

CHAPTER 1

PETER

When people think of the twelve disciples of Jesus, the first person to come to mind is usually Peter. In Matthew 10:1-4 the twelve apostles or disciples are named. Which name comes first in the list? _____ When something needed to be said (or even when something did not need to be said), who was usually the first disciple to speak up (see John 6:66-69; Matthew 16:13-16; Mark 9:2-6)? _____

Which disciple was usually the first to jump into action (See John 21:7 and Matthew 14:28-30)? _____ Peter was always quick to jump into things even though it is wise to look before one jumps! For example, before jumping into a swimming pool, it is always good to look first and see if the pool is filled with water!

Peter was also quick to say things. Sometimes he said the right thing (Matthew 16:16), and sometimes he said the wrong thing (Matthew 16: 21-22). Too often Peter would *spea**k** first* and *thi**n**k later*; consequently, he is remembered as an impulsive and impetuous man who was quick to speak and quick to act.

The Bible tells us more about Peter than any of the other disciples. Although he had his problems, Peter was a man who really loved His Master. The Lord used Peter in a very special way. Let us take a brief look at seven episodes in the life of Peter:

1. The Miraculous Catch of Fish (Luke 5:1-11).

What was Peter's other name (Luke 5:3)? _____ What was Peter's occupation (Luke 5:2)? _____ In Luke 5:4 the word "draught" means "catch." Jesus was telling Peter how to fish. Here we have a carpenter telling an experienced fisherman how to do his work and how to catch fish! Did Peter obey the Lord (Luke 5:5)? _____ How successful had Peter and the other fishermen been on the previous night (Luke 5:5)? _____ How successful were they when they did what Jesus said to do (Luke 5:6-7)? _____

Why do you think Peter said what he did in Luke 5:8? Why did he think he was such a sinful man? Had he recently killed anyone? Had he tried to drown his brother Andrew in the lake? In a similar way God helped Isaiah see his own sinfulness (see Isaiah 6:5).

Have you ever seen your own sinfulness before a HOLY GOD? Have you ever cried out and said, "Lord, You are so great and so holy, and in contrast I am so sinful and so wicked"? When we measure ourselves by other people, we may not seem so bad, but when we measure ourselves in light of a holy God, we see how sinful we really are.

Jesus told Peter that he would be a different kind of fisherman: "...from henceforth (from now on) thou shalt _____" (Luke 5:10). Later in this chapter we will learn that Peter became an excellent FISHER OF MEN!

2. Walking on the Water (Matthew 14:24-33).

The fourth watch (Matthew 14:25) is from 3 to 6 a.m. For hours the disciples had been struggling in the midst of a stormy sea. When the disciples saw Jesus, they said, "It is a _____" (Matthew 14:26). The word "spirit" means PHANTOM or GHOST. They had never seen a real person walk on water, and so they thought it must be a GHOST!

There are some people who do not believe the Bible and do not believe that the miracles we read about in the Bible really happened. Some say that Jesus did not really walk on the water. They say that He was really walking on a sandbar! They say that when Peter got out of the boat, he stepped onto a sandbar also, but as he walked towards Jesus, he fell off the sandbar! Do you think this is really what happened? _____ Sometimes the explanations of unbelieving men are very foolish.

Read verses 28-29. Did it take courage and faith for Peter to step out on water? Would **you** have done what Peter did? Would you have left the safety of the ship? And remember, the storm was still raging (see verse 32). Peter was not walking on a still and calm lake!

Did Peter just start walking on the water or did he wait until Jesus told him to do so (Matthew 14:28-29)? _____ Sometimes people get into trouble because they try to do something which God has never told them to do.

Why did Peter sink (see Matthew 14:30)?

_____ What lesson should this teach each and every believer? Peter had **faith** (verses 28-29), and Peter also had **fear**. Do **faith** and **fear** together very well? _____

Peter started well. He began his first steps by FAITH, but he did not **continue** by FAITH.

Christ did not change.

His command (v.29 "Come") did not change.

But, Peter changed. Peter took his eyes off Jesus!

Is Jesus always ready and willing to pick up the believer when he fails and falls (verses 30-31)?

Where will you keep your eyes this week--on the **storm** or on the **Savior**? The storms that we face in life may be very real, but we must be guided through them just as an airplane is guided in landing (by the lights on the runway) or as a car is guided down the highway (by the road). We must keep our eyes on the Savior, but this does not mean that we ignore the problem and pretend it is not there. God wants us to face the problems and the storms of life bravely, keeping our eyes on the Savior (His power, His promises and His provision):

**"I can bravely face the storm
because my eyes are on the Lord!"**

What are the "storms of life" that you sometimes face? Difficulties at school? Problems with friends? Problems at home? Things that make you afraid? How can you get your eyes fixed on **the Saviour** (His power, His promises, His provision)? In the midst of the storm, is He all you need? _____

When Peter walked on the water, he knew the storm was there, but he believed His SAVIOR could help him to walk on the water in the midst of the storm. Later he sank because his faith failed, and he somehow thought that the storm was greater than his Saviour. See Psalm 25:15. Don't get your eyes on the **net** (the problems of life and the storms of life). Where should your eyes be? _____

3. The Arrest of Jesus (John 18:3-12).

When Jesus was arrested, there was a great multitude of Jews and Romans who came to take Him away. Were these men armed with weapons (John 18:3)? The small band of 11 disciples was greatly outnumbered by this large group of people who had come to arrest Jesus.

How many weapons did the disciples have (Luke 22:38)? _____ Who had one of these swords (John 18:10)? Was Peter quick to use this sword? _____ Was this an act of courage or an act of fear? _____ Peter had lots of **zeal** (a strong feeling of interest and enthusiasm that makes someone very eager or determined to do something), but did he have good aim? _____ Do you think that Peter was really trying to slice off the man's ear, or was he probably aiming for something else? _____ What did Jesus do about this "ear problem" (Luke 22:51)? _____

Did Jesus tell Peter to keep on using his sword (John 18:10)? _____ Do you think Jesus really needed Peter's help? _____ See Matthew 26:53. Could Jesus have received help that would have been much better than Peter's help? _____ How big was this army of angels that Jesus could have called? A **legion** at full strength was made up of 6,000 soldiers. Therefore, more than 12 legions means more than _____ angels! That is quite a large angelic army! Even one angel is much more powerful than any man or group of men could ever be! Did Jesus pray and ask God to send this army of angels? _____ Why or why not? Why did Jesus allow these people to arrest Him? Why did Jesus allow these wicked people to put him on the cross?

If Christ had not gone to the cross, what would this have meant to you? If Christ had not died on the cross, would there be any way that you could be saved? Why is it absolutely necessary for Jesus to go to the cross? (Compare Matthew 16:21-22.)

Actually, Jesus did not even need the help of the angels. In John 18:5-6, we learn that Jesus said, "I am he." What happened to all those who had come to arrest him?

_____ Jesus could have said "DROP DEAD," and they all would have dropped dead, but Jesus did not desire to kill people. He came to save people (John 3:17; 1 Timothy 1:15).

4. Peter's Three Denials (John 18:15-27).

Peter very **BOLDLY** and very **BRAVELY** cut off the ear of Malchus. Very soon, however, this bold and brave Peter became a **COWARD**. The same Peter who once said that he would follow Jesus even if it meant death (John 13:37) was about to deny his Lord how many times (John 13:38)? _____ You can read about these three denials in John 18:17,25-27. Was Peter proud of his Lord or was he ashamed of his Lord? _____

Did Peter speak the truth or did he speak lies? _____
 Did Peter gladly CONFESS the Lord or did he cowardly DENY the Lord? _____

The last denial was the worst one of all. The man who asked him the third question was a relative of Malchus (John 18:26). This man was sure that he had seen Peter in the garden. Peter was the very man who had sliced off his relative's ear, but Peter denied the whole thing. Why do you think Peter denied his Lord? Why did Peter want these people to think that he had no connection with Christ at all? What about you? Are you connected to Jesus Christ? Do you belong to Him? Has Jesus saved your soul? Are you proud of your SAVIOUR and what He has done for you? Are you glad to talk about Him to others?

Peter fell deeply into sin. Peter failed his Lord. After these three denials was Peter sorry for what he had done (Luke 22:62)? _____ When you fall into sin, does it bother you? Do any tears come? Is sin a serious thing to you? Did you know that sin is something very serious to the Lord? It was so serious that God sent His only Son to die on the cross FOR YOU!

5. Catching Men (Acts chapter 2).

Have you ever gone on a fishing trip? How many fish did you catch? Suppose you went on a fishing trip and came home with 3,000 fish. Would this be a successful trip? _____

Peter once went on a fishing trip and caught 3000! In Luke 5:10 Jesus had told Peter that he would catch _____. In Acts chapter 2 we learn that Peter preached to a great crowd of Jewish people. Peter was not ashamed of Christ any more. He boldly and courageously preached to these people and told them about His wonderful Lord and Saviour (see Acts 2:14 and the verses following). Did the message get through to their hearts (Acts 2:37)? _____ Earlier Peter had used a metal sword to slice off a man's ear, but now in Acts Peter is using God's Word which is sharper than any sword (see Hebrews 4:12). With God's Word Peter was able to pierce into the hearts of men. Peter's audience was "cut to the heart," and they cried out, "WHAT SHALL WE DO?" (Acts 2:37). Peter told them what to do in Acts 2:38-40. A great number of people did what Peter said (Acts 2:41). About how many people were saved on this day (Acts 2:41)?

_____ God used Peter on this day to catch 3000 men! This fisherman had become a "FISHER OF _____" (Matthew 4:19).

Actually this sermon was just the beginning of his powerful preaching. Peter had not finished preaching the good news: he had just begun! He would preach many other messages and many more people would be caught. Another of Peter's sermons begins in Acts 3:12.

Have you been caught? Has the living God captured you? Have you believed the good news about Christ? If so, are you spreading the Word to others so that they might be caught also?

6. Peter in Prison (Acts chapter 12)

In Acts chapter 12 we learn that Herod the King was persecuting the Christians and treating them very badly (verse 1). What did this king do to James (Acts 12:2)?

_____ What did he do to Peter (Acts 12:3-4)?

_____ What did the Church (the believers) do for Peter (Acts

12:5)? _____ Did God answer the prayers of these believers (Acts

12:6-11)? _____

Peter came and knocked at the door. Many believers were inside this house praying to God and asking God to get Peter out of prison (see Acts 12:12-13). Did Rhoda let Peter in (Acts 12:14)?

_____ When the believers heard Rhoda's announcement, did they believe her? _____ Did they say, "Praise God! Our prayers have been answered, and Peter has been released"?

_____ (See verse 15). Finally when they saw Peter they were _____ (verse 16).

What does this teach us about prayer? Should we be surprised and shocked when God answers our prayers? When we pray, we should pray BELIEVING (Mark 11:24).

7. Peter's Death (John 21)

Jesus told Peter about his death long before it ever happened. The Lord described Peter's death in John 21:18-19. Would Peter die as a young man or an old man (John 21:18)?

_____ Does the Lord know all about you and all about your life and all about your death even before it ever happens? _____

Peter was curious, and he also wanted to know what would happen to John (see John 21:20-22).

In a nice way the Lord told Peter that His business with John was NONE OF PETER'S BUSINESS (John 21:22)! God has a unique plan and purpose for each individual person. The important thing is not what God will do with someone else. The important thing is for each of us to obey Christ's command to follow Him" (see John 21:22). I must let the Lord use my life in a wonderful way regardless of the failures or successes of others.

Peter wrote two of the books that we find in the Bible. Which books are these?

1) _____ 2) _____ The book of 2 Peter was the last book that Peter ever wrote. In 2 Peter 1:14 Peter spoke about his coming death. He knew that the day of his death was fast approaching, and he was ready to go and be with the Lord.

Although the Bible does not say how Peter died, tradition (the historical records that have been handed down to us) tells us that Peter was crucified on a cross upside down. This took place during the time of Nero who was ruler of the Roman empire. Peter did not feel that he was worthy to die the same way his Lord died, so he was crucified in a different way—upside down.

Death for the believer is not the end; it is just the beginning! Death for the believer is just the doorway that brings the believer into eternity and into the presence of His SAVIOR. Death for the believer means "to depart and to be _____ which is far _____" (Philippians 1:23). Peter knew that he would put off his temporary "tent" or "tabernacle" which was his body. See 2 Peter 1:14. Peter also knew that being "absent from the body" meant being **present (at home) with the Lord**" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

If you were to die *today*, what would happen to you? Are you ready to die? Are you ready to live?

You in Peter and Peter in You

We have been studying the man Peter and what he was like: strong-willed, aggressive, courageous, quick to act, quick to speak, impulsive, impetuous, bold, courageous, brave, believing, strong at times and very weak at other times, etc.

Are you like Peter? How? Was Peter like you? How?

As you think back to the life of Peter, can you find yourself in Peter? How? As you think about your life today, can you find Peter in you?

What are Peter's good points that you share? What are Peter's weak points that you share?

What lessons have *YOU* learned from the life of Peter?

