

THE TWELVE

Peter, Part One

A BIO OF PETER

Name: Simon son of Jonah (nicknamed “Peter” by Jesus, meaning “rock”)

Marital Status: Married

Wife's name: Unknown

Home town: Bethsaida, a town on Lake Ganesaret in Galilee (exact location unknown, possibly the north shore). The apostle Philip also came from this town as well.

Profession: Fisherman

Age: 20-25 years old

Relatives: Andrew, his brother and his mother-in-law are mentioned in the scriptures.

Personality: Extroverted, brusk, abrasive, loud, enthusiastic, impulsive, resolute, eager, bold, aggressive and outspoken. Peter is noted for being somewhat brash. He was quick to speak and share an opinion. He was quick to act and sometimes slow to think. He was susceptible to external influences and intimidated at times. But Peter really did love Jesus.

Social status: Uneducated in the Mosaic Law but seemed to have a reasonable fishing business with his brother (Andrew) and partners (James and John the sons of Zebedee). He seemed to have owned his own boat and it appears as though he owned a house in Capernaum as well.

General facts: Spoke Aramaic but also had an accent that clearly identified him as a Galilean; was 'unlearned' i.e. he had no additional religious or scriptural instruction; was a disciple of John the Baptist, and was one of the three apostles closest to Jesus.

Position amongst the 12: Although not named as a leader, Peter certainly seems to be the apostle that was most apparent amongst Jesus's followers (his name is mentioned about 110 times in the gospels). His name is mentioned first in all the lists of the Apostles. Jesus seemed to have a closer relationship with him together with James and John and these three would often be called out by Jesus to go somewhere or do something that the others were not invited to (Example: the transfiguration and the Garden of Gethsemane). After Christ's ascension, Peter appears to take a position of leadership, quickly becoming the spokesman for the group, and the other disciples seem to follow without resistance.

Death: He was martyred as prophesied by Jesus. Early church tradition claims that Peter was in Rome in the last phase of his life and that he was executed by crucifixion (upside down, with arms outstretched) at the time of the Great Fire of Rome of the year 64, during the reign of Emperor Nero. Most scholars believe that Peter was crucified sometime between AD 64 and 68.

It's phenomenal how God can take something so broken and turn it into something beautiful. That's what we're going to see as we look more closely at Peter. We want to see how Christ worked with him and changed him and see what the important issues of discipleship are.

Jesus purposefully spent three years raising twelve men to multiply Himself and His mission. He never built them around His gift only, but built His gift into them!

Last year in Johannesburg, five to seven hundred thousand sermons were preached. But the transformation of society went backwards. The missing ingredient is the application and mobilising of the priesthood. We need more discipling!

The minute you stop growing and taking new ground, you die. We need to get back into the place of being disciplined by God. We need to be asking: how do we follow Christ in a local church? How do we allow Jesus to disciple us? We'll be asking this.

Above you can see some facts about Peter. Perhaps you can identify with his personality - abrasive, loud and enthusiastic. See, Christ doesn't look for people who have finished characters. He wants to rather use every one of us and in the process he'll finish us off. I love the fact that Jesus takes rough and uneducated people - people we wouldn't use. If we were doing any of the choosing, we would have some lengthy process where people need to fill out all sorts of forms and so on and we would choose respectable people. But Jesus doesn't do that. Here we see how he took this man, Peter, turned him the right way up and knew that this man could change the world for the Gospel.

Jesus sees potential in every single personality type. Later we'll see Andrew was the antithesis of Peter.

The best we know is that Peter, probably about 62 or 63 years old, was martyred for his faith. He served God faithfully and counted his martyrdom a privilege. This series is about learning to become Christ-followers. A disciple is someone who follows Christ even when it becomes unclear. A disciple never stops following Jesus, regardless of anything that happens, and this is what we need to come back to. We need to come back to Christ.

There is more scripture about Peter than any of the others, because God was going to use him as the church was birthed by the holy spirit.

We are going to look at the life of Peter in two parts:

Part 1 'Character' (Becoming more like Christ)

Part 2 'Mission' (Turning the world upside down with the Gospel)

The Spirit is changing everyone of us into the likeness and image of Jesus. See Jesus didn't come in and develop a depth in Peter for it's own sake, but so that he could be prepared to do extraordinary exploits. We'll see that God entrusts so much to Peter, yet as we get to know him better in the Bible we notice that he seems like someone we wouldn't trust. Yet God entrusts so much to him, as he wants to do with all of us.

CHARACTER

The model for our character is Jesus, not anyone else. In many "discipleship movements" of the past people just became clones of others. And we saw those movements come to an end as a result. The only hero is Jesus and any preacher who doesn't point to Jesus will find the doors will close on the ministries they have been called to.

2 Corinthians 3 : 17 - 18

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Our hope is to be more like Jesus.

Lessons we learn from Peter's life:

These are some of the important stories we can learn from. We want to use them to highlight the discipleship principles that Jesus employed in the life of Peter.

Peter's unworthiness on the boat

Luke 5 : 1 - 11

1 On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, 2 and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." 5 And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." 6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 7 They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." 9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were

partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” 11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

Peter is a fisherman by trade and Jesus was a carpenter. Most of us would have told the carpenter that he doesn't know how to fish and therefore doesn't know what he's talking about. But Peter doesn't blink an eye and lets down the nets at Jesus' word. Already the discipleship process was happening.

Peter calls himself a “sinful man”. This is important. We cannot become followers of Christ unless we come to terms that there is only one who is worthy; if we don't come to this place and realise that Jesus is righteous, not us. If you believe you're righteous and God got a great deal when you decided to become a Christian, you're going to follow yourself and your own interests, not Jesus. That's going to go nowhere fast.

He left everything and followed Jesus

Matthew 4 : 18 - 22

18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

After the event recorded in Luke above, Peter left everything and followed Jesus. Peter even had to give up his occupation because he had been given a new occupation. For many of us we won't give up our occupation because it's not our call to do so, but we still have to leave everything and follow Christ. This isn't just for full-time elders. We also have marketplace elders. We've got to work out our vocational call with God.

But we must come to terms with the fact that there's nothing righteous in us and it's Jesus that will make us fishers of men. The “I'll make you” is discipleship and the “fishers of men” refers to mission. We are disciples for mission. If these two are not happening there's a breakdown in the process somewhere.

Peter's revelation that Jesus is the Christ

Matthew 16 : 13 - 19

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar- Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Peter has a revelation that Jesus is the Christ. See, Jesus asks the disciples who *they* say the

Christ is - He's not interested in hearing from you what others think, he wants to know what *you* think.

We need a revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God - and we need that revelation on-goingly. Peter was able to hear, receive, and his heart was open for God to show him who Jesus was. You have to constantly settle that in your heart because very soon Jesus can become a waiter who answers your prayers to make you comfortable. Or a prophet who says a few wise words. No, he is the Anointed One who you owe everything to; you can't compare Him to any other god, system or philosophy, it's Him and Him alone.

The Gospel is so simple and it's so important that we get back into being disciplined by Jesus. Stop thinking you can save yourself. If you're not convinced that Jesus is the only saviour you'll never preach that with conviction. If people aren't saying that He is the only saviour around you, pray for them.

How did you come to believe in Jesus? You got a revelation and it hit your heart. We never move off of that in discipleship. We don't replace that with church rules and regulations. Christ is the way, He is the Lord; we do not bow to men, women, systems, or anything else.

What does Jesus mean by "on this rock, I will build my church?" Jesus is saying that on this revelation of Him being the Christ, he will build His Church. If you're not building your life on this revelation you are building with sticks and paper and hay, and on that day when everything is tested with fire it'll be burned up.

If you want to unclutter your life, get back to this. There's only one righteous and leave everything and follow him.

Peter learned the cost of discipleship

After this revelation we see Peter's nature come out.

Matthew 16 : 21 - 28

21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." 23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. 28 Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Here we see Peter had applied his human wisdom to the revelation of Jesus being the Christ he

received earlier. Jesus didn't soften his rebuke - he stopped Peter's thinking in its tracks.

Imagine one of the elders in this church said to you, "Get behind me Satan!?" Wouldn't you soon be 'hearing' from God that you need to go to a different church? Why can't we take correction? The truth is that discipleship is about correction. This has nothing to do with man's rules or someone looking or not looking good, it's about life and death issues. Jesus had to go and die on the cross and we must not try and add human wisdom to the Gospel message.

Get off your high horses and these attitudes we have. We need to be able to be corrected. Every single one of us.

Peter shows passion and courage

Matthew 14 : 22 - 33

22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. 25 And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." 28 And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

We want the attitude we see in verse 28. And we know that when we see the wind, we need to look to Jesus, not the circumstances. But note in verse 31 that Jesus doesn't say to Peter, "Well done, you tried so hard." Instead, he says "O you of little faith"! Could we stand to be corrected like that?

We need to launch out and take risks so that we can be corrected. Some of us play in the safe zone. No, let's launch out of there. We're too reserved and far too calculating. In the Scriptures Peter is a wonderful case study of faith that grows. Some of us sit with little faith and will die with little faith, because we never activate it so God can add to it.

Peter's humanity

Luke 9 : 32 - 33

32 Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. 33 And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah" – not knowing what he said.

Peter was just like you and me. Here, in this passage, we see that Peter was full of immaturity. He

wanted to camp in this place when Jesus decides that instead they must go down and continue with the mission. What can be said about this? Well, have you noticed how some churches are built around constant manifestations? If we camp at manifestations of the Spirit and all that we're not using those manifestations like God intends.

Instead, God calls us in the manifestation to take the mission out. What follows after this scripture? Jesus goes down and releases a boy from a demon. The mission continued and there was freedom because of that.

Sometimes, like Peter, we say the most inappropriate things at the most inappropriate time. But we're in good company.

John 13 : 5 - 9

5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

We can see that Peter had so much respect and love for Christ. But Jesus was teaching him that he would need to get on his knees and serve his brothers like Jesus had.

Mark 14 : 26 - 31

26 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 27 And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' 28 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." 29 Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." 30 And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." 31 But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same.

Peter says he won't deny Christ (Mark 14:26 - 31) but does three times. He cuts off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, when they come to arrest Jesus. (Matthew 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50; John 18:4-11) He ran to Jesus' tomb as soon as he is told by Mary and the women that were with her that Jesus had risen. (Luke 24:12; John 20:2-6.) These all show his humanity.

Peter continually asked questions, wanting to learn

Here's one of the most redeeming qualities of Peter.

In Matthew 17: 24 - 27 he asks if they should pay temple tax. Peter finds the tax for him and Jesus in the mouth of a fish he caught.

In Matthew 18:21 - 35 Peter asks how many times he should forgive someone who continually sins against him.

In Mark 10:28 and Luke 12:28-29 we see that after Jesus pitied the rich young ruler, Peter stated that they (the disciples) had left their homes to follow Jesus. He receives Jesus' commendation and promise of reward for this.

In Mark 13:3, along with Andrew, James and John, Peter asked Jesus privately about when and how the temple would be destroyed and what the signs of the end of the times would be.

Peter asked Jesus whether His eschatological parables in Luke 12 applied to them as the disciples.

Jesus thinned out the 'crowd' following Him, challenging them that His true followers would be those who were willing to eat His flesh and drink His blood. Many abandoned Him. He then turned to His disciples asking if they too would abandon Him. But Peter answered Jesus 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life ...' (John 6:60-71.)

Where do we ask our questions? Primarily in prayer. Then of course we have leaders in the local church to discuss things with as well. Are we teachable? Or do we know it all?

Here are three questions to challenge us out of this:

- 1. Have we come to terms with our sinfulness and need of a saviour?**
- 2. "Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men." How does this play out in today's world?**
- 3. Have I left everything and followed Christ?**

We work out and live out our discipleship in a local church where we are integrated and functioning, and submitted to leaders. Are you looking over your shoulder at who needs help? Are you going to always sidestep when Jesus says to you, "I will make you" or when correction comes? If not, guess what, it's going to get worse at your next church, until the problem carries you around instead of the other way around.

Use this local church and the relationships we have here. We work it out, that's what relationship is about. We too, the elders, are followers of Christ. We are also tempted like others. We follow Christ in and through a local church - we don't need the church to be saved, but it is God's vehicle to help followers to do what they're called to do.