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What Can We Learn From Peter? (Part 1)

Matthew 4:19: (KJV) ¹⁹And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. ²⁰And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.



Of all the Apostles, Peter is the one who is most exposed to us. His background is clear, his strengths and weaknesses are obvious, and his faults are plain. It is through the viewing of his life that so many of us find hope - for we see in the Apostle Peter a simple man, who with great faith met with countless adversities and by God's grace was not only forgiven for his failings, but was one of the twelve foundation pillars of the true church. Stay with us as we begin to tell the story of Peter - the man - the disciple - the leader.

Did Jesus call Simon Peter to follow him right at the start?

This account of Simon's **first encounter** with Jesus happened shortly after Jesus came back from his 40 days of fasting and praying:

John 1:35-42

- Simon's family had a heart for God.
- Jesus' message to Simon: *I know who you are and who you can become.*
- Jesus did not here invite Simon to follow him, he simply “saw” him for what he could be.



Background, Life of the Apostle Peter, Rick Steves, Mosaic Television

- *The impression is often given that Peter has nothing and that at that point it is easy to follow Jesus. That's really an anachronistic view of the world in which Simon Peter lives. He lives in Galilee which is a rich region. The fields at the right time of year are absolutely beautiful. The fishing business on the Sea of Galilee is a very stable business. People don't necessarily become rich, but you can live well.*

Simon's **second encounter** with Jesus, likely about six months to a year after his baptism:

Mark 1:14-20 (NRSV) and Matthew 4:12 and Matthew 4:22: (NRSV) ¹²Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, ... ¹⁷From that time Jesus began to proclaim, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near. ¹⁸As he walked 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. ¹⁹And he said to them, Follow me, and I will make you fish for people. ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

- Jesus returns to Galilee without a formal following yet in place.
- Here he begins to preach in earnest the necessary repentance for the kingdom.
- Jesus' message to Simon: *I know you, follow me for true satisfaction.*

So, was this the moment when Peter truly follows Jesus?

What would it have been like to be an “up close and personal” follower of Jesus?

A few days after the previous “calling,” Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law. See the CQ Rewind Full Edition Bonus Material for details.

(Source: Jamison, Fausset and Brown) That these calls were all distinct and progressive seems quite plain.

Sometimes we are drawn to Jesus in small, progressive steps as well.

Simon's **third recorded encounter** with Jesus: Luke 5:1-11: Perhaps there is a deeper meaning spoken here by Jesus? The deep waters would require more faith. Imagine the bewilderment as they called for help - this was impossible! How often have we said, “Get away from me, Lord, I'm too sinful.” Jesus' message to Simon was: I know you, you are willing to follow, you have seen many miraculous events occur from the healing of the sick to the casting out of demonic influence. Now as you follow me, your own sin seems overwhelming and unconquerable. But I say to you, as you follow me and trust in me, you can now do it without fear, for with my strength you will become fearless fishers of men. Simon Peter had the guts to drop everything and follow him. Do we have that same courage?



Observations - Life of the Apostle Peter, Rick Steves, Mosaic Television

I think that he has a lot to say about how simple, ordinary people in ordinary vocations can be called to do very extraordinary things. We know more about Peter than any of the twelve...

Now Simon begins to live life as a follower. He observes Jesus doing many things.

Jesus teaching and healing with authority: Mark 1:22

Jesus healing on the Sabbath: Mark 3:1-2

Jesus eating with sinners and calling Matthew: Matthew 9:9-10

So, how does Simon Peter end up being an Apostle?

First, one more observation that he would have seen as a follower: **Jesus dealing with multitudes:** Mark 3:7-12: In all these things, Simon Peter would have begun to see the magnitude of the work of Jesus. So far, there seems to be no one that intimidates Jesus, nothing that he cannot do, and no circumstance that he cannot conquer! How personally overwhelming this must have been! What a far cry from the life of a fisherman!

What he did right, keep following, Stuart Briscoe

- *The one thing Jesus told him to do was keep on following. Simon Peter kept putting his foot in it, and he kept stumbling, and he kept saying the wrong things and doing the wrong things and making the wrong decisions. But he kept on picking himself up and kept on following. And Jesus said, you come to me, keep on following, and I'll make you.*

If we fall and don't get up, it is pride and embarrassment that keep us down.

Apostles were given special recognition and responsibilities. We are not Apostles; there were only twelve specific individuals that Jesus called by name. The masses that followed after him were called disciples. The Apostles were first called to be disciples.

Jesus appoints the twelve: Luke 6:12-13: Choosing the twelve was a prayerful decision.

Matthew 14:23: Jesus' habit was to be immersed in prayer at important times in his life, and it should be in ours as well.

His instruction to us - to Peter - was to do what he did...pray in solitude: Matthew 6:6

And now the life-changing announcement: Mark 3:14-19: The Apostles were appointed to specific works:

- to be with Jesus,
- to be sent out to proclaim the message, and
- to have authority to cast out demons.

For the beatitudes, loving your enemies and more, please see CQ Rewind Full Edition Bonus Material!

In this segment, we will focus on teachings of Jesus that would have had an extraordinary effect on Simon Peter. First, a reminder about what it was that he was walking away from to follow Jesus:

Galilee home, Life of the Apostle Peter, Rick Steves, Mosaic Television

- *We know Peter was married because of the reference to his mother-in-law. He had a home you can still visit in the city of Capernaum in a kind of condominium complex where Simon and his extended family lived. He had a business there which kept him above the poverty level. So while there are struggles economically in Galilee, there was a great deal to give up to follow Jesus.*

How would the following events have affected Peter, your average hard-working Mediterranean Jew?

Jesus teaches them to pray: Matthew 6:7-15: Prayer should not be intimidating. Jesus gave us a template of how to approach the Heavenly Father.

Jesus commends the faith of the Roman (not Jewish!) Centurion: Matthew 8:5-10: Jesus just said the word and the healing took place remotely! What kind of impression would this have made on Peter? What about the Jewish witnesses who did not have as great of faith as this Centurion?



Jesus proclaims his true family ties: Luke 8:19-21: Jesus raised the bar to what family truly is. The family of followers of Christ was a higher standard. Peter, as the spokesman for the twelve, would have had to realize he was part of this new and higher family.

The commissioning of the twelve: Mark 6:7-13: They left with no resources because it was a journey of faith. These were all object lessons Peter learned along the way. Sometimes we harshly judge Peter for his failings, but **we also** fail miserably.

It was soon after this that John the Baptist is beheaded. This changes some things in the ministry of Jesus.

What do you suppose it would have been like to walk on water?

After the death of John the Baptist:

1. The return of the Apostles: Mark 6:30-31
2. The feeding of the 5,000: Mark 6:32-44
3. Jesus departs to pray after he lost his friend and cousin, John the Baptist: Mark 6:45-47

Matthew 14:22-33: Jesus orchestrated to be by himself. He needed time to refocus and is praying. This reminds us of Moses, who also went to the mountain. Jesus would have considered much in prayer - John's beheading, the miracle of feeding the 5,000, all of his followers and the work yet left to do...

²⁴*But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. Mark 6:48: (NASB) ⁴⁸Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea; and he intended to pass by them.*

Jesus could see the disciples from on the mountain, from his own higher perspective, straining at the oars against the wind. They would have been 3-4 miles away (John 6:19). The fourth watch would have been between 3 to 6 a.m.

²⁵*And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, It is a ghost! And they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.*

This is the individual they were following! What a comfort those words would have been!

Jesus' reassurance was similar to what he would give them the last night of his life: John 16:33: In Bible symbology, the restless seas symbolize the restless masses of humanity. So when Jesus says he has overcome the world and he walks on water, it shows that he walks above the restless masses.

²⁸*Peter said to him, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water. ²⁹And he said, Come! And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.*

What an amazing amount of faith that would have taken! Notice Peter does not put himself out on the water - but he does present a condition to Jesus that may not be in his best personal interest: IF it is YOU, THEN COMMAND ME to come out onto the water. Remember the conditions were bad with waves and wind in the middle of a storm. Peter knew how to navigate while in the boat, but not how to navigate out of the boat. He put himself in great danger but it was faith in action. His request was to come to Jesus.

³⁰*But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me!*

He lost focus! Presumably he was not close enough to the boat to turn back.

³¹*Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and took hold of him, and said to him, You of little faith, why did you doubt?*

Jesus stretches out his hand to save him. Wouldn't you love to just live in faith without our doubts and second thoughts?

³²*When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. ³³And those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, You are certainly God's Son!*



Isaiah 26:3-4

So, after all this, do you think that Peter really “gets it”?

Peter’s confession of Jesus: Matthew 16:13-20: So, Peter reveals a clear and world-changing truth. How does Jesus respond?

*¹⁷And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I also say unto thee, that thou art **Peter <4074>**, and upon this **rock <4073>** I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*

The name “Peter” means “rock” and is always translated as “Peter.”

Peter: Strongs #4074 Petros (pet'-ros); apparently a primary word; a (piece of) rock, as a name, Petrus, an apostle. Thayer's Lexicon: A proper name used metaphorically of a soul that is hard and unyielding, and so resembling a rock.

One traditional interpretation of this verse seems to indicate that Peter was to be the foundation of the Christian Church - Our Catholic friends would say that Peter was the first Pope - but let's take another look...the word “rock” in this verse is slightly different:

Rock: Strongs #4073 petra (pet'-ra); a (mass of) rock (literally or figuratively): KJV-- rock. Thayer's Lexicon: a rock, ledge, cliff, projecting rock, large stone

So, how was this second word used elsewhere?

Matthew 7:24: *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a **rock <4073>**:*

1 Corinthians 10:4: *And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual **Rock <4073>** that followed them: and that **Rock <4073>** was Christ.*

The “rock” **<4073>** upon which the church would be built was Jesus. So we believe Jesus was saying, You are Peter, a rock in character. Upon this rock (the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the son of the living God), I will build my church. That was Jesus' message - he was the foundation.

Matthew 16:19-20: Peter is the one that actually opened the door of the Gospel to the Gentiles through the first convert of Cornelius.

Jesus’ rebuke of Peter: Matthew 16:21-25: Why end on a down note? Simple! First, the story is not over. We all know how Peter grows through his failures. Second, what an encouragement that one as impetuous as Peter - one who in one breath proclaims Jesus as Messiah and in the next breath plays the role of tempter - would have been given such incredible blessings from Jesus!

There is still much more to learn about the Apostle Peter. He showed us focused, clear faith and how to fall and have the grace to be lifted back up again.

The Apostle Peter shows us how to be faithful through all kinds of difficulty and problems. We want to apply the lessons to ourselves and become stronger in faith just like Peter.

**So what can we learn from Peter?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!**