

Peter

Making The Bible Come Alive

The Impulsive One

Who was this person?

- When Jesus first met Peter, his name was Simon Peter.
- Simon Peter was an unschooled, ordinary man as noted in Acts 4:13. He didn't have any formal educational training. Peter, his brother Andrew, and Philip (another of Jesus' disciples) were from a place called Bethsaida (John 1:44), a town north of the Sea of Galilee which once had an active fishing industry. He was the son of a man called John.
- With his limited education, Simon Peter found himself in a career as a fisherman. Fishermen in those days worked long hours, often through the night. They navigated stormy seas, dealt with merchants and buyers of fish on the docks, and would have smelled like fish every day when they returned home! Peter fished the Sea of Galilee with his fishing buddies, James and John, and Andrew his brother. Since fishermen dealt with so much, they always needed to be prepared and quick to respond in any situation. We see this characteristic in Peter's life on more than one occasion.
- Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was the one who introduced him to Jesus. (John 1:40-42) When Andrew told Simon Peter they had found the Messiah, he quickly took him to meet Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "*You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas*". Cephas in Aramaic translates to the name Peter in the Greek language. That day, Jesus saw Peter not only for who he was as a fisherman, but for whom he would become. The name Peter means "a rock".
- Peter, James and John became Jesus' three closest friends.
- When Jesus sent the disciples out two-by-two he often paired Peter up with John. Peter was the oldest, and John was known to be the youngest of the twelve disciples, likely in his early teenage years during the time of Jesus' ministry (i.e. 13-16 years of age).
- Peter wrote two books of the Bible that were considered to be letters to new Christians in the early Church. These books are in the New Testament and bear his name, 1 Peter and 2 Peter.



What is this person known for?



- When Simon Peter's brother, Andrew, first encountered Jesus, they and James and John were working in their fishing boats and had not had much success catching fish. Jesus saw them on the water's edge with two boats, while they were washing their nets. Jesus gave them advice on what to do, and when they followed His instructions they could barely gather all the fish. Jesus provided them with a miraculous catch of fish! (Luke 5)
- When Peter was introduced to Jesus, he was "hooked"! After realizing the miraculous nature and power that Jesus had (as described in Luke 5:1-11), Peter realized his insignificance as compared to Jesus' greatness. Quickly, he fell at Jesus feet saying, *"Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"* (Luke 5:8) Jesus respond, by telling him, *"Don't be afraid: from now on you will catch men"*, meaning you will fish for people (Luke 5:10) At that moment Simon Peter and the others pulled their boats up onto the shore, left everything there, and followed Jesus.
- After a busy day of ministry Jesus sent His disciples to take a boat and go sail across the Sea of Galilee. He planned to join them later after a time of prayer alone. Just before morning, while still out on the windy sea, the disciples saw something out on the water. At first they thought it was a ghost. They then heard a voice and wondered if it was Jesus walking towards them across the top of the water. Peter called out, asking if it was indeed Jesus, and that if it was, that he would walk out to him. Peter climbed out of the boat and didn't sink! While he kept His eyes focused on Jesus, he stayed on top of the water! However, the moment Peter began looking at the wind and waves around him, he became afraid and began to sink. Jesus got into the boat with the men, and the sea became calm. The disciples knew at that moment that he truly was the Son of God. (Matthew 14:22-33)
- During the Last Supper, just before the crucifixion, Jesus was talking with His disciples. Jesus was sharing with them the things that were going to take place very soon. Jesus mentioned that some of his closest friends would actually turn their backs on Him. Peter couldn't believe that to be possible, and exclaimed his disbelief out loud. (Matthew 16:22) Jesus assured that not only was it true, but Peter himself would deny Jesus, not once, not twice, but three times! Not only was this going to happen, but Peter would

deny Christ before the rooster crowed in the early morning to announce the start of the next day.

- When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus in the garden where He was praying, the disciples were scared by what was happening. Peter didn't want anything to happen to his Lord and best friend so he tried to take things into his own hands. He pulled a sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, Malchus, who was part of the group wanting to arrest Jesus. Jesus quickly scolded Peter for his action, telling him to let God's plan unfold, then Jesus healed the ear of the wounded man right in front of the crowd! (Matthew 20 and John 18)
- Scripture relays to us that Jesus had a few very close friends, John, James and Peter. Since Peter was in that close relationship with Jesus, he experienced many significant times with Jesus and saw His miracles firsthand, including the following: Jesus is transfigured on the mountain (Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36) Checking the empty tomb after Jesus' resurrection (John 20:1-9) The miraculous catch of fish (John 21:1-14) When Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46) John (and Peter) were sent to prepare the final Passover meal (Luke 22:7-16) Peter was there on the Day of Pentecost, and even reminded the crowd what was spoken by the prophet Joel (Acts 1:12-14; prophecy v. 17-21) John thrown into prison with Peter, yet the Church grew because of their teaching. (Acts 4:1-4)
- Jesus gave Simon a new name –Peter (in Greek, *Petros*) meaning “rock”. (Matthew 16:18) because Jesus wanted to highlight the important role Peter would have in the early Church. When Jesus said “*on this rock I will build my church*” He was using a pun (play on words) to highlight Peter's role as Peter would become one of the leaders of the early Church. In the book of Acts we can read how involved Peter was in the foundation of the early Church.
- Peter was one of the disciples who spoke with Jesus after His resurrection. After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to some of his followers. When he spoke to Peter, he forgave him for denying Him and encouraged him to care for the Church. John 21 shares how Jesus also appeared to some of the disciples while they were fishing. Peter recognized his risen Lord standing at the shoreline and actually jumped out of the boat near shore to run and meet Him!
- After Jesus ascended to Heaven, Peter, now filled with the Holy Spirit, courageously preached to thousands of people. It was one of the first sermons ever shared by one of Christ's followers. Peter called the people to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. He told them they would also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, the promise for them and for others. He pleaded with them saying, “*Save yourselves from this*





corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were then baptized, and approximately 3,000 were added to the Church that day! (Acts 2:1-4; 14-41)

- Peter was part of two jail breaks! Many times dangerous prisoners would be chained to a soldier to ensure they could not escape. On the night before his trial, Peter was chained to two soldiers and guards were blocking the entrance of the jail. All of a sudden, an angel of the Lord appeared before Peter and woke him up with a little slap to his side. The chains miraculously fell from his wrists. Peter jumped up and got dressed, put on his coat and walked past the guards and right out of the jail. The guards had no clue he had escaped! (Acts 12:1-10)
- Peter had the opportunity to speak to many influential people and because of those conversations, people came to faith in Christ. Read about Peter going to Cornelius' house in Acts 10. Cornelius was a high ranking official in the Roman Army. At the end of the story, you will read in verses 46-48 that people were filled with the Holy Spirit and baptized.
- When Peter died, he was crucified on a cross like Jesus. Peter felt he wasn't worthy to die in the same way as Jesus so he hung upside down on the cross.

WHY DO YOU THINK THIS PERSON HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN GOD'S STORY?

- **Keep our Eyes on Christ!** When Peter climbed out of the boat to walk on the water, he was fine as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. In our lives we need to keep our focus on Jesus and we do this by praying and reading His instruction book (the Bible). Read your Bible everyday and you'll grow, grow, grow...Forget to read your Bible and you'll shrink, shrink, shrink! Your love for God will shrink—grow cool or even cold. When we keep our focus and trust on Jesus, He promises to guide us through all the seasons of life (Colossians 3:1-4; Hebrews 12:1-2; Psalm 101:3, Psalm 121:1).
- **Say the right things...at the right time!** Perhaps due to his years of being a rough fisherman, Peter didn't always speak in a polished or professional manner. When Jesus said that some of the disciples would deny they even knew Him, Peter thought that was “crazy talk”. Peter was recognized as a follower of Jesus but he denied He was. (John 18:15-17) Scripture tells us that while Peter was warming himself by a fire during the time that Jesus was being whipped and flogged, he was recognized. Peter got very angry and denied that he even knew Jesus. (Luke 22:54-65) Then a little while

later, a relative of the man who lost his ear by Peter's quick sword work, questions that he was the one with Jesus in the olive grove. (John 18:26-27) Again, a third time, Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow. As Peter then looked at Jesus, he recalled the prediction that someone would deny Him three times. As he realized that someone was him, he began to weep bitterly.

• **Regardless of our past there is a future in Jesus.** Peter was an older, rougher fisherman than some of the others, but Jesus had a plan for Peter. Peter was impetuous. In other words, he often blurted out things and acted before thinking. Even with his imperfections, Jesus chose Peter to help establish the Church. The Church (the body of Christ) which we are part of today, had its start because of the willingness of this man. Peter was a man who realized his weaknesses and shortcomings, and yet was willing to be used by God to build His Church.

• **Old habits die hard.** Peter wasn't perfect when he first came to Jesus. He was a brash rough and tough fisherman. Even after three years with Jesus and watching His ministry, Peter still had that quick instinct to defend himself. He cut off the soldier's ear when they came to arrest Jesus. Yikes! This reminds us that we need to daily ask Jesus for help to curb and even deliver us from instantaneous responses that are not good, and definitely not pleasing to God. Our bad habits can hurt others ... real bad! The Holy Spirit is there to help us with our attitude and our actions. (Galatians 5:22-26; 1 Peter 2:1-5).

• **To show us the depth of Christ's forgiveness.** Peter did many rash and crazy things, however, Jesus forgave and restored Peter to a place of good-standing with Himself. When Peter did something wrong, he knew it and would seek out Jesus for forgiveness. When we do wrong things, we need to humble ourselves and go to the person we have wronged and make things right. If we have disobeyed God's Word, we need to ask God for His forgiveness. Even when Peter failed Jesus by denying Him, Jesus was ready to forgive. The Bible tells us in 1 John 1:9 that *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* Verse 10 goes on to say that *"If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar, and His word has no place in our lives."* Scripture tells us in 2 Timothy 2:13 that if we are faithless, He will remain faithful for He can-not disown Himself—what a promise! Jesus understands the difficulties we face on this earth. He Himself never sinned but He is familiar with the struggles we face. His desire is that we are humble before Him and admit our wrongs, no matter how bad they are (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:22-23; Psalm 51:17; 1 Peter 2:22-25; John 3:16).





- **We are new creations in Christ.** Like Peter, we may not be perfect, but once we make a choice to follow after Je-sus He becomes our model. We take on a new identity as we become “Christ-followers”. Whether at church, home, school or work, our desire should be to follow Christ and become more like Jesus (1 Peter 2:21; 1 Corinthians 4:16; Hebrews 13:7).
- **When things get tough...keep going.** In our world we know there will be difficulties. It seems that more and more society is drifting away from believing in the Bible and the rules and instructions for living found in it that come directly from God. Laws that once were founded on the principles in Scripture are now completely ignored. How-ever, it doesn’t mean as Christ-followers that we are to disregard them. No! We need to know the truths found in the Word of God so we can stand firm in these days. (John 16:33; 1 Peter 2:11-21)
- **To remind us that the Holy Spirit is our Helper.** Jesus told His disciples that when He returned to Heaven that He would send them a Comforter, a Helper. The Holy Spirit is Who initially draws us to coming to know and believe in Jesus. Then the Holy Spirit continues to work in the lives of believers as our Guide, Helper, Counselor and Com-forter. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the power to do great things for God. When Peter would go out to minis-ter, people were healed even just by his shadow...talk about healing power! (John 1:32-34; 3:5; Act 5)

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Pose the following two questions to your children, one at a time. Allow for interaction and discussion, letting them share their thoughts while you guide the conversation.

- What life lessons can I learn from this Bible character about how I should and should not live?
- Based on what I have learned from this Bible character, how can I live in a way that is pleasing to God.

MORE IN GOD'S WORD

In the Greek language, there are two similar words that mean stone or rock. The word, “Petros” is masculine and the word “Petra” is feminine. Petros is a smaller stone, one that can shift or roll; an insecure stone. Petra is a solid rock, more like a boulder that will not move. Jesus used the smaller rock “Petros” when he called Simon Peter by the name “Peter”. He saw Peter as the smaller rock and Jesus being the large, immovable rock.

In Matthew 16, starting at verse 13 Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied to him and said, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Then Jesus asks Peter directly, "Who do you say I am?" Peter's answer is very clear: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Jesus goes on to tell Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by My Father in Heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven." After that Jesus warned His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ. Jesus said that because He knew that they did not fully understand the kind of Messiah He was. It was going to be difficult for them to fully understand what Jesus came to earth to do until His time on earth was complete.

There are other verses in Scripture that will help you understand all that God is telling us through this illustration of Jesus being the strong, immovable rock.

Look up these Scriptures and see references to God being referenced as our "Rock":

Ephesians 2:20

Deuteronomy 32:4

2 Samuel 22:2-3

Can you find others in Scripture? There are lots and lots of references to God being our Rock!

