



Introduction

The following questions, prayers and comments are intended to assist you through a Bible study time this summer. Watch on Facebook Live or commhope.freeonlinechurch.com/live at 9 am on Sundays. This study and Pastor John's sermons will cover 15 men & women of the Bible. Weekly studies like these will be available each week. If you have any questions, please e-mail koko@commhope.org.

Week 13: Peter – Life Lessons

Peter has been described by many adjectives, i.e., impetuous, bold, stubborn, penitent, and many more. In this lesson I am, attempting, to make a sequential summary of the lessons I have learned from what scripture says about him.

The Lord leads and directs each of our lives. When we look at ourselves it is useful to ask, where was God when this or that happened to me? Perhaps, by imagining what God was teaching Peter at the different events in his life, we may begin to see what God has been doing in the different events of our own lives.

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for loving me and for redeeming all the errors and sins of my lifetime. I praise you for the freedom I feel when I read your words: "...There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus". I love you, Jesus. Amen.

Comments and Readings: Read Matthew 4-28 and Acts 2:14 – 12:8 and Galatians 2:77. These are most of what scripture includes of the life stories about Peter. These are definitely not a biographical study of Peter; however, they are a wonderfully edifying account of Peter's encounters with God.

Historians indicate that Peter was born in the year 1BC in Bethsaida in Galatia to Jonah a fisherman by trade.

We, also, know that Peter was married and again, historians, surmise that he would have married somewhere around 25 – 27AD and that he settled with his in-laws in Capernaum.

When we studied about Matthew, I wondered what would cause him to leave his business so easily. In Mt4:18 we see that Andrew and Peter do the very same thing. What do you think made them do that? Like Matthew, Peter takes Jesus home with him and in Matthew8:14, Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law. Jesus has been teaching and healing everywhere he and his recently called disciples went. What did Peter think about all the extraordinary things he was witnessing? How did he reconcile what he knew about life and what he was seeing daily?

Peter was a follower of, Jesus but at the same time he was working in his fishing business, probably to support his family. He and his employees spent an entire night working and caught nothing. How many of us have worked hard only to have the terrible feeling of accomplishing nothing! I wonder if Peter thought how gracious it was for Jesus to help him in his efforts to support his family and employees by showing them how to catch a "great number" of fish at the wrong time of day and too close to shore, see Luke 5:1-11. I wonder how long it took Peter to make sense out of being told he would now become a fisher of men!

As often happens in scripture, God changes the name of the servants that come to follow Him, like he did when he changed Simon's name to Cephas, which is translated Peter, see John 1:42. I have lived with a nickname since I was born. As much as I like my given name, the nickname resonates with me far more than Karen does, in large part because of who gave it to me. I wonder if, aside from the important Christian symbolism in the name and "The Rock" connection, Peter liked his new name.

In Matthew 14:23 we see Peter rise up to stand strong in light of the amazing experiences he has had recently, see Matthew chptrs. 8-14; following Jesus, healing the leper, the Centurion's paralytic, the mute, the blind, the bleeding woman, and more, calming the storm, addressing the doubts of the followers of John the Baptist, demons driven from the possessed, hearing wonderful illustrations of life with God through parables stories, and seeing over 5000 people given lunch. On the heels of all these events and teachings, Peter's confidence and faith are excited and powerful and in Matthew 14:22, Peter sees Jesus walking toward him on the water. Peter responds with all of his heart, leaping from the boat to go to Jesus. We all know this story, but when I looked at how much Peter had been experiencing in his relationship with Jesus, I understood better how compelled he was to respond to Jesus in a big way. Have you ever felt "at risk" when you have stepped out in faith?

In Matthew 16, Peter again comes to a moment when he speaks from the power of his growing faith, see verse 16. In my faith walk as I confessed my faith, in front of the church my family attended in Montana, I remember thinking my heart would start singing at any moment because of the closeness I felt with Jesus. Peter, in verse 16, is having one of those moments. He knows in the depths of his being that Jesus is his salvation. Have you ever had the opportunity to share about your moments of Jesus joy?

In verse 22, Peter, in his rediscovered, sense of strength steps forward to correct Jesus. We have all had bad news come to us that we don't want to believe or have any way to understand. Jesus power to complete the horrible job of death and resurrection are the illustration of the truth that Peter was going to learn. It is a blessing to me that he learned this lesson by doing the wrong thing. It strengthens my belief in what Paul tells us in Romans 8:1 that we are not ever condemned in our errors, when we are in relationship with Jesus.

In Matthew 26 we see the story of Peter's struggle to deal with what appeared to be the loss of his Jesus. The up and down of the emotions that Peter goes through are evidence of how difficult it is to follow a God that gives Himself away to people who don't want or care about Him. And even harder, as we see in John 21:15 is the call to love people as much as Jesus did. Jesus does not condemn Peter for the lessons he has learned, the mistakes he has made, the shallowness of his understanding, rather He calls Peter to love His sheep. A difficult lesson?

Finally, in verse 50-53 Peter grasps what it all meant and that amazing joy, intimacy, singing heart sense of closeness to God overwhelms Peter again, and he and his friends stayed in the Temple. I find that fellowship with other believers strengthens me; is that true for you too?

In Acts 1:13 is the list of disciples waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter, the leader is listed first. In Acts 2:14, Peter arises to refute the question of the disciple's sobriety and explain scripture to everyone while identifying Jesus as the Messiah that they had all been awaiting. Finally, his strength of spirit, passion and how God had positioned him, all came together and people who were present were changed forever, see Acts 2:40-47. I remember Lisa Bippes giving her testimony at one of our prayer

meetings; she talked eloquently about how the Lord guided she and Brian, their entire life. Like Peter they experienced God's guiding hand.

Peter goes on to heal a lame man, be arrested, deal with deception within the church, teach in Samaria, he goes on mission trips outside Israel, resurrected the dead, and many more extraordinary things. Essential to the message of God throughout scripture, Peter in Acts 10:34 understands that God does not show favoritism. Peter stands strong against the challenge to the validity of his inclusion of those deemed unworthy. I wonder if we can, also stand strong at including people our culture deems unworthy?

In Acts 12:11 Peter is delivered from imprisonment by King Herod. He says, "I know without a doubt..."; once again, I wondered how he processed the event that happened to him. Peter had moments of doubt; sinking into the water he had been walking on, rejecting the information about Jesus dying, denying that he would deny knowing Jesus, and moments of absolute clarity; see John 6:68, 21:15 and his Pentecost speech in Acts 2. Peter continued to make blunders and be reprimanded like he was in Galatians 2:77, but his faith was never in doubt; he was like King David, able to make mistakes and always return to God. I want to be like that.

It is assumed that Peter was martyred during the reign of Nero in Rome somewhere between 64 and 68AD. It is interesting that both Peter and Paul died in Rome at the hands of the Romans. Both, men of great passion and of a close relationship with God. *"Please remember, Peter was a Jew, not a Roman. Paul was a Roman by birth, a Jew by lineage. The one thing both men had in common was their passion and commitment to their calling to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. They both believed that their death brought them in the presence of God, immediately."* Overviewbible.com Ray Nelson

Even though Peter had impressive positive and negative behaviors in his time with Jesus, I think it is fair to say that when the Holy Spirit blessed him and called him into his leadership role, Peter was consistent in his service to God. The illustration of God's grace in Peter's life is beautiful and it gives me hope that I, too, do not face condemnation but rather I am embraced for the service I give to God, see Romans 8:1&2. My husband's favorite book is called, "If you want to walk on water you've got to get out of the boat". We relate to the failures that Peter had because we are convinced that God will sustain us through our doubt and we will end up safely in the boat. It is good that he took the risk maybe we can do the same? Jesus lifts us all up.

Come on in, the water's fine!

Prayer: Jesus give us boldness like Peter and be gracious to us like you were to Peter. Make all things work together for good. Help us be fools for you. Amen.