

Call and Growth

Devotional Reading: Colossians 2:1–7

Background Scripture: John 1:40–42; Ephesians 4:11–16;

Philippians 3:12–16; Colossians 1:9–11; Hebrews 6:1–3

Today's Scripture: Matthew 4:18–20; 16:16–18;

John 21:15–18; 2 Peter 3:14–15, 18

I. Peter's Call

Matthew 4:18–20

18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

18. The *sea of Galilee* is a large fresh-water lake in the northern region of Palestine. It was the location of a significant fishing industry. *Jesus* is living in Capernaum at this time. That town is located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, so His *walking by the sea* is unsurprising.

19–20. Jesus' call seems abrupt. Why would these fishermen drop *their nets* immediately for Jesus? During Andrew's time as a disciple of John the Baptist, Andrew encountered Jesus; after that, Andrew told Simon, "We have found the Messiah, . . . the Christ" (John 1:41).

Jesus' command to *follow me* is not simply an invitation to join His walk along the shore. Instead, it is a summons to become His student and disciple.

II. Peter's Proclamation

Matthew 16:16–18

16 And Simon Peter answered and

said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

16a. As this segment of our lesson opens, Jesus and the disciples have traveled to the region of Caesarea Philippi, about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. In this remote area, Jesus and the disciples experience a retreat-like atmosphere and relief from crowds. While there, Jesus asks the disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" (Matthew 16:15). What comes next is Peter's response.

The title *Christ* is the Greek equivalent of the Jewish title "Messiah." Both designations mean "the anointed one." Many first-century Jews expect the Messiah to be a political figure chosen by God to save their nation, sit on the throne of David, and rule over an earthly empire. But Jesus will be a leader in God's unique terms.

16b. The second part of Peter's confession reveals why he believes that Jesus is fulfilling messianic expectations. Inherent

in the two parts of Peter's confession is a recognition of both Jesus' power (the ability to do something) and authority (the right to do something) as God the Father confirms these.

17. Peter is *blessed* for having recognized and acknowledged the identity and mission of *Jesus*, although Peter still misunderstands the nature of that mission. The phrase *flesh and blood* contrasts created human beings with Jesus' uncreated *Father which is in heaven* as the source of Peter's awareness.

18a. The interpretation of this verse has been the subject of much discussion throughout church history. The main issue is to determine to whom or what *this rock* refers.

Theory 1: The rock is Jesus Himself. Supporting this proposal is the fact that Jesus refers to Himself as the chief cornerstone (Matthew 21:42).

Theory 2: Peter himself is the rock. The word *Peter* is Greek for "rock" or "stone." In this regard, Peter's leadership is the "rock" on which the growth and expansion of the church was based.

Theory 3: Peter's confession is the rock. The Bible tells us that confessing Jesus as Savior and Lord is vital (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9; 1 John 4:15; etc.).

18b. The phrase *the gates of hell* refers to the domain and power of death. Even death itself cannot permanently hold back the community of God's people.

III. Peter's Ministry John 21:15–18

15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou

me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

15a. Our next section of Scripture takes place following Jesus' resurrection. By this time in the post-resurrection timeline, Jesus has appeared to many of His disciples and followers (John 20:11–29). He appears again to seven disciples at the Sea of Galilee (21:2), directing them to a large catch of fish before inviting them to breakfast (21:12).

After breakfast, *Jesus* turns the meeting into an opportunity to teach. *Simon Peter* had previously boasted of his commitment and devotion to Jesus (Matthew 26:33; Mark 14:29; Luke 22:33; John 13:37). He even resorted to violence to prove it (18:10). But his pledge of devotion proved to be bluster. Jesus' question probes Peter's heart and loyalties.

15b. Peter assures Jesus of his *love*, even reminding the *Lord* that *thou knowest* this fact. However, Jesus had correctly predicted that Peter's previous declarations of commitment would prove false (John 13:37–38).

15c. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus has laid down His life. If Peter loves Jesus, he will lead in the same way, protecting and

providing for the *lambs* who are God's people.

16. With only slight variation, the exchange is repeated.

17. A third time, Jesus questions Peter's love. For Peter to feel *grieved* at this repetition is understandable. Does Jesus doubt his answer? Or is Peter's distress the result of seeing a connection between these three questions and his three denials of Jesus?

Peter's response includes an acknowledgment that not only does Jesus know Peter's inner thoughts, but Jesus also knows *all things*—a recognition of Jesus' deity.

18a. The phrase *verily, verily* emphasizes the absolute certainty of what is about to be said.

18b. Jesus prophesies that the freedom of movement Peter enjoyed while *young* would someday be lost. One interpretation of the phrase *thou shalt stretch forth thy hands* is that it refers to the practice of crucifixion. The phrase thus might allude to how Peter would meet his death. Tradition is unclear regarding that method. In about AD 90, the first-century church leader Clement of Rome states that Peter was martyred. Later tradition from the church historian Eusebius holds that Peter was crucified in Rome during the reign of Nero. Regardless of the method of Peter's death, Jesus promised that the apostle would glorify God because of it.

IV. Peter's Teaching **2 Peter 3:14–15, 18**

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you.

18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

14. Some commentators believe that the apostle Peter composed the letter we call 2 Peter in Rome shortly before his death. Therefore, the epistle serves as his final word to believers.

We must back up a few verses to determine the antecedent of *such things*. The answer is found in 2 Peter 3:12, where the word translated *look for* here in verse 14 occurs again as “looking for,” the object being “the coming of the day of God.” While believers *look for such things*, we must remain *diligent* in all aspects of our faith.

15. The *longsuffering of our Lord* refers to the delay of the bodily return of Jesus to bring judgment. The Lord is patient, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Peter calls on the authority of the *beloved brother Paul* to emphasize the harmony of their teachings. We do not know the specific teaching by Paul that Peter has in mind. But we know that Paul wrote to believers in Rome regarding God's patience for salvation (Romans 2:4; 3:25; 9:22; etc.).

18. The letter ends with words of exhortation and praise. The promise of Christ's return impels us to use that certainty as a touchstone for how we are to live. We *grow in grace* as we react to God's unmerited favor given through our faith in *our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*.

An increase in the *knowledge* of Him implies more than knowing facts—it includes a relationship with Him as characterized by following His commands for righteous living. To be saved is a state of being justified; after that happens, what comes next is the lifelong process of sanctification.

Involvement Learning

Call and Growth

Into the Lesson

Write down your favorite food, favorite hobby, and ambition at each of the following life stages.

Child: _____

Teenager: _____

Adult: _____

What conclusions can you draw about how people change as they grow into adulthood?

There are many examples of how people or things change as they grow. In today's study, let the example of Peter's spiritual journey cause you to reflect on your journey of discipleship.

Into the Word

Based on Matthew 16:16–18, how would you answer the following questions:

Who is Jesus? _____

Who is Simon? _____

Read 2 Peter 3:14–15, 18. List all of the instructions Peter gives in these verses.

Why does Peter think it was important for believers to practice these things?

What would it look like to follow these instructions today?

Key Text

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

—John 21:17

Into Life

Think of another believer who wants to grow in faith. Write a short note to that person. The note should include at least one positive aspect of that believer's faith journey and one aspect of encouragement.

Thought to Remember

Discipleship is a journey of growth.