

Peter

Molding of a Leader

Robert H. Stein, a seminary teacher, and pastor said this in his book, Jesus the Messiah, “Apart from Jesus’ death and resurrection, probably no other event in His life possessed greater significance and had more lasting consequences than his choosing of the twelve.” p. 120

“Jesus took a tough-minded, successful businessman with a lot of raw talent and many rough edges and eventually changed him into a man of God.”

“One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.” John 1:40-41

I. Background of Peter

- A. He was from Galilee Peter’s hometown was Bethsaida, on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. (John 1:44) At the time of Christ, he had his home in Capernaum – port city with fish harbors and markets. Both his actions and mannerisms set him apart as being from this area. (dialect, clothing - Matt. 26:73; Acts 2:7)
- B. Married and head of a fishing business
- C. Probably part of the Galilean group at the cross (Luke 23:49; I Peter 5:1)
- D. Named first in all apostle lists.
- E. Most influential apostle in the early church
 - 1. Peter suggested a replacement for Judas Iscariot Acts 1:15-26
 - 2. 120 received the Holy Spirit but only Peter’s words are recorded Acts 2:1-14
 - 3. He and John performed the first miracle after Pentecost. Acts 3:1-8
 - 4. Peter traveled extensively on missionary journeys.
 - 5. Ministered to Gentiles but known as the “Apostle to the Jews” Galatians 2:8
- F. Writer of two books of the New Testament - 1 & 2 Peter 64-67 AD

“As Paul took a more active role in the work of the church and as the Jews became more hostile to Christianity, Peter faded into the background of the New Testament narrative.”

“And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.” John 1:42

II. Changes to Peter

- A. Changed Name – First meeting with Jesus John 1:40-42 Jesus knew the final outcome of this rugged, opinioned fisherman, and even before Christ’s first conversation with Peter, changed his name to reflect who he would become.

1. Simeon (Hebrew)/ Simon (Greek) – “hearing” though it means “hearing”/“quick to hear” it is connected with Peter’s old way of life – Peter was quick to hear but also quick to react. But not always wisely – impulsively. Jesus will use this name to get Peter’s attention or when He rebukes Him.
2. Cephas (Aramaic)/Peter (Greek) - “rock” - Peter - used the most in the Gospels
About two years later Jesus will explain to Peter His new name - Matt. 16:17-20 (Eph 2:20-22) *“Peter would become the primary leader of the apostles, and together they would lay the foundation for the church, a new and dynamic entity, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.”* Jesus will change him from the inside out!

“And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. ¹⁹And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. ²⁰And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.” Matthew 4:18-20

B. Changed Occupation – *“Peter went from the head of a fishing business to the head of fishing for men business!”*

1. Left and traveled with many of the same group of men. Andrew, James & John
2. Peter continued to be the leader. *“These men were already comfortable working with each other and reporting to Peter”* As Peter had the personality of a leader, and three men already worked with/for him, as the followers of Christ grew, all seemed to naturally follow Peter’s leadership. Actually, Peter became known as the “mouthpiece” of the apostles. Don’t miss it, this was in the plan of God. Brilliant strategy

“And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.” Mark 8:31-32

C. Changed Leadership Style

1. Old Style – spoke out boldly; ambitious, arrogant statements, even to the point of embarrassing others (always right) Mark 14:29; impulsively gave opinions when not asked for it; self-appointed spokesman; asked questions seemly for the group; even rebuked Jesus without full understanding. *“Bold statements, direct questions, and self-confidence in themselves do not make a godly servant-leader.”* Peter’s style of leadership was founded on **pride!**
2. New Style – Peter was still a natural leader; he did not lose his leadership skills but he learned to become more like Christ, a servant-leader! Please realize, Peter became the leader God desired by the filling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the obedience to Him during the testing of his character.

Heart of declaring Christ - “boldness” naming the name of Jesus repeatedly before the Jews and Religious Leaders without consideration for his own safety. Walk through Acts 5:12-42 No more fearful follower of Jesus, unsure of the plan of God, unsure of Christ’s plan for him!

Heart of “shepherding” others; - 1 Peter 1:1-6 Peter’s Lesson on Leadership!
No more a self-seeking, hurtful, arrogant leader. Instead taught an attitude of being tender, concerned, meek, humble, warm, caring, encouraging

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: ³² But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. ³³ And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.”
Luke 22:31-33

D. Changed Pride - Peter’s Ultimate Failure

1. Bold, prideful statements concerning his loyalty to Christ - Mark 14:27-31;
Luke 22:31-38 - proof action - cut off Malchus’ ear John 18:10 (every gospel book records this action of Peter)

2. Denies Christ in Judgment Hall Mark 14:54-72 Every gospel book records the denial of Peter! We are told that when Jesus looked at him, he remembered the words of Christ’s foretelling his denial, and went out and wept! *“Though this was Peter’s lowest point, he actually took a major step closer to becoming the man Jesus Christ wanted him to become.”*

3. Defeated returned to his “comfort zone” fishing! (found only in John 21) Let’s not be too hard on Peter. He had not been fishing for almost three years and without the constant leadership of Christ, the pressure of Jerusalem’s Religious Leaders, and the stinging memories of the recent denials – Peter led six follow-disciples fishing! Had no direction from Jesus or the Holy Spirit, so lead them fishing.
Even though Christ appeared to him 3 times!

4. Restoration comes with humble confession! It always does!
“Love for the Savior is the prerequisite for service!” – John 21:15-19 **Be mindful of the fact that with testing, even when we fail, there is the opportunity for growth and maturity that leads to usefulness to God, but it is all dependent on repentance, obedience, and faith moving forward.** Testing is more than hardships like illnesses, great losses, death, but instead it can be faithlessness (Luke 24: 19-27 as in the disciples attitude after the death of Christ) or willful sinning(Like Peter’s denial of Christ)! The disciples and Peter moved from their tests to repentance, obedience and faith!

“And he (Peter) said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.” Acts 10:28

E. Changed Prejudice - Five years after Pentecost

1. Forgot Lesson – John 10:16 In this passage, Jesus alludes to the fact that the gospel would be to the world. He had often displayed giving the truth to the Samaritans and Gentiles throughout His ministry.

2. Teaching dream – Acts 10:15-16 Perhaps you have heard that you can't build doctrine from the book of Acts, and this passage is a good example. God does not give us direction or teach us from a dream, we have the complete Word of God. But in this event of Peter, God gave him a dream and prepared him for ministry to Cornelius and those in Caesarea.
3. Great confession - Acts 10:34-35; 15:7-11 Peter got it! God wanted them to go to the whole world! "God is no respecter of persons:" when it came to the gift of salvation! When he understood this, he accepted it, and lead the way for the mostly Jewish church to open their hearts and minds to this truth!

Christian tradition says that Peter served Christ faithfully for 40 years, first with Jesus and the other eleven disciples, then in Jerusalem establishing the first church, then through the verification of God in a dream Peter opened the doors for the acceptance of Gentiles...just as Jesus had said, and lastly it seems by epistle records that Peter was active in the church of Rome. About 64-67 AD it is believed that he was martyred by crucifixion and was given his request to be crucified upside down, He didn't feel worthy to die as His Savior.

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ: ²Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, ³According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: ⁴Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:1-4

III. Lessons from Peter

- A. No matter your previous experiences, weaknesses, or past sins, Jesus Christ can use you to serve Him. It is wonderful to realize Peter's pattern was quick repentance. We saw it along the shores of the Sea of Galilee at the miracle of the great catch of fish after Peter had shown his faithlessness. There at Jesus' feet, he said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord," (Luke 5:8) Then later, he will repent after his denial of Jesus at the trials. Like Peter, we need to be quick to repent! We must examine ourselves – being "brutally honest" – and come to God in true repentance, a repentance that seeks to change those patterns that grieve the heart of God. (Walkthrough Psalm 51 ending with a careful look at verses 17-19.)
- B. Prejudice is one of the most difficult challenges many faces in their Christian lives.
 1. No man is mature in Christ who is prejudiced against others. A good test of our growth in an area of weakness or sin is our reaction in the face of peer pressure. Prejudice and peer pressure sometimes can go hand in hand. Unfortunately, we see this in the life of Peter in Gal. 2:11-14. Galatians is dated about 54-55 AD so about 10 years before Peter's death and the writing of 2 Peter. It is sad to see Peter still swayed away from the truth and faithful discipleship of the Gentile believers by his desire not to offend those Jewish believers from Jerusalem. God used Paul to forcefully and publicly reprimand Peter and remind him of the damage he was causing to the sake of the gospel. Please realize, our spiritual immaturity can greatly damage and even cripple those around us in our families and churches.

2. God cannot use one to the full if they allow prejudice to continue and to affect his attitude and actions toward others. Common prejudices: (many of these were of the Pharisees in Jesus' day) open sinners (gross sin or passive sin); uneducated, not as knowledgeable; physically or mentally handicapped; different ethnic background (sometimes just different is enough); religion/denomination other than our own; ones who don't agree with me We must come to the realization of the God truth as Peter did, "God is no respecter of persons:" and carefully watch our attitude and actions!

C. It takes time to become the person God wants you to become. –
"Becoming like Christ is a process." It is a process that takes a lifetime! Just as in Peter, Jesus calls us and then desires to makes us what He calls us to be! It is believed Peter wrote his second epistle about 35 years after his earthly walk with Christ and shortly before his martyrdom. It took years of obedience and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's power, to deal with his default self-sufficiency, pride, and prejudice. We must realize, we too should be growing and changing throughout our life. I remember sitting at my dining room table teaching a lesson on Christ to a varied group of ladies when one of my older and respected women said with tears how she struggled with certain sins. I remember the soul shock I felt, the sudden sadness and overwhelming disappointment. In my heart, I must have thought dear Miriam must have arrived at spiritual maturity, and with that, perhaps one day I would too. I academically knew better, that is not what the Bible taught, but the thought of Miriam struggling with sin was tough to imagine. I hardly thought Miriam would have an issue left! WOW! We are never completely mature in Christ and can put away the struggles of the old man until we open our eyes in heaven! This realization should bring us hope and patience. Hope that one day we will be perfect, and patient with ourselves and those around us who are not. 1 Peter 5:7-11

"God specialized in transforming hearts, redirecting our self-centered energy, and reshaping our raw talent and abilities to achieve His purposes in this world.... If we'll follow Him, listen to His teachings, and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, learn the lessons He wants us to learn we'll become the men and women He can use to change the world as Peter did!"

Finish with words from an old grandpa Peter: 1 Peter 1:13-2:3; 2 Peter 1:1-11

All italicized quotes are from Gene A. Getz's book
The Apostles, Becoming Unified Through Diversity