



## 2 Peter 1:1-4 The Danger of Drifting

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro  
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Have you ever driven a car that was out of alignment; one that, if you take your hand off the wheel, will pull to one side and you'll drift out of your lane? It can be slight or it can be really noticeable, but it's never a good thing. Because if you stop paying attention to what you're doing, or take your hand off the wheel you could drift into onto coming traffic, hit a guard rail, or end up in a ditch.

Well, 2 Peter is a letter written to Christians, warning them to keep in alignment and not to drift in their walk with God.

I can't tell you how much I wish we didn't need this warning! But from the very first chapters of the Bible to the very end there are constant warnings, *to people who know God*, not to drift away from Him. You see, knowing God, being transformed by Him, and even attending church regularly, are no guarantee that you won't drift.

Giving your allegiance to God is not like voting for a politician where you vote once and you're set for the next for the next four years. Submitting to God is a constant process. It's not even just a daily process - at times it's a moment-by-moment process.

You have to keep your hands constantly on the wheel of your life, paying attention to the road. The weight isn't all on you, you can always cry out for help, but the harsh reality is that if you put your relationship with God on autopilot and start fiddling with your phone - you'll wind up in a ditch.

Think about what you know of Biblical history:

- Adam walked with God in the Garden, and turned his back on God at the tree
- Moses saw the burning bush, led the people out of Egypt, he even saw the shekinah glory of God, and yet he got upset with the people one day and struck the rock he was supposed to speak to and instantly lost the ability to enter the Promised Land.
- David was a man after God's own heart, and Uriah's own wife - Bathsheba.
- And it's not just the Old Testament - practically every letter in the New Testament is written to correct a local church or an individual Christian who was sinning or to warn them about the dangers of sin.
- Including this one. Peter is writing, encouraging his readers, including us, to grow in our knowledge and experience of God SO THAT we don't drift.

After all, he knew personally how possible it was to know God intimately and then turn your back on Him.

Peter had been a fisherman, a normal dude, working a normal job, up in Capernaum, on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee. He wasn't from the big city, he wasn't highly

educated, he hadn't gone to seminary, but one day, Jesus showed up and everything in his life changed.

At first he was just one of the people who was intrigued by Jesus. He heard others saying Jesus was the Messiah – the one God had promised to send – and he wanted to know more, so he started listening to Jesus teach.

One day he was listening to Jesus while cleaning his nets on the shores of the lake, and Jesus called Peter to follow Him, promising to make him, “a fisher of men” (Luke 5:1-11).

Now he wasn't just a face in the crowd, he was a disciple – not just an occasional listener, but an intentional devotee, Jesus had a group of at least 70 of these at one point, and probably more. It's the kind of transition we all need to make – going from just hearing *about* Jesus to intentionally hearing, understanding, and following Him. You've got to move from knowing *about Him* to knowing *Him* and that's what Peter was doing.

Then, Jesus called the Twelve apostles, the word means, literally, a “sent one” someone commissioned by Jesus to fill a special role. These were going to be his closest companions, the ones Jesus invested the most of His time into. And Peter was the first to be named.

So, Peter went from someone listening in the crowds, to someone intentionally following, to someone specially called by Jesus for a particular purpose. And then, he was one of a group of three apostles that had special experiences with Jesus:

- Only Peter, James, and John were present at the healing of Jairus' daughter and at the Transfiguration. Peter and John were the two disciples sent to make preparations for the final Passover meal, and later that night these two, along with James again, were asked by Jesus to accompany Him during his agonizing prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

More than just being in this group of three though, there are four lists of the Twelve Apostles in the Scriptures, and in each list, Peter's name is always listed first – leading most to assume that he was the top dog. An informal “first among equals” who had many special opportunities, like this one:

**Matt 14:25** Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. **26** And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear.

**27** But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”

**28** And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”

**29** So He said, “Come.” And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. **30** But when he saw that the wind *was* boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!”

[31](#) And immediately Jesus stretched out *His* hand and caught him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” [32](#) And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

[33](#) Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.”

- After the miracle of feeding the Four Thousand, Peter was the one who confessed Jesus as the Messiah:

**Matt 16:13** When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”

[14](#) So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

[15](#) He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

[16](#) Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

[17](#) Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

[18](#) And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

- So, Peter tended to be the one who spoke a little impulsively, and most of the time that worked out all right; but not always. In the Upper Room, as they celebrated the Passover, Jesus spoke His final words to His disciples, knowing that He would be executed within hours:

**John 13: 31** So, when he (Judas) had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. [32](#) If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. [33](#) Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you. [34](#) A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. [35](#) By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

[36](#) Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?”

Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.”

[37](#) Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.”

[38](#) Jesus answered him, “Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.

That had to sting a little bit, but it was perplexing too – what did He mean?

Not long after that they went out to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prayed and Peter was asked to be nearby praying as well, but the big fisherman couldn't fight off his sleepiness until suddenly he awoke to the sound of a posse coming for Jesus.

And then, foolishly, impulsively, Peter tried to keep his word:

**John 18: 7** Then He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?"  
And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

**8** Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am *He*. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way," **9** that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."

**10** Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

**11** So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"

Then chaos broke out and all the apostles, these men who had been so committed to Jesus, fled for their lives. The troops took Jesus and at some point Peter and John regained a little courage and made a plan to follow the group and see what is going on.

**John 18: 15** And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so *did* another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. **16** But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in. **17** Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also *one* of this Man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."

**18** Now the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself.

**19** The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine.

**20** Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. **21** Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said."

**22** And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Do You answer the high priest like that?"

**23** Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?"

**24** Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

**25** Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Therefore they said to him, "You are not also *one* of His disciples, are you?"

He denied *it* and said, "I am not!"

[26](#) One of the servants of the high priest, a relative *of him* whose ear Peter cut off, said, “Did I not see you in the garden with Him?” [27](#) Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed.

Luke 22:62 tells that when Peter realized what he had done, he “wept bitterly.”

He, a man who had been so close to Jesus, who had been called by Jesus, taught by Jesus, used by Jesus, who had just boasted of his loyalty to Jesus, had drifted. Call it doubt, call it fear, call it getting caught up in the moment – whatever the cause, he blew it, and he knew it. He had taken his hand off the wheel for a moment and wound up in a ditch.

But, by God’s grace, the story doesn’t end there.

After Jesus had gone to the cross, paid the price for our sin, and risen from the grave, Peter received news about what had happened, and he went and saw the empty tomb, again with John.

And not long after, while they were out fishing, Jesus appeared to them on the shore:

**John 21: 7** Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on *his* outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. [8](#) But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. [9](#) Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. [10](#) Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.” [11](#) Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. [12](#) Jesus said to them, “Come *and* eat breakfast.” Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are You?”—knowing that it was the Lord. [13](#) Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. [14](#) This *is* now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

[15](#) So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, *son* of Jonah, 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 again a second time, “Simon, *son* of Jonah, 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 Jonah, 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 all things; You know that I love You.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep. [18](#) Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish.” [19](#) This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.”

Peter had been restored. He knew what it was like to drift into the ditch, and now he knew what it was like to be pulled out by Jesus.

Not long after this Peter would be used to lead the revival that happened at Pentecost when 3000 people were saved in a single day. He went on to become a leader in the early church, and spent a few nights in jail for what he had been trying to tell people about Jesus and he would eventually be martyred for his faith in Him.

Until that day Peter’s life was spent trying to surrender more and more to the God who had saved him; telling others about Him; and encouraging those who had already become Christians with words like what we find in the first chapter of Second Peter:

2 Peter 1:[1](#) Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

[2](#) Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, [3](#) as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, [4](#) by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.

That’s a pretty complex sentence, with a lot going on; so let me boil it down for you. Here’s what Peter is saying:

1. If you are a Christian, (vs. 1) you have obtained a “precious faith,” not by anything you have done, but because it was gifted to you. So, you didn’t buy the car you’re driving, it was given to you by Jesus. And, like Peter, it wasn’t that you were so great, it’s that Jesus chose you and chose to do something great in you.
2. (Vs. 2) You experience greater and greater grace and peace as you learn more and more about this great God who gives Himself for you.
3. Jesus has a plan for your life, a plan you need to follow instead of doing your own thing, but He has also, (vs3) given you “all things that pertain to life and godliness,” in other words, if He is calling you to do something, He will give you what is necessary to do it.

4. Jesus has rewards in store for you, (vs4) “exceedingly great and precious promises” which you receive when you are adopted into His family and become a “partaker of the divine nature.”

This is all good news, it's the gospel – you receive mercy and blessing because of what Christ has done.

BUT, all of this threatened by the dangerous reality of drift. Lust – a compulsion to fulfill my own desires instead of living for God threatens to corrupt and wreck my life. And isn't that what I needed to be saved from in the first place?

We'll receive more specific instruction on how to combat deadly drift as we work our way through this short letter, but the basic answer is exactly what Peter has said right here – *grow in your knowledge of Jesus!* Keep your eyes on Him, keep your knees bowed before Him and you'll stay on track toward His kingdom. If you take your hands off the wheel for even a minute, you're in danger.

Your life is just like driving a car, you can only go in one direction at a time – so which direction are you headed - toward Jesus, or away from Him?

Now, it could be that some of you in here need to ask Jesus to forgive you for getting distracted and taking your hands off the wheel. Maybe you're in the ditch and you need Him to pull you out, or maybe you're just wandering away and you need to get back on course – ask Him to do that for you this morning.

And if you have never received Him as your Lord and Savior, if there has never been a moment when you consciously said, Jesus, I am wrong and You are right, I need You to forgive me for living life my way instead of Yours, and I need You to teach me, lead me, and use me – then do that this morning. Give control of your life back to the One who made it. Go from being someone who is learning about Jesus, to someone who KNOWS Him.

And for all of us – keep digging into His Word – this is the food that He has given us to sustain us. It's where we find the knowledge of Him, and therefore, it is how we grow in grace and peace.

Let's pray.