

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

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SERMON STUDY GUIDE | PART 2: PLAN OF ATTACK | 11.19.17 | FOLLOW ON FB @PASTORERICHUFFMAN TW @ERICTHESTORY

Session 1: Peter's Shame

John 18:18-27 and Luke 22:54-62

John 21:15-19

DAY 1

When you hear the word shame, what comes to mind?

How can shame be a useful response in some circumstances?

DAY 2

Introduction: There's a lot to love about Simon Peter. First of all, his given name was just Simon. *Peter* was the nickname Jesus gave him – it meant “The Rock”. Jesus was always giving guys nicknames. I believe that, when Jesus named Simon *The Rock*, it was tongue-in-cheek. It's like when you meet a really fat guy whose friends call him Tiny. Because a rock is steady and consistent, but there was nothing steady about Simon Peter. He was impulsive and unpredictable. One morning, he was on the shore after fishing all night, and a total stranger comes up to him and says, “Follow me,” and Peter's like, “OK. *Does anybody need a boat?*” Peter was *married*. He probably should have asked his wife before giving up the family boat and livelihood, but that's just who *The Rock* was.

Another time, the disciples were out on the water late at night, and they wake up to see what looked like a ghost hovering above the water. They all started to freak out, except Peter. Peter said, “Is that you, Jesus?” And he jumps out of the boat, onto the water, and takes a couple steps before he realizes he's walking on water. But then the wind blows a little and “The Rock” screams like a little kid and says, “Save me, Lord!” (Matthew 14:30)

Simon Peter talked a big game, but he was really just a scared little kid on the inside. In Matthew 26, Jesus said, “You’re all going to desert me tonight.” Peter said, “All those other fools might desert you, but I will *never* desert you.” But Jesus insisted, “I’m telling you, before the rooster crows in the morning, you will deny me three times.”

Then Peter stuck his chest out and boasted, “Even if they kill me, I will never deny you.” Jesus, maybe nodding sarcastically, said, “Okay *Rock*.”

Relevance: With Jesus, there are no deal-breakers. Think about what Peter did. Jesus trusted him, and Peter lied to Jesus’ face. On the single hardest night of Jesus’ life, Peter said, “I don’t know the guy” three times. Peter quit on Jesus. Any of us would call what Peter did a deal-breaker. What did Jesus do?

He said, “Peter, I forgive you.”

Questions: Have you ever been forgiven for something that could have been a “deal-breaker”? Were you receptive to forgiveness? If so, how did being forgiven change you?

DAY 3

Read Luke 22:54-62

Peter denied Jesus three times just as Jesus had predicted in Luke 22:34. After the rooster crowed, “The Lord turned and looked at Peter”. What do you think Jesus was trying to convey to Peter through His glance?

How do think this made Peter feel?

Read these two verses, Luke 22:62 with Luke 22:33. How would you characterize Peter’s demeanor in verse 33?

How would you characterize his demeanor in verse 62?

What do you think caused the following changes in Peter? He first declared "I am ready to go to prison with you", then said "I don't know Him", then left weeping bitterly.

DAY 4

Read John 18:18-27

What kind of fire were the people gathered around?

The high priest questioned Jesus "about His disciples and about His teaching" in verse 19. Contrast Jesus' answer to the high priest to Peter's answers to his questioners.

When confronted with an accusation of following Christ, have you ever denied Him? Have you ever downplayed your relationship with Him?

If so, can you share how you may have denied / downplayed your relationship with Him?

If you have ever denied / downplayed (most of probably have at some time and in some way), compare your reaction to Peter's reaction when "he wept bitterly".

DAY 5

Read John 21:15-19

In verse 9 of this chapter, Jesus prepared a "charcoal fire". This ties the following scene together to the scene where Peter denies Jesus three times. How many times does Jesus ask Peter the "if he loves Him"?

What is the significance of Jesus asking what appears to be the same question again and again?
(Hint: it helps if you know Greek)

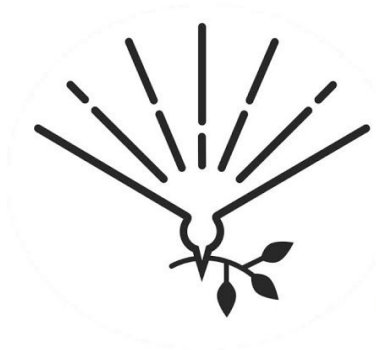
Recall Peter saying how he would even go to death for Jesus. Now, what is Jesus telling Peter in verses 18 and 19?

What would your response be if Jesus told you that following Him would lead you a painful death in this life?

How can we come to rely on Jesus and His strength to get us through tough circumstances in this world?

DAY 6

Read the verses once more all the way through. If possible, read it out loud. Write down your lasting insights, inspirations, questions and doubts.



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Session 2: Peter's Call

Luke 5:1-11

DAY 1

Recap what stood out to you in the first session, Peter's Shame.

The verses in Luke 5 describe how Jesus called Peter to follow Him. The way Jesus calls people can vary widely. Can you share with the group how Jesus has called you to be a follower of Him?

DAY 2

Introduction: As he began his public ministry, Jesus searched for his inner circle of followers. Given the high stakes of Jesus' message, you might think he'd choose to surround himself with the best and brightest: business leaders, political powerhouses, and social movers. But time and again in the gospels, Jesus called certain kinds of men to be his disciples: men who were passionate, humble, and willing to sacrifice for the sake of something greater. Such is the case with Simon Peter, whom Jesus called out as a disciple in this week's readings in Luke 5.

Relevance: There are two things to learn from the way Jesus called Simon Peter and the other disciples. First, there is something God looks for in men and women that the world often does not see. While the world trains us to look for influence, opportunity, and security, God looks for humility, optimism, and a willingness to take leaps of faith. We should keep that in mind as we ask the Holy Spirit to shape our character so that God can use us to build His Kingdom. Second, we should also take note of God's wisdom here as we choose who to spend our time with. It's so easy to value people based on worldly things, instead of valuing people the way Jesus did.

Questions: How do you think your attitude and outlook compare to Simon Peter's? Are you curious, humble, and willing to take risks for God?

Do you tend to surround yourself with people who are humble, optimistic, and faithful? Or do you find yourself caving to social pressures and spending time with people who are popular and powerful?

DAY 3

Read Luke 5:1-4

From verse 1, what was the crowd's response to hearing the word of God?

Describe Jesus' pulpit.

Why do you think Jesus did not find a more suitable place (like a nice building or a place where people would expect to hear religious talk) to teach the people?

DAY 4

Read Luke 5:5-7

When Simon answered Jesus, who did he say "worked hard all night" and what were the results?

How was Simon obedient to Jesus in these verses and what were the results?

Sometimes Jesus asks us to do things that might not make sense to us given our recent experiences. We often need to step out in faith, trust Jesus in obedience for us to reap the fruits of our labor. The benefits of obedience are not always going result in worldly success but will always lead to closer relationship to Him. Where is Jesus asking you to trust Him in your daily labors?

How might things be different if you trusted Jesus instead of your own strength / capabilities?

In verse 7, "they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come". How does this compare to your response when Jesus provides for you?

DAY 5

Read Luke 5:8-11

After Simon Peter saw what Jesus had done in the previous verses, what was his response to Jesus, both physically and spiritually? Also read Matthew 4:17.

When you were first confronted with the truth about Jesus, how did your response compare to Peter's?

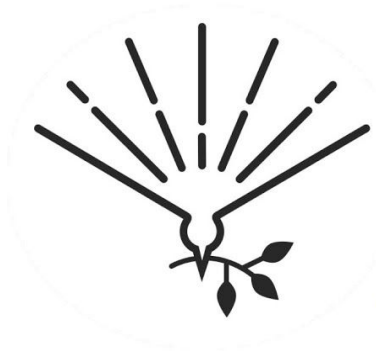
Jesus met Simon Peter on his boat and provided for him in his everyday labors. Jesus abundantly provided, then asked Simon to leave everything and follow Him...even the fish they just caught! Jesus called on Peter to follow Him. Does Jesus' request seem fair to you? Why or why not?

How has Jesus called you to follow Him?

What baggage have you refused to leave behind that is holding you back from a more abundant life with Jesus?

DAY 6

Read the verses once more all the way through. If possible, read it out loud. Write down your lasting insights, inspirations, questions and doubts.



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Session 3: Peter's Fear

Matthew 14:22-36

DAY 1

Recap what stood out to you in the second session, Peter's Call.

When comes to mind when you hear the word "fear"? What do you think causes fear in most people?

DAY 2

Introduction: The action around Jesus and his disciples is really picking up in this week's reading. John the Baptist has just been beheaded (14:1-12), Jesus has just miraculously fed five thousand men, plus women and children (14:13-21), and now the disciples are on a boat, without Jesus, because he needed some time alone to pray (14:21-23). During his time in prayer, it becomes clear that it's time to let the disciples in on the big secret: Jesus is God in the flesh.

He's hinted at his true identity before, calling himself the "Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:8) and performing many miracles, but tonight's events will leave no doubt in the disciples' minds. The moment they see Jesus walking on the water, they are reminded that only God "treads on the waves of the sea" (Job 9:8), and they worship him (14:33).

Relevance: Of course, of all the disciples, it's our man Peter who wagers with Jesus: "If it's really you, prove it!" When Jesus says, "Come," Peter is quick to step out onto the water. But it doesn't take long for his heroic faith to waver, and Peter sinks like a rock (get it?). Like so many of us, Peter *wants* to have more faith than he actually has, and as we see this pattern unfolding of "faith overcome by fear", we'll begin to see more and more of ourselves in Peter's story.

Questions: Can you think of a time that, when faced with a challenge, you reacted with courageous faith, but when the "winds" of change or reality began to blow, you lost your nerve and failed to follow through?

What do you think it takes for people who have big hearts and good intentions to actually follow through and turn their feelings into faithfulness?

Considering how important it was for devout Jews (like these disciples) to worship *no one* but Yahweh (Exodus 20:1-3), what do you think is the significance of the disciples *worshiping* Jesus (as opposed to merely following him)?

DAY 3

Read Matthew 14:22-25

Why did Jesus send the crowds away in Matthew 14:22-23? See also John 6:14-15.

When others encourage you to step forward for higher places of recognition in this world, what is your response and how does it compare to Jesus' response?

When the disciples were in the boat far off from land and their boat was being battered by waves, how did Jesus come to them?

What does this tell you about Jesus' power over this world?

How does this give you comfort in your circumstances?

DAY 4

Read Matthew 14:26-32

What was the reaction of the disciples in verse 26?

How quickly did Jesus react to their fear and what did Jesus say to them?

In verses 28-29, what did Jesus tell Peter to do and did Peter obey? What was the result?

What caused Peter's fear in verse 30?

When Peter was gripped in fear, to whom did he turn and what was his request? See verse 30

When physical conditions around you cause you to be frightened, to whom do you turn and how does your request compare to Peter's?

DAY 5

Read Matthew 14:33-36

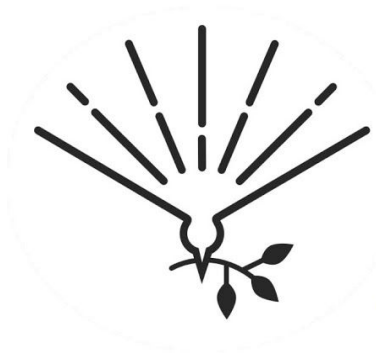
After witnessing the previous events, what was the response of the other disciples in the boat?

What does their response tell us about their understanding of Jesus' nature? See Exodus 20:5

When confronted with the truth about Jesus, what is your response?

DAY 6

Read the verses once more all the way through. If possible, read it out loud. Write down your lasting insights, inspirations, questions and doubts.



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Session 4: Peter's Faith

Matthew 16:13-20

DAY 1

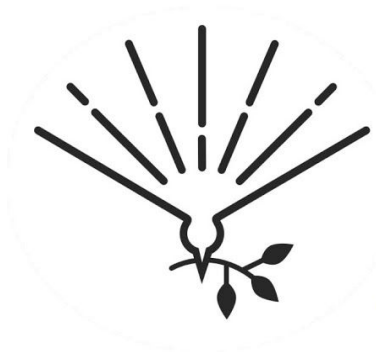
Recap what stood out to you in the last session, Peter's Fear.

When comes to mind when you hear the word "faith"?

DAY 2

Introduction: So far in this study, we've been pretty critical of poor Peter; *the Rock* often struggled to live up to his sturdy nickname. But there were also moments when it was clear why Jesus chose Peter in the first place - moments where Peter's faith and courage are on full display. Sure, he was impulsive and struggled with follow-through, but we should remember it was Peter who left everything behind to follow Jesus, who stepped out onto the water, and who drew his sword to defend Jesus as he was arrested. And most importantly, as we'll learn this week, it was Peter who first spoke up to identify Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God.

Relevance: Speaking up for Jesus comes with consequences. When you "out" yourself as a Christian, you're open to all kinds of criticism. One recent study found that 87-91% of young, non-religious adults believe Christians are hypocritical, judgmental, and anti-homosexual. In many academic circles, Christianity has been categorized alongside ancient mythologies and fairy tales (at best) and



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fundamentalist, violent blood-cults (at worst). Why tell the world you believe Jesus is God if it could mean you'll be socially ostracized?

This is the question Peter and the other disciples faced as well, but it wasn't just their social lives on the line. They could have been arrested and executed for proclaiming the divinity of Jesus, so when Jesus asked them who they think he is, many of them stayed quiet. Only Peter spoke up: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!"

Questions: Have there been times when you felt ashamed of your faith in Christ to the point of staying silent? Can you think of a situation where you could have spoken up about your faith, but instead you chose to stay silent? What factors or pressures contributed to your decision?

DAY 3

Read Matthew 16:13-20

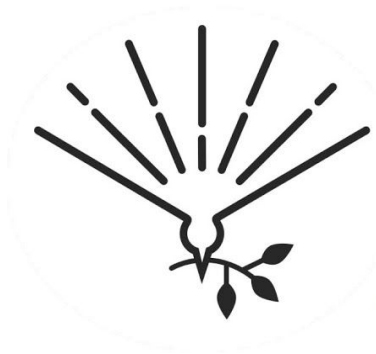
In verse 13, why do you think Jesus asked about what the "people" thought of Him rather than the Pharisees and Sadducees?

In verse 13, Jesus refers to Himself as "the Son of Man". Jesus often refers to Himself using this phrase. What does this mean? See also, Daniel 7:13-14

Now read Philippians 2:6-8. What does this tell you about Jesus and His time on earth?

Who answered Jesus' question in verse 14, and what was the answer?

Then Jesus asked what the disciples thought of Him in verse 15. Who responded and what did he



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say?

How would you answer Jesus' question "who do you say I am"?

What, if anything, is holding you back from confessing Jesus as the Son of the Living God?

DAY 4

Read Matthew 16:13-20

In verse 17, who revealed the truth about Jesus to Peter?

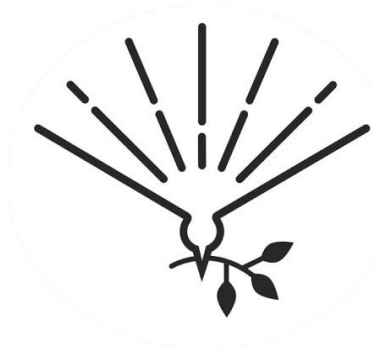
Why do you think Jesus made this distinction?

Peter boldly proclaimed a truth about Jesus, how does Peter's answer demonstrate his faith in Jesus? See also Hebrews 11:1,6

What does your answer to Jesus' question, "who do you say I am?" indicate about your faith in Jesus?

What tangible steps are you willing to take to build up your faith in Jesus?

DAY 5



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Read Matthew 16:13-20

In verse 18, Jesus refers to Peter as a rock on which the church will be built. Whose church is it, Peter's or Jesus'? (Hint: read verse 18 carefully)

Read Ephesians 2:20 and Revelation 21:14. Who is the cornerstone of God's household? Who makes up the foundation?

In verse 19, Jesus says to Peter "I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven,". Compare this verse to Matthew 18:18, when Jesus was speaking to all the disciples.

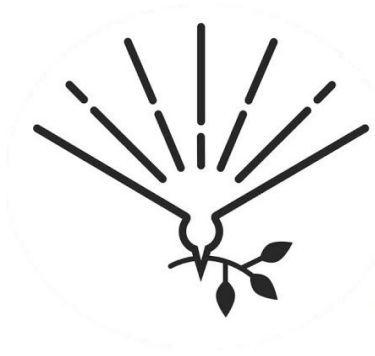
How does the context of additional Scripture effect your understanding of Jesus' words to Peter in verses 18 and 19?

Given Jesus' words in 18 and 19, how should Jesus disciples understand their purpose, their mission in God's church at this time? See also Matthew 28:19

How are you living out God's purpose / mission for you?

DAY 6

Read the verses once more all the way through. If possible, read it out loud. Write down your lasting insights, inspirations, questions and doubts.



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Session 5: Peter's Doubts

Matthew 16:21-23, 11:1-6 and Luke 7:18-23

DAY 1

Recap what stood out to you in the last session, Peter's Faith.

How can faith bring you closer to Jesus? How can doubt bring you closer to Jesus?

DAY 2

Introduction: This week, we'll continue to take a closer look at the walking enigma that was Simon Peter. Just when you begin to think Peter has it all figured out and is walking by faith, he trips over himself and falls flat on his face. To this point in our study, Peter has shown flashes of brilliance: his fearless response to Jesus' call, his courageous step out onto the water, and his powerful proclamation that Jesus is the Messiah were all examples of Peter's great and growing faith. But Peter – like so many of us – just can't seem to get out of his own way sometimes.

This week we'll take a closer look at a time Peter *doubted* and even *rejected* God's plans. As much as his faith had grown, he still couldn't bring himself to accept what needed to happen next. Peter wasn't the only person close to Jesus who doubted; later in the week, we'll see how even John the Baptist needed further confirmation to believe.

Most importantly, we'll see how both men worked through their doubts in the same way: by taking their questions straight to Jesus.

Relevance: Being a Christian doesn't mean having all the answers. Actually, we Christians come from a long line of doubters. All the great biblical heroes had their doubts, and that includes Jesus, who wasn't always so sure about that whole crucifixion plan (Luke 22:42). What made the people in the Bible heroes wasn't their certainty; it's that even though they had doubts, they kept moving. Noah must have doubted God's plan to build a massive boat with no water in sight, but he did it anyway (Genesis 6-9). Abraham doubted, but he left his father's house anyway (Genesis 12:1-4). Sarah doubted to the point of *laughing at God*, but she tried to get pregnant with her old, infertile anyway (Genesis 18:12). Moses doubted God's wisdom, but he led the people out of Egypt anyway (Exodus 3:1-12:43). Mary doubted her destiny, that didn't stop her from saying, "I am the Lord's servant" (Luke 1:26-38).

You can doubt and be a Christian. The question for Christians isn't whether or not you have doubts; it's what you do with your doubt. In *The Life of Pi*, Yann Martel writes, "If Christ spent an anguished night in prayer, if he burst out from the cross, *My God, why have you forsaken me?* then surely we are permitted to doubt. But we must move on. To choose doubt as a philosophy of life is akin to choosing immobility as a means of transportation."

We're all bound to have doubts at times, especially when our experiences with life, loss, pain, and suffering don't seem to align with our beliefs in an all-loving, all-powerful God. The question this week isn't *whether* we'll have doubts; it's *what we do with our doubts* that really matters.

Questions:

What are the doubts and questions about God, Jesus, the Bible, or the Christian faith that you find yourself wrestling with the most?

Have you experienced doubt as a paralyzing force that keeps you from growing, or as a catalyst toward deeper faith?

DAY 3

Read Matthew 16:21-22

What did Jesus foretell to His disciples in verse 21? Include details.

Why do you think Jesus was so specific about what was going to happen to Him?

Even with all the specifics, did the disciples understand? See Mark 9:32

Why do you think it was so difficult for the disciples to understand?

In verse 22, what was Peter's response to Jesus?

How do you respond to Jesus when you hear or read something in His word that you don't like?

DAY 4

Read Matthew 16:23

How does Jesus respond to Peter? What does He call Peter?

Does this response appear overly harsh to you? Why?

What did Jesus say caused Peter to act in this way?

When this week have you set your mind on man's interest instead of God's?

How has Jesus responded to you when you set your interests on this world? See also John 16:7-8

How would your priorities change for your activities tomorrow if you listened carefully to Jesus about His priorities?

DAY 5

Read Matthew 11:1-6 and Luke 7:18-23

John the Baptist was a man of great faith and declared the following about Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29.

While imprisoned for his testimony, what does John the Baptist ask Jesus in these verses?

It appears that even John the Baptist had periods of doubt. How did John the Baptist get through his period of doubt?

How did Jesus respond to John's questions?

Both Peter and John the Baptist had doubts but went to Jesus for answers. They both then went on to show tremendous faith and ultimately die for their belief in Jesus. What can you do to use your doubts to propel you towards a life of greater faith?

DAY 6

What do you learn about God from these verses?



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Session 6: Peter's Leadership

Acts 2:14-41

DAY 1

Recap what stood out to you in the last session, Peter's Doubts.

What comes to mind for you when you think of "leadership"?

DAY 2

Introduction: At last...it's the time we've all been waiting for: Simon Peter's *breakout* moment! For six weeks, we've been on a journey with this obscure, first-century fisherman who rose to become the most important leader in the early Church, and we've studied some of his best and worst moments. At many points along the way, it would have been easy for Simon Peter to give up the cause of following Jesus: the time he tried to walk on water and failed, the time Jesus called him "Satan," or of course the time he denied ever knowing Jesus. But Peter was nothing if not resilient, and we'll see his tenacity begin to yield powerful results in this week's readings.

Relevance: Following Jesus often feels like an on-again, off-again relationship, complete with awesome highs and some devastating lows, too. At times, either due to your own choices or external circumstances, you will not "feel" like a disciple of Jesus Christ. In those moments, the question will be: *Will you fold under pressure and choose to walk away, or will you trust Jesus enough to persevere through adversity?*

Questions: What doubts, decisions, or external circumstances have led you to question God's purpose for your life?

Think of someone you know who has persevered adverse conditions in life to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds? Where did their courage and strength come from?

DAY 3

Read Acts 2:14-36

Peter delivered a sermon to many people in Acts 2. List the Old Testament books that Peter used in his sermon.

Why do you think he referred to the Scriptures so often?

What appeals to you in this sermon and why?

Preaching about Jesus was dangerous at this time. Remember Peter had denied even knowing Him just a short while ago. What gave Peter the strength to preach in such a way to so many? See Acts 1:8.

How are you relying on the Holy Spirit when you discuss Jesus with others?

DAY 4

Read Acts 2:37-41

In verse 37, the audience was "pierced to the heart" when they heard Peter's words. What is your reaction to Peter's sermon?

In verse 38, what does Peter tell them to do? And why is this so important?

Read verse 41, what was the outcome for many in the audience that day?

What next steps did the new believers take in verse 42?

What can we learn from them?

DAY 5

Read Acts 2:14-41

When preaching to others it is easy to be light on the truth and heavy on life applications or general “hope”. Peter’s sermon was heavy on the truth of Jesus Christ and claiming the resurrection as a fact that the people can believe to be true. Why do you think Peter based his first public sermon on the truth of the resurrection and not something else?

What traits of good leadership did Peter display?

How can you become a more effective leader in your circle of influence to lead others to Christ?

DAY 6

What do you learn about God from these verses?



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Session 7: Peter's Witness

Acts 10, 15:7-11

DAY 1

Recap what stood out to you in the last session, Peter's Leadership.

What comes to mind for you when you think of "witness"?

DAY 2

Introduction: Simon Peter has grown up before our very eyes. Gone are the days when he spoke impulsively, with no authority, about things he didn't understand. He's been tested by the fires of failure and doubt, and he has emerged from the ashes a grown man of God. In this week's readings, we'll see Peter take his place as a key figure in the foundation of something called *Church*. From the time he preached his first sermon in Acts 2, Peter gained confidence and momentum, quickly becoming the leader Jesus called him to be.

Relevance: It's so easy to allow your past failures to define you. Sometimes we do it to ourselves; other times, we let other people do it to us. To some of his friends and family, Peter would undoubtedly forever be "the guy who denied Jesus," or the guy who talks a big game but chickens out when the chips are down. Peter had to overcome his past failures in order to

fulfill his destiny in Christ. This is something we all face.

Questions: What do you think changed Peter from the bumbling coward in the gospels to the potent leader we find in the Book of Acts?

Have you ever experienced a season of dramatic growth following a time of deep disappointment and failure? What do you think is the relationship between failure and maturity?

DAY 3

Read Acts 10:1-22

Describe Cornelius.

Describe Cornelius' vision.

The angel of God provided very detailed instructions for Cornelius and what he was supposed to do. How did Cornelius respond to the angels instructions?

What was Peter doing in verse 9-10?

Describe the different ways God communicated to Cornelius in verses 1-7, and to Peter in verses 9-16 and 19-20.

What do you need to do in order to have more clear communication in this life from God?

DAY 4

Read Acts 10:23-48

How did Peter respond to the messengers?

Peter begins his sermon to the gentiles, Cornelius in verse 34. But before he begins speaking, he shows humility and gives the glory to God. See verses 25 and 26. When witnessing about the truth of Jesus Christ, it is important to humble ourselves before God. If someone fell at your feet to praise and worship you when they saw you...how would you react? Be honest.

What does Peter focus on in this sermon?

What happened to the people who were listening?

Why do you think Peter's sermon was so effective?

What can you do to make your witness more effective?

DAY 5

Read Acts 15:7-11

Peter is speaking to the apostles and elders about what is necessary for salvation. What does Peter say about salvation for the gentiles?

What does Paul say about salvation? See Ephesians 2:8-9

What does Jesus say about salvation? See John 3:16 and John 11:25

What yoke are you requiring of yourself to inherit God's promise of salvation, if any? What yoke are you putting on others for their salvation, if any?

DAY 6

What do you learn about God from these verses?



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Session 8: Discipleship Group Year End Discussion

(i) Hebrews, (ii) Parables of Jesus and (iii) Life of Peter

Review the materials from all of the previous sessions and answer the following questions.

What did you learn this year about Jesus?

What did you learn this year about faith?

What did you learn this year about service or good works?

What did you learn this year about the Kingdom of God?

What was the biggest area of doubt or struggle you encountered during your study of God's word?

What was the biggest area encouragement you encountered during the year?

What role has your Discipleship Group community helped you in your spiritual development?

How has your prayer life changed over the course of the year?

What tangible steps can you take to improve your prayer life?

What is your plan to continue to study God's word over the summer?

How is calling you to use your spiritual gifts to serve at TSH to reach people in the name of Jesus?