



Tonight, we begin a study of the two books written by the disciple that we call "Peter." His born name was "Simon Bar-Jonah," "The one who listens - The son of a dove." The name "Simon" comes from the Hebrew word "Shema," meaning "to listen, to comprehend." That is sort of ironic because Simon is the disciple that we think of talking when he didn't know what else to do. He was the son of a dove, the symbol of peace. And when we think of Peter, we don't think much of a person of peace. Remember, he is the one who ended up trying to defend Jesus in Gethsemane with a sword. That's when he cut off a guy's ear as they came to arrest Jesus.

He was one of the earliest disciples. We're introduced to him at the beginning of the Book of John. Turn in your Bibles this evening to John chapter one verse thirty-five.

### The First Disciples

*<sup>35</sup> Again, the next day [the day after John the Baptist had baptized Jesus], John stood with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"*

*<sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"*

*<sup>39</sup> He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).*

*<sup>40</sup> One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup> He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). <sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus.*

*Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, "A Stone"). (John 1:35-42)*

Andrew was the first to hear John the Baptist testify that THIS was the Lamb of God. So, these were two unlikely pillars (Galatians 2:9) upon which to build Christianity. They were simple young Jewish men born into Israel, one of the world's smallest and least essential nations. Such are the things of God. God does things that often seem upside down to

men. <sup>25</sup> *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* (1 Corinthians 1:25)

The few times Andrew appears in the gospels, he is the quiet one who always trusts in Jesus. He heard John speak, and Andrew believed that Yeshua, this one whom we call in English "Jesus," was the Messiah who had come to save Israel. In faith, Andrew told his brother, "Simon, come and see. We have found the Messiah". And then, his brother Peter believed. These were simple happy fisherfolk. The whole story of Jesus is just something that doesn't make a lot of human sense. Yahweh, the Maker of the universe, coming to earth and being born of a lowly virgin woman. She was probably thirteen or fourteen. She was a devout Jewish girl who knew her scriptures. She was engaged to a simple carpenter. During their engagement, she turned up pregnant. She had known no man. An angel appeared to her to explain that God Himself had put the seed within her from which would come a son whom she was to call "Yeshua," which simply means "God saves."



This Simon Peter (known as Cephas) was outspoken. He was hot-blooded. He was an enthusiastic strong-willed fisherman who often acted impulsively. Like each of us, Peter had strengths, but he also had great weaknesses. Scripture tells us that Peter was from Bethsaida (John 1:44). Which is right there on the coast of "Harp Lake." We call it the Sea of Galilee. He was married, and Peter and his wife (1 Cor 9:5) moved over a couple of miles to Capernaum (Kafir Nahum...Village of the Prophet). If you go there today, you can look down through a large sheet of glass and see the ruins of Peter's house there.

Jesus chose Capernaum as the center point of His ministry. Peter lived there as a disciple of Jesus. Peter was a good speaker, and we often see him in scripture acting as a spokesman for the group. (Matt 15:5, 18:21; 19:27; Mark 11:21, etc). Peter was the first of the disciples to articulate (to speak) the truth about Who Jesus was. Caesarea Philippi is up on the the side of Mount Hermon; and it was there that Peter proclaimed, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God." (Matt 16:16-17) Peter was on the mountain with an inner circle of Jesus' confidantes (Peter, James, and John).

These same three were found with Jesus at critical points in His ministry. Only these three were there when Jairus' daughter was raised from the dead. They also were tasked with preparing the Passover meal on the night that Jesus was betrayed and began his journey to the cross. Peter was often impulsive and driven by his emotions. He's the one that got out of the boat and walked on water toward Jesus. He took his eyes off of Jesus and sank, but he was THE ONLY DISCIPLE WHO GOT OUT OF THE BOAT AND WALKED

ON WATER. When not knowing what to say, Peter would blurt out "stupid stuff." There on the Mount of Transfiguration, when Jesus was revealed to these three, Peter blurted out the suggestion of making an altar to Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. It was an awkward moment. We learn from Peter that it's sometimes just better to shut up and listen. And of course, the biggie that distinguishes Peter the most was when he boasted that he would NEVER forsake the Lord, yet on the night of the arrest, Peter chickened out and denied that he even knew Jesus, and he did it THREE TIMES.

Despite Peter's failures, the Lord Jesus NEVER GAVE UP ON HIM. Jesus would tell him that he would be essential in establishing the Church. And we all remember that after Jesus' resurrection, He sought Peter out and restored him to sweet fellowship when he led Peter three times to proclaim his love for Jesus. It was then that Jesus recommissioned him as an Apostle to resume God's plan not only for Peter's life but also for the establishment of the Church.

Peter was the main speaker on the Day of Pentecost. Peter preached the first sermon and 3,000 people "came forward" to receive Jesus as their Savior. In the Book of Acts, Peter is involved in various healings. He preached the gospel with that same belly of fire. He preached to the Sanhedrin (Acts 4), and all the threats and beatings could not shut him up. Peter had a fire that was shut up in his bones. (Jeremiah 20:9) There was nothing now that would ever stop him from preaching the risen Messiah. (Acts 5)

Peter was a witness to things he never imagined as a Jew. He was in the house of Simon the Tanner when he had a vision of a great sheet that came down with unclean animals. In the dream, he was told to kill and eat. He was there when the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8), and he was called to the home of a Roman Centurion who believed and received the Holy Spirit. Yes, like the old Bob Dylan songs, the "times they were a changing." Peter preached the sermon on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit fell on those present. The Church was born, and although he was confused, Peter saw God's inclusion of ALL PEOPLE. Peter saw the gospel spread from Judea to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth (to the Romans themselves).

After Peter saw Cornelius and his family come to the Lord, he concluded that "God does not show favoritism" (Acts 10:34). Although he came to understand that the Gentiles didn't need to conform to Jewish law, Peter wrestled with the whole business of how "Jewish" Christians needed to be. Paul would call him out later, telling him that he was preaching grace, but trying to get people back under the law. Peter was Peter, and God loved Him and NEVER GAVE UP ON HIM. (Galatians 2:11-14)

And finally, we get to where we begin tonight. There is no Gospel of Peter, but scholars believe that Peter spent much time with John Mark later in his life. They believe that Peter told John Mark everything that he had seen and experienced with Jesus, and those conversations led John Mark to write the Gospel of Mark. It is the oldest of the gospel accounts, and it is the shortest. Peter wrote two letters, 1 and 2 Peter. These were most likely written between 60 and 68 AD.

Jesus predicted that Peter would die a martyr's death (John 21:18-19), and it happened. Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified upside-down during Nero's reign. He was broken and humble and did not consider himself worthy of being executed in the same way as his Lord. We have no account of this in scripture, but it sounds exactly like Peter.

So, what do we learn from Peter?

**Jesus overcomes fear.** When we step out into the storms of life, we should keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Perfect love drives out fear. (1 John 4:18)

**Jesus forgives unfaithfulness.** As seen above, Peter boasted of his faithfulness only to end up being a failure. Yet, Jesus forgave him and restored him. When we fail, it is not our end. We confess, get back in the game, and continue. Jesus will not abandon His own. (2 Timothy 2:13)

**Jesus patiently teaches.** Again and again, Jesus corrected Peter with patience, firmness, and total love. And, He does the exact same thing for us. He tells us, "I will instruct you and teach you how 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 simple fisherman from Galilee, but Jesus called him to be a fisher of men ([Luke 5:10](#)). Peter left all he had to follow Jesus. Peter was unschooled. You might even say that he was "unqualified." But remember that God doesn't always "call the qualified" but always "qualifies the called." Peter was willing to leave all he had to follow Jesus; God used him in extraordinary ways. As Peter preached, people were amazed at his boldness because he was "unschooled" and "ordinary." But then they noted that Peter "had been with Jesus" ([Acts 4:13](#)). Being with Jesus makes all the difference.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/life-Peter.html>

When I was a little boy, we used to sing a song at St Thomas' Episcopal School. It was a sad song, but it sort of tells the story that I've just told. We suffer much as we follow the Lord, but there is a peace that comes in serving Him that passes all understanding. The ending is sort of cryptic and makes it sound like the peace of God it is no peace. But, it is peace. It is just a peace that the world cannot understand. It is a peace that passes all understanding. That is why I pray each week that your life and my life would be filled with true Shalom, the marvelous peace of God.

## Lyrics

They cast their nets in Galilee  
Just off the hills of brown;  
Such happy, simple fisherfolk,  
Before the Lord came down.

Contented, peaceful fisherfolk,  
Before they ever knew  
The peace of God that filled their hearts  
Brim-full, and broke them too.

Young John, who trimmed the flapping sail,  
Homeless, in Patmos died.  
Peter, who hauled the teeming net,  
Head down was crucified.

The peace of God, it is no peace,  
But strife closed in the sod.  
Yet, Christians(\*), pray for but one thing--  
The marvelous peace of God.