

COVENANT — JESUS CHRIST

Peter's Confession and Denial

LESSON 06

APRIL 12, 2026

LESSON TEXT

Matthew 16; Luke 22; John 21

FOCUS VERSES

Matthew 16:13–16

¹³When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

¹⁴And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

¹⁵He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

¹⁶And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

God's covenant is based on His faithfulness, not our faithlessness.

MY RESPONSE TO COVENANT

I will trust Jesus even when I don't understand His ways.

COVENANT CONTEXT

Much like the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, God's people in the New Testament broke covenant with God. Even after all the miracles Simon Peter had witnessed, and even worked when Jesus sent him out, he broke covenant when he forsook Jesus and denied knowing Him. But the mercy of God still reached for him to repent so God could forgive and restore him. Mercy is still part of covenant relationship with Jesus.

TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: What is the most embarrassing fall (literally speaking) you have suffered in your life?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to the story of Peter falling (spiritually speaking) when he forsook Jesus and denied knowing Him.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. PETER'S FAITH

A. Jesus Asked His Disciples About His Identity (I)

DISCUSS: *Where do your ideas of who Jesus is come from? Are they rooted in God's Word?*

- B. Peter Declared Jesus Is the Christ
- C. I will proclaim Jesus is my Messiah.

***DISCUSS:** Where do you find it most difficult to share your faith? How do you still testify there despite the difficulties?*

II. PETER'S FAITHLESSNESS

- A. Peter Abandoned Jesus in the Garden

***DISCUSS:** If your faith has ever wavered because you could not comprehend the plan of God, how did He reassure you?*

- B. Peter Denied Knowing Jesus Three Times
- C. I Will Not Deny My Identity in Christ under Any Circumstance. (V)

III. PETER'S TRANSFORMATION

- A. Jesus Restored Peter

***DISCUSS:** Why do we still sometimes struggle with our faith even after witnessing the miracles and wonders God works?*

- B. Jesus Empowered Peter to Preach at Pentecost
- C. I will submit to the Holy Ghost to transform me.

***DISCUSS:** Besides Simon Peter, who else in Scripture was transformed by the mercy of God? Who else in your life has been transformed by the mercy of God?*

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God's mercy to help us stand after we fall
- For mercy to help others stand after they fall

LESSON CONNECTION

For a time a minister of the United Pentecostal Church International built a special connection with a Trinitarian Anglican church. Initially he was renting a room at the Anglican church's campus, holding Friday night Bible studies. After a few months the Bible study group outgrew the room, so the pastor asked if he could use their fellowship hall. It was much bigger with plenty of room to grow. The church graciously agreed, allowing him to use their hall at the same price he was paying for the smaller room.

"We just like that you're growing," the elder member of their board remarked.

As the Pentecostal church continued to grow, the pastor was unaware that the Anglican church was not growing. After a few months, the church board started having serious discussions about the Pentecostal preacher becoming their pastor. Their current pastor was in his early eighties and looking to retire. After a few months of interviews, the Anglican church board unanimously voted him in as their pastor. A church that had been around for 114 years was getting their first Pentecostal pastor.

The early years were tough. Apostolic elders around the new pastor made sure he and his wife were spiritually guarded. He served on the district youth board as a sectional representative, providing the couple with some connection apart from the weekly grind of pastoring, but still many challenges abounded. One day in a moment of frustration, the young pastor desperately called out to God, "Please, help me! This is too challenging." He had been

so frustrated because he was seeking ways to bring revelation of the mighty God in Christ to the people.

In a very gentle way, he felt God ask, “Where was Peter when he received the revelation of who I am?”

As the young pastor waited for God to respond, his mind searched for answers. Eventually, he stilled his spirit and waited. The word of God came again gently saying, “Peter was in My presence when I gave him the revelation of who I am. All you are responsible for is getting these people in My presence, and I will reveal to them who I am.”

In Matthew 16, Luke 22, and John 21, through the myriad of scenes we encounter, one truth is certain: Peter was in Jesus’ presence. Even when Peter removed himself from Jesus’ presence, Jesus found a way to invite Peter back into His presence. From these stories we glean that wherever Jesus is present, revelation, transformation, and empowerment are all possible.

BIBLE LESSON

I. PETER’S FAITH

A. Jesus Asked His Disciples About His Identity

At the foot of Mount Hermon lay the lush city of Caesarea Philippi. Situated just a few miles from nearby Jewish towns, the city starkly contrasted with traditional Hebrew religion. In ancient Israel, it became a center of Baal worship in open defiance against God. Eventually, the Greeks took control of the area, replacing Baal worship with the veneration of Greek fertility gods, like Aphrodite and Artemis. Later when the Romans conquered Israel, Herod Philip named the city after himself, continuing the long-standing practice of pagan worship.

Locals mystically believed the gods traveled back and forth from the underworld through a seasonal spring of water that flowed from the mouth of a cave in Caesarea Philippi. To entice the gods, people engaged in a variety of deplorable and despicable acts. The pagans believed the cave and its spring water created a gateway to the underworld; they called it the “gates of hell.”

In this cauldron of idolatry and sin, Jesus asked His disciples: “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” (Matthew 16:13). Swirling all around were all sorts of ideas about spirituality, but Jesus did not want guesswork about who He was. He did not want His disciples then, nor us today, to guess who He was or is, which is why He later asked them directly: “But whom say ye that I am?” (Matthew 16:15).

DISCUSS: Where do your ideas of who Jesus is come from? Are they rooted in God’s Word?

B. Peter Declared Jesus Is the Christ

When Jesus asked His disciples who others thought He was, they answered: “Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.” But when Jesus asked them who they thought He was, their answer would not just pull from rumors or theories; it would come from what they had witnessed with their own eyes and ears over the last many months of following God in flesh.

Inspired by divine revelation, Peter truly saw Jesus for who He was. Simon Peter responded: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus responded: “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:16–17). In that moment, Peter recognized Jesus’ role as the Messiah. He also realized Jesus’ divine nature, acknowledging His deity by declaring Him to be the Son of God. Peter finally saw Jesus. He saw Jesus as the Son of Man and the Son of God. Matthew 16 teaches that wrapped up in Jesus is both humanity and deity—making Him the incarnate God.

C. I will proclaim Jesus is my Messiah.

Peter’s moment of revelation came in an unexpected setting—Caesarea Philippi, a place steeped in ancient idolatry. The disciples must have been unsettled by Jesus’ decision to lead them to such a sinful place. But there in that striking location—the “gates of hell”—Jesus revealed His identity to all of them. Afterward, in a tone of undeniable authority, Jesus proclaimed: “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

Jesus promised that the forces of Hell—its cunning schemes, destructive plans, and deceptive doctrines—would be powerless against God’s great church. Understanding the full essence of who Jesus is should inspire us to speak out fervently and without hesitation. He is the Messiah, the Lord of all creation. Even when we find ourselves standing at the very threshold of darkness, like Peter we can boldly proclaim Jesus is the Christ: He is our Messiah.

***DISCUSS:** Where do you find it most difficult to share your faith? How do you still testify there despite the difficulties?*

II. PETER'S FAITHLESSNESS

A. Peter Abandoned Jesus in the Garden

On the night Jesus was betrayed, Peter underwent a great test of his faith. Hours earlier, he fervently vowed he would remain loyal to Jesus, even to death. Jesus was fully aware of the weakness that lay in the heart of Peter, so He forewarned him that his courage would falter that very night. Jesus predicted that before the night was over, *all* His disciples would turn away from Him, an unsettling prophecy that hung heavily in the air. (See Zechariah 13:7.)

The Gospel of Luke captures the stark transition Peter underwent: "Then took they [Jesus], and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off" (Luke 22:54). This moment marked a profound shift from faithfulness to faithlessness. Instead of standing beside Jesus as he had promised, Peter found himself trailing behind, a hesitant follower instead of a devoted disciple.

As the faith-shaking events unfolded, Peter and the other disciples were swallowed up in confusion and fear. They had abandoned the one who had cared for them so deeply. That type of heart-wrenching betrayal often occurs when we wrestle with understanding God's divine plan for our lives. Peter certainly faced this trial. This once-ardent supporter became a cowardly observer, unable to reconcile the unfolding events with his own expectations of what the kingdom of God should look like.

***DISCUSS:** If your faith has ever wavered because you could not comprehend the plan of God, how did He reassure you?*

B. Peter Denied Knowing Jesus Three Times

On the night of Jesus' arrest, Peter huddled in front of a campfire in the courtyard of the Temple. A servant girl recognized him, saying, "This man was also with him. But Peter denied, saying, 'Woman, I know him not.' When others recognized Peter, he continued his charade, 'Man, I know not what thou sayest'" (Luke 22:56–57, 60). In total, Peter denied following Jesus three times. He even reached for the sharpest arrow in his quiver and swore with an oath that he had never met Jesus.

Suddenly the rooster crowed, fulfilling Jesus' prediction that Peter would deny Him three times. Peter was tested. Peter failed. He fled from there and wept bitterly. Peter abandoned Jesus when He was arrested in the Garden, but this time, he abandoned even his very identity as a follower of Jesus Christ.

C. I Will Not Deny My Identity in Christ under Any Circumstance.

(V) No matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, denying Jesus never leads to a positive outcome. It breeds bitterness and regret within our hearts. In reflecting on Peter's experience, we must resolve to uphold our identity in Jesus Christ unwaveringly, regardless of the trials we face. Jesus Himself cautioned us, stating that if we deny Him, He too will deny us. (See Matthew 10:33.) Embracing our covenant with Him means we commit to following Him faithfully, not only in times of joy and blessing, but also during ardent tests of faith and in moments of struggle and temptation.

III. PETER'S TRANSFORMATION

A. Jesus Restored Peter

In just seventy-two hours, Peter underwent a profound transformation. Initially, he had been one of Jesus' most ardent supporters, ready to defend Him even to the death. However, the weight of recent events—Judas's betrayal, Jesus' trial, and the Crucifixion—shattered Peter's resolve. But when John and Peter received news that Jesus was risen from the grave, driven by a mix of urgency and disbelief, they raced to the tomb to see for themselves. John recounted the experience:

And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed." (John 20:5–8)

Even after his denials and abandonment, the story took a poignant turn when an angel told the women who came to the tomb: "Go your way and tell the disciples and Peter..." (Mark 16:7). First of all, Jesus still considered these

men—who had followed Him and then forsook Him—disciples. Second, Jesus was willing to forgive and restore Peter. What magnificent mercy!

Jesus chose to reach out and extend grace to them, illustrating the depth of God’s commitment and the unbreakable covenant He maintains with us, even when we falter and turn away. Jesus’ deep concern for Peter vividly symbolizes how God consistently seeks to transform us. Just as He offered reconciliation to Peter after his failures, Jesus also calls each of us back to Him, even when doubts and fears cloud our hearts.

***DISCUSS:** Why do we still sometimes struggle with our faith even after witnessing the miracles and wonders God works?*

B. Jesus Empowered Peter to Preach at Pentecost

One day, after these profound events, Jesus appeared once more to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. However, God kept appearing to Peter during the lowest moments of his life. Peter and the others had gone fishing for some money and meals. Although they fished all night, they had caught nothing. A voice from the shore called to them around sunrise: “Children, have ye any meat?” They shook their heads in embarrassment and frustration. He just smiled and offered, “Try the other side.” When they did, they hauled in so many fish it nearly broke their nets.

One of the disciples recognized the stranger on the shore. It was Jesus. Peter threw off his cloak, jumped into the water, and swam to the one he had run away from. The Spirit of God stirred within Peter, compelling and uplifting him, aligning his heart with the divine purpose Jesus would lay in front him. God was not abandoning Peter in his struggles; instead, God was empowering Peter, transforming his doubt into a mission that would be realized in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost.

Jesus gently guided Peter, reminding him of his calling—not to fill bellies with nets full of fish, but to nourish souls with the richness of the Word of God. The journey that began with his plunge into the water would eventually lead Peter to preach boldly at Pentecost, igniting a flame of conviction in countless hearts, just as he himself had experienced.

C. I will submit to the Holy Spirit to transform me.

Peter’s life is a reminder that God does not require perfection. He is looking for our willingness to be available for His work. Throughout Peter’s journey, although we see his many failures and missteps, he remained open to God’s calling. This openness is crucial because when we demonstrate our reliability and commitment to God’s purpose, He responds by expanding our abilities and influencing our capacity to serve.

The fundamental key to this transformation lies in our submission to the Holy Spirit. This process involves willingly allowing the Spirit to renew our minds. A mind transformed by the Holy Spirit is less likely to be deceived by misunderstandings or overwhelmed by past mistakes. Instead, we learn to embrace God’s grace as a powerful resource to fulfill His divine will in our lives, and when necessary, the grace to forgive ourselves as He has forgiven us.

Spiritual transformation can take a life like Peter’s—filled with mistakes—and make something powerful and useful out of it. Transformation is the progression of covenantal relationship. A life in covenant is a life that is progressing and becoming more like Jesus Christ, moving beyond experience into the heights of what He offers—right relationship right in the middle of the will of God.

***DISCUSS:** Besides Simon Peter, who else in Scripture was transformed by the mercy of God? Who else in your life has been transformed by the mercy of God?*

***Teacher Option:** Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate how God is merciful to restore and forgive us after we fall spiritually.*

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

When Simon Peter left the net, jumped into the water, and swam to shore, he did not know what to expect. His fellow disciple was right: it was Jesus. The same Jesus he had followed for three years; the same Jesus he had sworn he would never leave; the same Jesus he had sworn he never met. Peter may have braced himself for a deserved lecture: “Simon, you really let Me down back there.”

But Jesus graciously served him and the others breakfast. Then after breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter a simple

question. “Simon, do you love Me more than these?”

Simon Peter answered, “Yes, Lord, You know I love You.”

“Then feed My lambs.”

Jesus asked again, “Simon, do you love Me?”

“Of course, Lord, You know I love You.”

“Then tend my sheep.”

Jesus asked again. “Simon, do you love Me?”

Simon was hurt. How many times was Jesus going to ask him a question, this question? Simon was frustrated and still embarrassed. He answered, “Lord, You know all things. You know I love You.”

Jesus nodded. “Then feed My sheep.”

That was it—three times. Maybe Jesus asked Simon this question, “Do you love Me?” around a fire early one morning the same number of times others asked him this question, “Are you one of His?” around a fire early one morning.

Could it be Jesus was mercifully helping Simon stand back up after each time he fell? And as long as he got up each time he fell, Simon was still standing, and he could still follow Jesus. Then Jesus looked him in the eyes—this time there was shame in Simon’s eyes—and Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Then follow Me.”

Even if you have fallen in your walk with Jesus, take Jesus’ hand and let Him help you stand again. Spend some time in repentance. If He asks you if you love Him, tell Him. You will find what Simon Peter found. You too will find His nail-scarred hand outstretched to give you the power and grace to get back up and keep following Him.