

TRIPLE PLAY

*Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?"
He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."
Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."*

—John 21:17

INTRODUCTION

Can you imagine doing something so bad that you know God will never forgive you, he will never love you again, and things will never be the same between you and him? Now imagine that you have done it *three times*! Well, this is how Peter felt after the rooster crowed and he suddenly realized that he had lied over and over again to those around him, insisting that he was not one of Jesus' disciples. He had betrayed Jesus! Peter was so upset, he cried bitterly.

This all happened right after Jesus was arrested. But after Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, he did an amazing thing for Peter. Looking right through the sin that Peter had committed, Jesus saw what was in the man's heart, and he did something that Peter never expected.

That's what today's devotion is about. It's based on John 21:17, which says, "Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.'" The devotion is called "Triple Play."

DEVOTION

It was the top of the fourth inning, with runners on first and second base, and no outs. Playing shortstop, Jordan yelled, "Strike him out, Rusty!"

He watched Rusty throw a pitch. The batter hit the ball, sending it flying toward Jordan. The runners took off, thinking it would sail over his head. But Jordan leaped high and caught the ball, stepped on second base, and then tagged the runner coming from first.

"Nice triple play!" the coach said, slapping Jordan's back as he jogged off the field. "Bang, bang, bang—three outs, just like that!"

Jesus made an awesome triple play after he rose from the dead. (See John 21:15–17.) Peter had gotten scared when Jesus was arrested. *Three times* Peter had lied, telling people he didn't know Jesus. Now Peter was feeling guilty. Jesus forgave all three of Peter's sins—bang, bang, bang, just like that. You may have let Jesus down many times. But he'll forgive you if you keep loving him and doing your best to follow him.

DID YOU KNOW?

How did Jesus tell Peter he was forgiven? Jesus didn't tell him, "I forgive you." He said, "Feed my sheep." This meant that he still wanted Peter to follow him and serve him. Peter knew he was forgiven!

QUESTIONS

1. Do you think it was right for Jesus to forgive Peter for doing such a bad thing three times in a row?

One way to answer: Yes, because the reason why Jesus died on the cross was so that he *could* forgive people who sinned against him. Jesus had paid the price for all of Peter's sins—and for all of our sins as well.

2. What if Peter had lied 33 times? Or 333 times? Would Jesus still have forgiven him then?

One way to answer: Yes, Jesus would still have forgiven Peter. There is no amount of sin that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross can't pay for. There is no sin too bad for his sacrifice to pay for either.

3. If Jesus can forgive so many sins, does that mean we're free to keep on sinning after we're forgiven?

Answer: No. Jesus didn't die on the cross so we could keep sinning. He wants us to stop. Remember, he told a woman who was caught doing wrong, "Go and sin no more." God gives us his Holy Spirit so we'll have the power to live right. So don't give up trying to stop sinning!

4. John 21:17 shows that after we make a mistake and sin, we need to keep loving Jesus and keep following him. What are two other very important things we need to do when we sin?

Answer: *confess*, which means admitting to God that we did wrong, and *repent*, which means changing our behavior and doing right from now on.

5. How many times should we forgive someone who sins against us?

Answer: Peter once asked Jesus that very same question! Jesus answered, basically, that we should forgive people over and over and over, as many times as necessary. (See Matthew 18:21–22.)