

The Unlikely Disciple

The Life and Letters of Peter

Bible Texts:

Matthew 4:18–20ⁱ; John 21:15–19ⁱⁱ; Selected passages from the Gospels

1. Peter, the Unlikely Disciple

Peter was a fisherman, brash and unpolished, the most unlikely candidate to lead the early church. Yet Jesus saw beyond Peter's flaws to the potential inside him. This reminds us that God does not call the qualified—He qualifies the called. No matter our mistakes, weaknesses, or feelings of inadequacy, God can use us to do extraordinary things if we yield ourselves to Him.

Reflection Question: Where in your life do you feel unqualified, and how might Jesus be calling you to trust Him with those areas?

2. Highs and Lows in Peter's Journey

Peter experienced many highs—such as confessing that Jesus is the Christ and even walking on water. But he also stumbled, from sinking in doubt to denying Jesus three times. These highs and lows mirror our own walk with God. Like Peter, we can experience moments of great faith followed quickly by times of failure. Yet in both, Jesus remains present, encouraging us when we believe and rescuing us when we stumble.

Reflection Question: Can you recall a time when you stepped out in faith but also felt like you failed? How did God meet you in that moment?

3. Peter's Lowest Point—and God's Grace

Peter's denial of Jesus is recorded in all four Gospels. Despite his bold promises, Peter failed miserably. Yet his failure was not the end of his story. Many of us know what it feels like to blow it and wonder if God can forgive or use us again. Peter's story reminds us that with Jesus, our worst mistakes are not final. God's grace restores us when we repent and return to Him.

Reflection Question: What past failure still weighs on you, and how does Peter's story encourage you to believe God's grace is bigger?

4. Restored for a Greater Purpose

In John 21, Jesus intentionally recreated the scene of Peter's denial with a charcoal fire. By asking Peter three times, "Do you love me?" Jesus opened Peter's wound so it could be healed from the inside out. Peter was not shamed but restored and recommissioned: "Feed my sheep." This shows that Jesus not only forgives us—He reaffirms our calling and sends us back into His mission.

Reflection Question: How is Jesus inviting you to move past guilt or shame so you can step back into His calling for your life?

5. The Rest of Peter's Story

Peter went on to become a bold leader in the early church, preaching at Pentecost where 3,000 were saved, planting churches, healing the sick, and even writing letters that remain part of Scripture. Though he once denied Jesus, he ended his life faithful, choosing to be crucified upside down out of humility. His legacy is not his failure, but the grace of God that transformed him into a pillar of the church. Peter's life teaches us that love truly covers a multitude of sins.

Reflection Question: How might God want to use your story—not just your strengths, but also your struggles—to encourage and bless others?

Endnotes:

^{i 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."^[a] ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. – Matthew 4:18-20.

^{ii 15} When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me." – John 21:15-19