



## **THE COMEBACK: SAMPLE LESSON**

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## **THE COMEBACK**

### **WEEK 1: HOW TO TURN YOUR SETBACKS INTO COMEBACKS**

**Bible: John 16:33**

**Bottom Line:** Setbacks can lead to discouragement, fear, and a desire to give up. But God can use setbacks as an opportunity for your greatest comeback.

#### **OPENING GAME: ROCK-PAPER-SCISSORS, COMEBACK EDITION (In-Person Version)**

**SUPPLIES:** None

#### **GAME PREP**

Pick 4-8 students to play the game and divide them into groups of two.

One half is "Team A" and the other side is "Team B."

When you begin, "Team B" is up 2-0 for each person.

That means that if Player B wins, they are up 3-0.

Remember, paper covers rock, rock breaks scissors, and scissors cut paper.

#### **HOW TO PLAY THE GAME**

Often when you play Rock-Paper-Scissors, you play to win three out of five tries.

For today's game, we're changing things up a bit.

Let's play Round One. Go!

(At this point, some of your groups may be 3-0 while others are 2-1.

Either way, proceed with these new instructions.)

We're going to flip the game now.

We are playing for seven tries instead of five and at the end of those seven, the person with the highest total actually loses the game.

I know, losing the game by winning the most rounds doesn't make any sense, but that's how life is sometimes.

Go!

Out of each pair, whoever has won the most rounds actually loses.

## **OPENING GAME: BLOCK MASTERS (Online version)**

*(This game is to be used with live, digital interaction)*

**SUPPLIES:** None

### **GAME PREP**

If you are using a video chat application like Zoom, you can play this with everyone on the same screen or you can send people to breakout rooms and bring them back.

The first option is simpler.

All students can play.

Have them pair up on screen.

Make sure everyone knows who their partner is and no one is by themselves or in a group of three.

Adult leaders can help where there is an odd number of students.

One half is "Team A" and the other side is "Team B." Be sure to designate this by saying that the older person in each pair is "Team A Member" and the younger person is "Team B Member."

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### **TEACH - HOW TO TURN YOUR SETBACKS INTO COMEBACKS**

**Say:** That may be the strangest version of Rock-Paper-Scissors you have ever played.

I know it is the strangest version I have ever led!

But here's the deal. Sometimes in life, what you think is going to be a setback actually helps you make a comeback.

And, I know, that in that game those who had an advantage ended up having a setback.

That can happen in life too.

But let's focus on the first option.

(Share the following story as, "My friend Mike told me..." or, even better, share a similar story from your life of how something you faced - especially in your teen years - that could have been a setback turned into a comeback for you.)

When I was in fifth grade, my parents divorced.

At the time, that seemed unusual to me because I didn't know many kids who had divorced parents.

I went through multiple remarriages, step-parents, step-siblings, and going to my Dad's house every other weekend.

None of this is what someone dreams their childhood will be like.

It was a setback in my life.

And I know that, unfortunately, this is a common experience for many students.

When I was in college and got engaged, my fiancé and I went to a Counselor for pre-marital counseling.

You are probably not real familiar with that right now, but it's basically a series of meetings where the counselor helps you prepare to be married.

(Most people prepare too much for the ceremony and not enough for the marriage.)

At our first meeting, he was reading through a document we had to fill out telling a little about our family history, which included a mess of marriages and divorces on both sides of our families.

He said, "You realize that statistically, you are both setup for failure, right?"

Not what you want to hear when you are planning to get married!

What a major setback!

Let's step into your everyday world recently.

Some of you don't have your driver's license and can't go anywhere without your parents.

We have all been working through various social distancing policies, rules regarding masks, and issues related to quarantine because of COVID-19.

At face value, and even as you work through these on a deeper level, these are setbacks.

Not being able to be in-person for school, church, and celebrations is the opposite of how we were designed.

God created us to be in relationship.

And seeing someone through a camera and display is not the same - not even close - to being in the same room together.

Well, although, Jesus' disciples didn't have to deal with COVID-19 - and they certainly didn't have Zoom or FaceTime, one disciple in particular knows what it's like to face major setbacks in life, Peter.

We are going to end up in **John 16**, so you can find that book and chapter.

But let me give you a quick overview of Peter's timeline as we approach that section.

In **John 13**, Jesus did a very humble, servant job of washing the disciples' feet to teach them about servant-leadership.

Peter didn't quite understand and in an attempt to tell Jesus how loyal he would always be, Jesus told Peter that overnight he would deny knowing Jesus not once, but three times!

In **John 15**, Jesus told the disciples how important it was to be connected to him to live the kind of life he wants us to live.

In **John 16**, Jesus prepares the disciples for the extremely hard times ahead so that they will be prepared, but also tells them of the promise of the Holy Spirit and what a great blessing he will be to them.

Look at the quote from Jesus in verse 33 with me:

**Read John 16:33.**

*I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.*

So, keeping those words of warning and encouragement in mind, Jesus spends all of chapter 17 praying for his followers.

**John 18** is when Jesus is arrested and his trials begin.

During this chapter - the same night Jesus had predicted - Peter denies knowing Jesus three different times.

You don't get much more of a setback to being a loyal follower of Jesus than denying you even know him!

In the next chapter, **John 19**, Jesus is killed on the cross and buried.

In **John 20**, the disciples get news that the tomb is empty.

Peter races John, another disciple, to get to the tomb to investigate.

They find it empty but don't fully realize what is going on.

In the last chapter of **John 21**, Peter and the disciples go fishing, probably thinking through how much he has done that he promised he would never do and wondering what this means for his relationship with Jesus.

Before John ends his book, he describes a conversation Jesus has with Peter where he lets Peter know that he is forgiven.

And not only forgiven, but he is trusted with carrying significant ministry responsibility going forward!

If you skip ahead to the book of Acts, that tells the history of the church, you'll find Peter preaching in chapter two and over 3,000 people deciding to follow Jesus and be baptized!

And so much of the rest of the book tells of Peter and the ministry he led - an incredible comeback story!

Do you remember how that counselor told me in college that statistically our marriage would not succeed?

I need to tell you that he also said, "But I also believe that if you build your marriage on a strong foundation of Jesus and do the work needed, you can change your family story and have a healthy, Christian marriage."

So we decided to be committed to each other and to put in the work to make our marriage strong and healthy - not perfect, but healthy.

And now we have been married for more than twenty-years, twice as long as our parents' first marriages!

And now I do pre-marital counseling with couples myself and help them prepare for a healthy, strong marriage.

What could have a setback and let me to be discouraged, fearful, and even giving up on marriage, God used as an opportunity for me to build into a great comeback story.

In Peter's life, he could have given up on following Jesus and just gone back to the family business of fishing.

But he didn't!

And literally the history of the church couldn't have been written without his humble comeback story.

What about you?

This is going to be harsh, but I believe some of you sitting here need to hear this put this way.

When you look back over most of this year, you have had not just one, but multiple setbacks.

No one planned for your life to go the way it has this year.

And you might be sitting here with discouragement, fear, and even a feeling of wanting to give up as you look at the unknown future.

But you have a decision to make today.

You can make excuses, or you can make a difference.

We need to each figure out how to allow what we may see as obstacles be turned into opportunities by God.

So let's do that today.

Pick one "setback" you have had in 2020 and figure out what is at least one positive thing that came out of it.

Here's maybe a few examples.

Didn't get to leave the house?

Got to spend more time with family.

Extra-curricular activities were cancelled.

Enjoyed more and better rest in a relaxing schedule.

Didn't get to travel.

Learned how to connect with people in new ways.

Pace of life was radically different for everyone in your family.

Everyone in your family enjoyed doing things together that you may not have made time for previously.

I can't speak for you, but think about the "setbacks" and figure out one positive to come out of it, even if it appears small to you right now.

And then in a bigger picture, start thinking about how the setbacks in your life can be used by God as opportunities for your greatest comeback.

Maybe like Peter, you feel like a failure or that you have disappointed God.

Can you see that he is ready not only to forgive you, but to trust you with bringing healing and hope to other people in your life?



Maybe like me, you have a broken or dysfunctional family and you wonder about your future relationships?

Can you see that God is a perfect heavenly Father and wants you to be an amazing part of His family?

Imagine if instead of setbacks, we looked back and saw 2020 as a year of comebacks!

This is definitely something for us to discuss in our small groups.

I want to challenge you today to be brutally honest as you look at your life and really pause to figure out how God can change where you think your story is going.

Everyone loves a good comeback story...especially Jesus!

Let's talk about all this in our groups!

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What is your favorite movie or book that features a comeback story?

What setback do they overcome?

Why do you like it so much?

2. Do you know people who had brokenness in their family and allowed God to transform that into a story of strength?

Explain.

3. How do you think Peter would have felt when he went from telling Jesus how loyal he was to denying that he even knew him in less than 24 hours?

4. In 2020, what has been a major source of discouragement for you?

Why?

5. What has caused you the greatest fear this year?

Why?

6. Peter could have given up . . . but he didn't.

He had no idea the kind of comeback story Jesus would write in his life.

How does this true story inspire you and give you hope in your life?

7. What is one positive that you can now see that came through something this year that at the time was a major setback for you?

8. One of the common themes in the stories today was the word "decision."

What is the difference between someone who makes excuses and someone who decides to make a difference?

9. Who in your family or circle of friends may not realize the positive that has come out of something that seemed like a setback in the past few months?

How can you share that and help them have a different perspective?

10. It's not enough to "think positively."

So what is one action you will take this week to make a positive difference in the people and world around you out of something you learned or experienced, during the setbacks of 2020?