

The apostle Peter was one of the first followers of Jesus Christ. And after Jesus' resurrection, Peter was a bold proclaimer of Jesus' greatness.

Simon Peter, also known as Cephas He was an outspoken and ardent disciple, one of Jesus' closest friends, an apostle, and a "pillar" of the church Peter was enthusiastic, strong-willed, impulsive, and, at times, brash. But for all his strengths, Peter had several failings in his life. Still, the Lord (who chose him) continued to mold Peter into exactly who He intended him to be.

Peter was a fisherman, but he left everything behind to follow Jesus.

Peter was a very capable man. We was a natural-born leader who often became the spokesman for the other disciples. He was strong and brave, but his story took a turn for the better when he realized it wasn't about him, it was about Jesus.

More significantly, it was Peter who first confessed Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," a truth which Jesus said was divinely revealed to Peter (Matthew 16:16-17).

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.)John 6:68)

Peter was part of the inner circle of Jesus' disciples, along with James and John. Only those three were present when Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:37) and when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain (Matthew 17:1). Peter and John were given the special task of preparing the final Passover meal (Luke 22:8).

In several instances, Peter showed himself to be impetuous to the point of rashness. For example, it was Peter who left the boat to walk on the water to Jesus (Matthew 14:28-29)—and promptly took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink (verse 30). It was Peter who took Jesus aside to rebuke Him for speaking of His death (Matthew 16:22)—and was swiftly corrected by the Lord (verse 23). It was Peter who suggested erecting three tabernacles to honor Moses, Elijah, and Jesus (Matthew 17:4)—and fell to the ground in fearful silence at God's glory (verses 5-6). It was Peter who drew his sword and attacked the servant of the high priest (John 18:10)—and was immediately told to sheath his weapon (verse 11). It was Peter who boasted that he would never forsake the Lord, even if everyone else did (Matthew 26:33)—and later denied three times that he even knew the Lord (verses 70-74).

Through all of Peter's ups and downs, the Lord Jesus remained his loving Lord and faithful Guide. Jesus reaffirmed Simon as Peter, the "Rock," in Matthew 16:18-19, promising that he would be instrumental in establishing Jesus' Church. After His resurrection, Jesus specifically named Peter as one who needed to hear the good news (Mark 16:7). And, repeating the miracle of the large catch of fish, Jesus made a special point of forgiving and restoring Peter and re-commissioning him as an apostle (John 21:6, 15-17).

On the day of Pentecost, Peter was the main speaker to the crowd in Jerusalem (Acts 2:14ff), and the Church began with an influx of about 3,000 new believers (verse 41). Later, Peter healed a lame beggar (Acts 3) and preached boldly before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4). Even arrest, beatings, and threats could not dampen Peter's resolve to preach the risen Christ (Acts 5).

Jesus' promise that Peter would be foundational in building the Church was fulfilled in three stages:

Peter preached on the day of Pentecost ([Acts 2](#)). Then, he was present when the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit ([Acts 8](#)). Finally, he was summoned to the home of the Roman centurion Cornelius, who also believed and received the Holy Spirit ([Acts 10](#)). In this way, Peter “unlocked” three different worlds and opened the door of the Church to Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles.

Even as an apostle, Peter experienced some growing pains. At first, he had resisted taking the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile. However, when he saw the Romans receive the Holy Spirit in the same manner he had, Peter concluded that “God does not show favoritism” ([Acts 10:34](#)). After that, Peter strongly defended the Gentiles’ position as believers and was adamant that they did not need to conform to Jewish law ([Acts 15:7-11](#)).

Another episode of growth in Peter’s life concerns his visit to Antioch, where he enjoyed the fellowship of Gentile believers. However, when some legalistic Jews arrived in Antioch, Peter, to appease them, withdrew from the Gentile Christians. The Apostle Paul saw this as hypocrisy and called it such to Peter’s face ([Galatians 2:11-14](#)).

Later in life, Peter spent time with John Mark ([1 Peter 5:13](#)), who wrote the gospel of Mark based on Peter’s remembrances of his time with Jesus. Peter wrote two inspired epistles, 1 and 2 Peter, between A.D. 60 and 68. Jesus said that Peter would die a martyr’s death ([John 21:18-19](#))—a prophecy fulfilled, presumably, during Nero’s reign. Tradition has it that Peter was crucified upside down in Rome, and, although such the story may be true, there is no scriptural or historical witness to the particulars of Peter’s death.

What can we learn from Peter’s life? Here are a few lessons:

Jesus overcomes fear. Whether stepping out of a boat onto a tossing sea or stepping across the threshold of a Gentile home for the first time, Peter found courage in following Christ. “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear” ([1 John 4:18](#)).

Jesus forgives unfaithfulness. After he had boasted of his fidelity, Peter fervently denied the Lord three times. It seemed that Peter had burned his bridges, but Jesus lovingly rebuilt them and restored Peter to service. Peter was a *former* failure, but, with Jesus, failure is not the end. “If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself” ([2 Timothy 2:13](#)).

Jesus patiently teaches. Over and over, Peter needed correction, and the Lord gave it with patience, firmness, and love. The Master Teacher looks for students willing to learn. “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go” ([Psalm 32:8](#)).

Jesus sees us as He intends us to be. The very first time they met, Jesus called Simon “Peter.” The rough and reckless fisherman was, in Jesus’ eyes, a firm and faithful rock. “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion” ([Philippians 1:6](#)).

Jesus uses unlikely heroes. Peter was a fisherman from Galilee, but Jesus called him to be a fisher of men ([Luke 5:10](#)). Because Peter was willing to leave all he had to follow Jesus, God used him in great ways. As Peter preached, people were amazed at his boldness because he was “unschooled” and “ordinary.” But then they took note that Peter “had been with Jesus” ([Acts 4:13](#)). Being with Jesus makes all the difference.

Acts 2:14-40

No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷‘In the last days,’ God says,

‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young men will see visions,

and your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸In those days I will pour out my Spirit

even on my servants—men and women alike—

and they will prophesy.

¹⁹And I will cause wonders in the heavens above

and signs on the earth below—

blood and fire and clouds of smoke.

²⁰The sun will become dark,

and the moon will turn blood red

before that great and glorious day of the LORD arrives.

²¹But everyone who calls on the name of the LORD

will be saved.’^[a]

²²“People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene^[b] by

doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well

know. ²³But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was

carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you

nailed him to a cross and killed him. ²⁴But God released him from the horrors

of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its

grip. ²⁵King David said this about him:

‘I see that the LORD is always with me.

I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.

²⁶No wonder my heart is glad,

and my tongue shouts his praises!

My body rests in hope.

²⁷For you will not leave my soul among the dead^[c]

or allow your Holy One to rot in the grave.

²⁸ You have shown me the way of life,
and you will fill me with the joy of your presence.’^[d]

²⁹ “Dear brothers, think about this! You can be sure that the patriarch David wasn’t referring to himself, for he died and was buried, and his tomb is still here among us. ³⁰ But he was a prophet, and he knew God had promised with an oath that one of David’s own descendants would sit on his throne. ³¹ David was looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah’s resurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among the dead or allow his body to rot in the grave.

³² “God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this.³³ Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God’s right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today. ³⁴ For David himself never ascended into heaven, yet he said,

‘The LORD said to my Lord,
“Sit in the place of honor at my right hand
³⁵ until I humble your enemies,
making them a footstool under your feet.”’^[e]

³⁶ “So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!”

³⁷ Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away^[f]—all who have been called by the Lord our God.” ⁴⁰ Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!”

Acts 3:12-26

¹² Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd. “People of Israel,” he said, “what is so surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness? ¹³ For it is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of all our ancestors—who has brought glory to his servant Jesus by doing this. This is the same Jesus

whom you handed over and rejected before Pilate, despite Pilate's decision to release him. ¹⁴You rejected this holy, righteous one and instead demanded the release of a murderer. ¹⁵**You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. And we are witnesses of this fact!**

¹⁶"Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus' name has healed him before your very eyes.

¹⁷"Friends,^[a] I realize that what you and your leaders did to Jesus was done in ignorance. ¹⁸But God was fulfilling what all the prophets had foretold about the Messiah—that he must suffer these things. ¹⁹Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. ²⁰Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and he will again send you Jesus, your appointed Messiah. ²¹For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²²Moses said, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your own people. Listen carefully to everything he tells you.'^[b]²³Then Moses said, 'Anyone who will not listen to that Prophet will be completely cut off from God's people.'^[c]

²⁴"Starting with Samuel, every prophet spoke about what is happening today. ²⁵You are the children of those prophets, and you are included in the covenant God promised to your ancestors. For God said to Abraham, 'Through your descendants^[d] all the families on earth will be blessed.'²⁶When God raised up his servant, Jesus, he sent him first to you people of Israel, to bless you by turning each of you back from your sinful ways."

Acts 4:5-12

The next day the council of all the rulers and elders and teachers of religious law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, along with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other relatives of the high priest.⁷They brought in the two disciples and demanded, "By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?"

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of our people, ⁹are we being questioned today because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed?¹⁰Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene,^[a] the man you crucified

but whom God raised from the dead. “For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says,
‘The stone that you builders rejected
has now become the cornerstone.’^[b]

¹² There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.”
