawn you with unfailing kindness” (Jeremiah 31:3).

Distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home). Invite students to write down a failure they have had in their lives. After students have done this, have them put it in the envelope and address the envelope to Jesus, signifying that this failure no longer defines them and they are giving it to Him. In addition to Jesus' name on the envelope, have them write: Jesus loves me even when I fail.

Mention to students that Jesus is able to restore us as He did Peter. We don't need to dwell on past failures or mistakes. We are loved and can move on to bigger and better spiritual matters as Peter did.

Challenge your students to spend time this week asking God if there are other past failures holding them back because they haven't turned those over to Jesus. Encourage them to add these to the list and place them inside of Jesus' love and care symbolically as they add them to the envelope. Urge them to thank God for how He will turn those failures around for His glory.

Close in prayer.

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