

Unlikely Heroes Series – Part 3 – Peter

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Today we are continuing our series on Unlikely Heroes. The purpose of this series is to encourage each of us. The people we read about in the bible were flawed people like you and me but that didn't stop God from calling them and using them.

The primary lesson in all of this is that you don't have to have it all together to be used of God.

Today we are looking at the **unlikely person of Peter**.

Peter's original name was Simon until Jesus changed it to Peter. Peter lived the tough life of a fisherman. He and James and John were partners in the fishing business.

Peter was married and he and his wife would often travel together in ministry.

Peter met Jesus through his brother Andrew who took him to meet Jesus.

In the natural, Peter was a poor candidate for the ministry. He wasn't the most pleasant, kind and considerate person to be around.

If he was in the school year book he probably would have been listed as the most unlikely to succeed as a leader in the church. The most unlikely to be chosen.

He was impulsive – quick to jump out of the boat to try and walk on the water

He was inconsistent – speaking up for the gentile Christians and then refusing to eat with them at one point

He would often speak without thinking – when he didn't know what to say he would just blurt something out – at the transfiguration – let's build some lean-tos

He was brash – at one point he even rebuked Jesus

He was strong-willed and a fighter – Cut off the ear of one of Jesus' captors

He liked to be in control and tell other people what to do.

But after meeting Jesus, Peter's life would never be the same. At this first encounter Jesus said something that gave Peter hope and the desire to change.

READ John 1:41-42

41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

Throughout Peter's life I can imagine he had people tell him he was a loser. He would never amount to much. He was just a loud mouth.

He meets Jesus and the first thing Jesus does is give him a new name which was giving him a new identity. This was powerful. It changed the course of Peter's life.

1. **Jesus does not see us as we are but as what we will become.**

He sees our potential, not our past sins and failures. He sees our destiny. He sees the calling that is on our lives and calls it forth.

Some of you may recall the **story of Gideon** in the bible. In fear of the enemy he hid in a winepress to clean his wheat. He saw himself as weak and a victim. Along comes an angel and gives him a new name and identity. He calls him a **mighty warrior**. He calls Gideon into his destiny and Gideon becomes a mighty warrior and delivers his people from the oppression of their enemy.

When Jesus looked at Peter through the eyes of faith he did not see...

- **Impulsiveness** – he saw someone who would be quick to obey and willing to take risks to advance God's kingdom
- **He did not see inconsistency** – he saw someone who could be flexible instead of legalistic
- **He didn't see a blabbermouth** – he saw a powerful preacher
- **He didn't see a brash arrogant person** – he saw someone who would boldly witness and go through great suffering for him
- **He didn't see his strong will and fighting spirit as a negative** but as having the potential to be harnessed for the kingdom to break through opposition
- **Jesus didn't see a controlling person** but the potential of a leader among leaders. A man capable of great loyalty and love.

So, Jesus named him Peter which means a stone or rock. He gave him a new identity. He was known as a bit unstable, independent and undependable. But from now on he was going to be known as the Rock. **The original Rocky.**

He would help build a solid foundation for the church. He would be looked to for leadership and stability in the days ahead. That is what Jesus saw in him and began to call forth that very day.

- Peter became the primary leader of the early church. In all the lists of the apostles he is listed first among his peers.

This name change so impacted Peter that he was willing to give up his business to follow this man who believed in him.

Years later Peter did the same for another man who nobody liked or believed in. He reached out to a recent convert named Paul who would become the great apostle someday. Paul had a

background of persecuting Christians. He was like an ISIS terrorist against Christians. Peter saw the potential and believed in him.

There are two challenges for our lives here. One is that God sees potential in you that other people don't see and even you can't fully comprehend.

Your past does not dictate your future. Jesus does. Jesus does not see you as you were or as you are but as what you will become!

He has a destiny for you to live out if you will do like Peter and make the choice to let go of your past and follow him God will do amazing things in you.

It may be in seed form in our lives but Jesus promises that the work he begins in us he will bring to completion. It's not all up to our self-improvement efforts.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

The second challenge here is for us to see other people through the eyes of Jesus. Through the eyes of his redeeming grace. To not hold their past against them and to see the diamond in the rough in them.

Marta – Colombia - diamonds on the streets. Homeless, girls selling themselves

Every strong-willed child, gives their parents headaches and heartaches but in them resides the calling of a leader and influencer for God someday.

One faith filled word from Jesus altered the course of Peter's life. One faith filled word from you to another person can do the same for them. Call forth people's potential instead of focusing on their weaknesses.

- Your words may alter the course of their life.
- Speak words of life into your children – "God has a call on your life"

2. Spending time with Jesus and embracing the ministry of the Holy Spirit transforms our weakness.

In Acts 4:13 people were amazed at Peter and the other disciples. Something had happened to these guys that could only be explained one way.

Acts 4: 13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

Unlikely ordinary Peter hung out with Jesus and it slowly transformed his life. Other people began to notice. If you read the letters he wrote, 1 & 2 Peter, you will hardly recognize Peter. He speaks of humility and walking in love and patience.

After he received the Holy Spirit there was a radical inner transformation. Before he struggled with pride and ended up denying Jesus out of fear of man. Afterward there was humility and he was fearless in preaching the gospel. Cost his life.

Hanging out with Jesus included the community of believers where he had to learn how to work through differences with the other guys. He learned to become a team player.

Hanging out with Jesus means you develop meaningful accountable relationships with your church family. - With other Christians that have a passion to wholeheartedly follow Jesus. **This is where life transformation happens.**

3. Jesus forgives and restores us when we fall.

It would be nice if once we became a follower of Jesus we would never sin again and never disappoint Jesus.

I'm glad the scriptures include the good, bad and ugly of the Bible characters' lives like Pastor Brian said last week. It gives hope to us as we stumble at times.

Peter stumbled a lot in the beginning of his spiritual walk. The greatest was when he denied knowing Jesus three times after Jesus' arrest. But Jesus still loved and believed in Peter.

Peter repented but struggled to believe Jesus could really love and use him again. So, he went back to fishing.

One of the most tender passages in the scripture is where Jesus, after his resurrection, restores Peter and invites him to keep serving him as his apostle.

READ John 21:15-19

Jesus goes after Peter. He doesn't let him live in regret and condemnation. Jesus questions were not of rebuke but of healing. Three times Peter had denied Jesus. Three times Jesus asks – "do you love me?"

Each time the healing went deeper in Peter's heart. Three times he had opportunity to express his loyalty to Jesus and then Jesus reinstated Peter back into his role as a follower of Jesus and leader of the church. He was Peter the rock.

Conclusion:

We all fall and fail at times. I want you to know this morning that no matter what you have done, Jesus is standing here wanting to restore you. The only thing he asks is “**Do you love me?**” - Then invites you to get up and begin following him again.

In one sense God has changed each of our names. We are now blessed to be called by his name. We are Jesus people. We are Christ followers called Christians.

So, this morning I call you out of the old way of seeing yourself and into the new. I call you into seeing people thru the eyes of Jesus as diamonds to be valued.

As we close, I would like you to stand and I want to declare over you who you really are in Christ. I want to release it afresh in and over you.

- You are strong. You are an overcomer. You are a victor.
- You are deeply loved. You are accepted and significant
- You are righteous and holy because of Jesus
- You are an able minister who can share God’s power and love with others
- You are a priest who can pray for others
- You are given the high privilege of being an ambassador for Jesus
- You are called a saint because of Jesus
- You are a chosen son – You are a chosen daughter of God almighty
- Jesus are his friend who he likes to hang out with
- Together we are his chosen bride

Blessing:

Now Go and walk in his redeeming grace. Walk in your new identity. Jesus loves you and believes in you.



Discussion Questions:

May 7th 2017

Unlikely Heroes: Peter

Message by Pastor Lester Zimmerman

ICE BREAKERS:

- What is one of your proudest moments?
- What is one of your most embarrassing moments? 😊

MINISTRY STARTER:

Begin your time together by declaring these truths over one another. Go around the circle and have each person read a truth over the person sitting next to them by inserting their name. For example, “Darrel, you are strong, you are an overcomer, you are a victor.” Then read the final one together.

You are strong; you are an overcomer; you are a victor. • You are deeply loved. You are accepted and significant • You are righteous and holy because of Jesus • You are an able minister who can share God’s power and love with others • You are a priest who can pray for others • You are given the high privilege of being an ambassador for Jesus • You are called a saint because of Jesus • You are a chosen son – You are a chosen daughter of God almighty • Jesus considers you his friend who he likes to hang out with • Together we are his chosen bride.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus does not see us as we are but as what we will become. Philippians 1:6 says, “...He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”
 - How do we learn to see ourselves through the eyes of Jesus?
 - What has that process been like for you?
 - In what ways do you see yourself differently from the way God views you? Why?
2. How do we learn to see other people through the eyes of Jesus?
 - How successful do you feel you are at seeing people through Jesus’ eyes?
 - What are practical ways we can call forth people’s potential instead of focusing on their weaknesses?

- What are ways that our school systems or employers do a good job, or poor job at calling out people's potential instead of focusing on their weaknesses?

3. On Sunday Pastor Lester reminded us that Jesus forgives and restores us when we fall.

- What is the difference between forgiveness and restoration?
- Are there certain sins that someone can commit in which they can be forgiven but not restored? Why?
- How does restoration look different in these different environments?
 - Relationship
 - Church
 - Small group
 - Family

4. Have you ever had to restore someone that you weren't necessarily eager to trust again? How do you deal with that?

5. **Read Luke 5:4-11. Then read John 21:1-25.**

- Notice Jesus ties Peter's forgiveness and restoration back into his calling and purpose. Can you identify the details from both stories that are similar? Was there anything important about those details?
- Have you ever felt like God restored something in your life that was lost? What emotions did you experience?
- In verse 3 notice that Peter and the other disciples returned to the old ways, the things they knew how to do, things they were comfortable with. They probably thought the Jesus experiment was over. What are some of the comfort-habits you have in your life that you turn to when you're down and out?
- But Jesus probes Peter's heart. Notice how Jesus' question helped Peter to process where his heart was at. Talk about the role of a person's heart in being forgiven and being restored.
- Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves him. Jesus gives Peter a chance to express his love and devotion back to Jesus. Discuss why it's important to give a person the chance to express themselves through the process of restoration.