

Peter - Part I (Matthew 4, 14, Mark 9, John 13)

Before Jesus, I was a fisherman. My rhythm of life was tied to the sea and the weather. In good weather, my day started just before dusk, when I would check my nets and equipment and prepare my boat to set sail. At night then, we'd be fishing. That's my brother and me—we worked together. Once we'd caught enough fish, we'd head back to shore and prepare the fish to be sold. If we were lucky, someone would buy the whole lot and resell them to others. But sometimes we'd have to have our wives or children sell them for us.

Well one day, we were out in the boat, and this guy walked by. I'd heard some rumors about this Jesus guy, but I didn't really know anything about him. He walked right up to our boat and he said, "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people."¹ About the same time, he also called James and John, some other fishermen in our area.

I couldn't have told you in that moment why we did it, but we dropped our nets right there on the beach and followed him. And our lives were never the same again. For one thing, it was incredible that a guy like him—a teacher, a person who could have had anyone following him—would want simple fishers like us to be his disciples. Sure, we wanted to learn from him, but we didn't know anything... We weren't the kind of guys that did really well at the synagogue or anything. So just the fact that he thought we were worth teaching was something.

But there was more to it than that. I'm sure that you've heard some of these stories, but I got to see Jesus do some amazing things. This one time, there were a bunch of us on a boat together, and Jesus fell asleep. Just then a huge storm came up and we were rocking back and forth, and I just knew we were going to capsize any minute. But Jesus got up and commanded the wind and the waves to calm down. And they did! We saw him drive demons out of people, heal the sick, even raise people from the dead. We saw him feed 5,000 people from just a few loaves and a couple of fish. It was beyond belief. And yet I saw it with my own eyes.

Right after the time that he fed all those people, he told us to get in a boat and head to the other shore while he dismissed all the people we'd just fed. By then, "us" was 12 of us who'd left our jobs and our families and were hanging out with Jesus pretty much constantly. So we did—we started out across the lake. We'd been out there for a while, and it got close to sunrise. Suddenly, we saw this figure walking on the water. We were freaked out! We thought it must be a ghost. But Jesus said, "Don't be afraid, it's me." And I said, "If it really is you, then tell me to get out of the boat and walk with you." He replied, "come." I immediately regretted my hasty challenge, but it was too late now. So I got out of the boat. At first, I was looking at Jesus, and I took a few steps on the water. I didn't sink! But when I looked away, just for a second and saw all the waves, I started sinking. "Save me!" I cried. So he reached out his hand and caught me. When he finally got me back into the boat, all of us

¹Matthew 4:19

worshiped him. We were finally sure of the fact that he was the Son of God, sent as the Messiah from God to save his people.

Probably the high point for me in following Jesus came this one time when Jesus took me and James and John up to a mountain alone. While we were there, all of a sudden, Jesus changed right in front of our eyes. He started glowing, like pure white, whiter than anyone could bleach something, and we also saw Elijah and Moses talking with Jesus. Then a cloud covered Jesus, Elijah, and Moses, and we heard a voice from the cloud say "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"² Eventually the cloud left along with Elijah and Moses, and Jesus stopped glowing, so we left the mountain. On the way down, Jesus urged us not to tell anyone else about what we had seen until he was raised from the dead. James and John and I spent quite a while talking about that and trying to figure out what he meant by "raised from the dead." We didn't understand until much later.

If that was the high point, the low point wasn't far off. It came time for the Passover celebration, and we made some preparations to celebrate it in Jerusalem together. So Jesus sent 2 of his disciples off, and they came back with a donkey. Someone must have told people we were coming, because when Jesus rode the donkey into the city, there was a crowd of people there to meet him. And they worshiped him and praised God for him. Little did we know that at the same time, men were plotting to arrest and kill him. So just a few days later, our world fell apart.

Jesus tried to prepare us, he did. We just didn't understand. First, when we came together to celebrate the Passover meal, Jesus washed our feet. Can you believe that? The job that the lowest servant would normally do, Jesus did. I tried to stop him, but he told me that if I didn't let him wash my feet, I had no part of him. So I said, "Not just my feet, but my hands and my head too!" Then, during the meal, he said, "One of you will betray me." We all said it couldn't be us, but he insisted. We didn't know then about what Judas had agreed to do. Finally, as we were finishing up the Passover seder, he held up a piece of bread and said, "This is my body, which is broken for you. Take, eat, remembering me." And then he held up a cup of wine and said, "This is my blood that is poured out for you. Take, drink, remembering me."

Judas left to betray Jesus, and Jesus spent some time talking to us about what would happen and predicting that he would be raised from the dead. We still didn't understand what he meant, but we listened. Finally, he got up and led us out to a garden where he spent some time praying before Judas betrayed him.

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²Mark 9:7

Discussion Questions

- What did you notice for the first time?
- What did you wonder about?

- What do you think led Peter to follow Jesus immediately?
- Do you think he ever regretted it?
- Why do you think Jesus chose fishers to follow him?
- What kind of person do you think Peter was? What personality?

- Which of Peter's stories about Jesus doing spectacular things stood out to you?
- Do you struggle to believe those things actually happened?
- Why do you think that Peter believed that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God?

- Why do you think the people were worshipping Jesus when he came into town for the Passover?
- Why do you think that people were planning to kill him?

- What is a Passover Seder? Why was this important?
- Why do you think Jesus wanted them to eat bread and drink the cup to remember him? What did that mean?

- Why do you think that Judas agreed to betray Jesus?
- Why do you think Peter was so sure that he wouldn't deny Jesus?

- What do you think about the predictions that Jesus was going to raise from the dead? What do you think was the hardest about that for the disciples to believe?

Application questions

- What stories have you heard about Jesus?
- What stories from today have you heard about Jesus?
- What do you think about Jesus because of these stories?

How is your relationship with Jesus like or unlike Peter's? What do you want your relationship with Jesus to look like?