



PETER

SESSION I

- **Main Passage:** Matthew 16:13-23
 - **Purpose:** To understand that as men of God, we must adjust our mindset to become a rock the LORD can use to help build His Kingdom.
 - **Session Snapshot:** When Jesus asked His disciples who they said He was, Peter quickly and correctly recognized Jesus as the Christ. The type of confession Peter made is the foundation Jesus builds His church upon. This exchange is where Peter got his nickname, Rock. But it only took a couple of verses for Peter to go from rock to stumbling block.
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GETTING STARTED

Kick off your time together by introducing a new theme or reviewing what you did in the last session.

FIRST, explain to your group that they will be beginning a video series on Peter that is part of a larger study on looking at the real men of the Bible. Remind men that the men you are studying are real people who lived real lives. God wants us to learn what it means to be in a relationship with Him from the example of these men.

THEN, if this study on Peter is your first study in the Real Men line of curriculum, consider introducing yourself, if necessary, and having the men in your group introduce themselves. Then, ask for volunteers to share what they want to get out of their time in this study. If you want to pass around a contact sheet or do any other first-session "housekeeping tasks," this is the time to do it.

If this is not your first study in the Real Men line, consider asking men to recap what they remember from the last man you studied together. Ask them what has been the biggest takeaway so far, or to share how the studies you've completed have impacted them.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

FIRST, if this is your first study, explain to the group the basic structure of your time together. Explain that you will watch a video that is usually about 15 minutes long, followed by a short discussion of the video. Then, you'll spend a few minutes in Bible study, followed by a closing activity. Consider encouraging men to take notes as they watch the video.

THEN, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

When the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **Before Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, he was brash and impulsive. Afterward, God redeemed those qualities, making Peter bold and influential. How can God take some of the negative characteristics we have and redeem them for His Kingdom work?**
- **Is it possible to recognize Jesus without God's help? Why or why not?**
- **Think about your church. In what ways is it built upon the Gospel? Do you see the Gospel motivating all that you do?**
- **Jesus said the gates of hell wouldn't prevail against the church (v18). How does this truth comfort you when you look around and see what our culture has become? Explain your answer.**
- **Rick talked about the church learning to play "offense" instead of so much "defense." What do you think a church playing offense looks like? How is your church doing that?**
- **In what ways are you "a rock" at home? At work? At church? In your neighborhood?**
- **In a handful of verses, Peter went from a rock to a stumbling block. In what areas or moments of your life might you be a stumbling block? Why can it be so easy to bounce between the two?**
- **Rick said that Jesus warned His disciples not to share the truth about Him yet because they weren't ready. What qualifies you to be ready to share the truth about Jesus?**

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **Peter voiced insight from the Father into who Jesus truly was and was praised by the Son as a result. Then Peter spoke up from his own wisdom and was rebuked. Let's examine this passage more closely to see how we can follow Peter's first example and avoid his second.**

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look at Matthew 16:13-23. As Rick stated in the video, we can either be a "rock" God can use to further His Kingdom or a "stumbling block" that gets in the way. In these verses, we see that our mindset makes all the difference.

We must make sure your people have a good understanding of the context of the passage you'll be studying. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his Gospel.
- **Time frame:** Most people hold to Matthew's Gospel being written in the late A.D. 50s or 60s, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.
- **Purpose:** Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his Gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THEN, read or have a volunteer read Matthew 16:13-23. When the volunteer has finished, direct their attention back to verses 13-16. Lead the group in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **At the point in Jesus' ministry, we just read about, almost everyone recognized greatness about Him, but few saw who He truly was. How have things changed or remained the same today? Why do you think that is?**
 - *Answer:* Very little has changed. Even today, many people across the globe think of Jesus as a great teacher or prophet and yet deny His deity. The answers to why this is will vary, but the short answer is this: sin, which creates spiritual blindness (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).
- **If we were to ask each other, *who do you say that I am*, it would be seen as possible arrogance or insecurity. Why did Jesus ask such a personal question?**
 - *Answer:* Our faith, and therefore relationship with Jesus, will always be personal. It doesn't matter what our family or friends believe about Jesus; when it comes to our salvation, it only matters who we say Jesus is.
- **Based on your everyday life, how would your friends and coworkers describe your beliefs about who Jesus is?**
 - Answers will vary. Give the guys in your group plenty of time to consider and share their responses.

Before transitioning to the next question, say something like:

- **Our words and actions won't always reflect a heart surrendered to the God of the universe. But how we set our minds will determine what direction we move. We can have a worldly point of view, or we can have an eternal perspective.**

NEXT, direct your group's attention back to Matthew 16:17-19. Then, ask:

- **Jesus pointed out two fathers in verse 17—Jonah (Peter's biological father) and God the Father. What is the significance of this?**
 - *Answers:* Several things, but here's one to focus on—Peter was gaining a new way of seeing things, a new perspective. Peter's confession came from above (Heavenly Father) because that is the only way we can recognize Jesus (Matthew 11:27, 1 Corinthians 12:3). Peter's mindset moved away from flesh and blood (Jonah) and towards the eternal perspective (Heavenly Father).
- **Why do you think Jesus focused on Peter's name?**
 - *Answer:* Peter's confession led him to become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)—a new spiritual birth into a new spiritual family. The new birth brought about a new emphasis on Peter's confession. When we choose to follow Christ, we take on His name, Christian, which means "little Christ."
- **Peter was not the cornerstone the church would be established on that Isaiah prophesied about (Isaiah 28:16, Matthew 21:42). That cornerstone is, of course, Jesus. Still, he did become a rock built upon the cornerstone of Christ. How can setting Christ as the cornerstone of our lives help us become a rock?**
 - Answers will vary.

THEN, re-read Matthew 16:21-23. It's important to know that Peter did not become perfect after his confession that Jesus is the Son of God. He still fell into moments where his perspective was set more on earthly things, more so than the things of God. Ask:

- **If we are new creations when we become Christians, how is it possible to drift back into old habits and selfish living?**
 - *Answer:* While we have been forgiven of our sins, we can't entirely escape them on this side of eternity. The ultimate debt of sin, death (Romans 6:23), has been paid for, but there are still

consequences of sin in this life we have to face. One of those is a continual desire to put self first. This will switch our focus away from the eternal towards the temporary, from God to ourselves.

- **Peter likely had good intentions in verse 22. What's the difference between our good intentions and godly intentions?**
 - Answers will vary, but, in a general sense, it comes back to our mindset. As Paul said, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2). Godly intentions will always come from above, while good intentions may not.

FINALLY, have a volunteer re-read Matthew 16:23. Then, say something like:

- **The words "You are a hindrance to me" would be extremely tough to hear from Jesus. The truth hurts. And the truth is, we are all stumbling blocks to the work of God at different times in our lives. Peter messed up in these last couple of verses, but that didn't set the path for the rest of his life. It shouldn't for us either. When we mess up, whether with good intentions or not, we must refix our gaze on Christ, the perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). He will help us regain a heavenly perspective.**

Ask if there are any questions. If there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group's attention on one key takeaway from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on the takeaways from this session. Consider starting this portion of your session by asking your group what they think are the main application points from your session. Allow discussion to go until there are no more suggestions.

Then, if necessary, supplement your discussion with the following application points. Say something like:

- **Paul stated to the church in Rome that transformation comes from renewing our minds (Romans 12:2).**
 - How has God transformed your mindset and the way you think?
- **The more time we spend with God, the more we will start to see things the way He does and take on a mindset on things from above.**
 - What does spending time with God look like for you? When that time is consistent, what changes do you notice about yourself?
- **When our desires sneak in and lead us away from the things of God, what is the best practice to get back on track?**

Allow the group to consider where they find themselves in these three questions. If it feels appropriate, allow some discussion about the kind of processing they find themselves doing.

FINALLY, encourage men to continue to think about these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them and to respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.