

The Twelve

Peter: Part Two

Mission

(Turning the world upside down with the Gospel of Jesus)

BIO OF PETER:

Name: Simon son of Jonah (nicknamed Peter by Jesus meaning rock)

Marital Status: Married

Wife's name: Unknown

Home town: Bethsaida, a town on Lake Ganesaret in Galilee (exact location unknown, possibly the north shore). The **apostle Philip also came from this town as well.**

Profession: Fisherman

Age: 20-25 years old

Relatives: Andrew, his brother and his mother-in-law are mentioned in the scriptures.

Personality: Extroverted, brusque, abrasive, loud, enthusiastic, impulsive, resolute, eager, bold, aggressive and outspoken. Peter is noted for being somewhat brash. He was quick to speak and share an opinion. He was quick to act and sometimes slow to think. He was susceptible to external influences and intimidated at times. But Peter really did love Jesus.

Social status: Uneducated in the Mosaic Law but seemed to have a reasonable fishing business with his brother (Andrew) and partners (James and John the sons of Zebedee). He seemed to have owned his own boat and it appears as though he owned a house in Capernaum as well.

General facts: Spoke Aramaic but also had an accent that clearly identified him as a Galilean; was 'unlearned' i.e. he had no additional religious or scriptural instruction; was a disciple of John the Baptist, and was one of the three apostles closest to Jesus.

Position amongst the twelve: Although not named as a leader, Peter certainly seems to be the apostle that was most apparent amongst Jesus's followers (his name is mentioned about 110 times in the gospels). His name is mentioned first in all the lists of the Apostles. Jesus seemed to have a closer relationship with him together with James and John and these three would often be called out by Jesus to go somewhere or do something that the others were not invited to (Example: the transfiguration and the Garden of Gethsemane). After Christ's ascension, Peter appears to take a position of leadership, quickly becoming the spokesman for the group, and the other disciples seem to follow without resistance.

Death: He was martyred as prophesied by Jesus. Early church tradition claims that Peter was in Rome in the last phase of his life and that he was executed by crucifixion (upside down, with arms outstretched) at the time of the Great Fire of Rome of the year 64, during the reign of Emperor Nero. Most scholars believe that Peter was crucified sometime between AD 64 and 68.

INTRODUCTION

In the first part of our study on Peter we noted how Jesus formed Peter's character for the purpose of mission. In this part we'll look at the mission itself – the focus of what it is we do as Christians.

As we mentioned before, in 2013 about five hundred to seven hundred thousand sermons were preached in Johannesburg, yet things have gone backwards. This is a shocking stat and the missing ingredient in the mobilisation of the priesthood is us becoming disciples of Christ. Surely all of the preaching going on should mean that society will change? Surely something of what God is doing in us should bring change? Well, we must be willing to change.

The Bible talks of us hungering and thirsting for righteousness and we agree with that, but the scriptures talk of more after that. Now that we hunger and thirst for righteousness, what changes? **Now that we've had moments with God, what changes?**

We're turning the world upside down with the gospel of **Jesus**, not our understanding of church planting or discipleship or some great doctrine. **What was Jesus called to do on this earth? To seek and save the lost.** Your calling in Jesus should fit right into that. Too often we say we're called to this or that and it's outside of what Jesus was called to. We're called to be His disciples, so let's go back to that.

That doesn't mean we become a thirty-year old Jewish man and grow a beard. We're talking about the heart. Jesus didn't teach His disciples how to preach and that sort of thing, but He spent seven years dealing with the disciples' hearts. So we need to get away from an idea that we create people who look and do the same thing as us. We want people who are in love with Jesus, not us, so we can all get busy with His mission.

Peter wasn't a clean cut guy. When he drew closer to God he found that there was a calling on his life that Jesus had for him. There are three points we can see in his life, and in the way Jesus disciplined him, that helped Peter develop his call and that will help us impact our world.

1. Christ's purpose needs to become our calling

Luke 9:10 says that **Jesus' mission was to “seek and save the lost.”**

Luke 4: 42 - 44 also highlights this:

“And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; *for I was sent for this purpose.*” And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.”

When Peter preaches to Cornelius (and his household) later on in Acts, he summarises Jesus' ministry like this (Acts 10:37-38):

You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Jesus was brought onto this earth to seek and save the lost. Wherever he went, He drew people towards him. So if that was Jesus' purpose and Peter was called by Jesus, what was Peter's purpose? Exactly the same. **And what is our purpose? Exactly the same.**

The principle of being Christ followers (disciples) is that we deny ourselves and follow Jesus, and through this see the very nature (character) of Jesus develop in our lives: “gentle and lowly in heart.”

2. Discipleship by doing

After following Jesus for only seven months, Peter is sent out on mission, along with the rest of the twelve. **Therefore we need not be perfect, only willing and obedient!** Also, there are lessons we can only learn on the job, in the field, while doing the work of the ministry.

Let's look at a summary of those seven months of discipling that Peter was exposed to:

Matthew 9 : 35 - 38

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The

harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.”

- Jesus preaches in a synagogue.
- Jesus heals a leper.
- Jesus heals the paralytic man, whose four friends break open the roof and lower him to where Jesus was.
- Jesus heals a cripple man at Bethesda.
- Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath.
- Jesus calls the twelve to be apostles.
- Jesus teaches on the mountainside (the sermon on the mount).
- Jesus heals the centurion's servant.
- Jesus rebukes three cities (Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum) for not repenting. (Matthew 11:20.)
- Jesus eats at Simon the leper's house.
- Jesus heals a man who is blind and mute, delivering him of a demon. Filled with jealousy, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of healing in the power of Satan, and Jesus rebukes them!
- Jesus' family look for him, and He replies, “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” (Matthew 12:50.)
- Jesus delivers the demoniac of Gerasenes from a legion of demons.
- A woman with a issue of blood for twelve years is healed when she touches the hem of Jesus' garment.
- Jesus raises Jairus' (the synagogue ruler's) daughter from the dead.
- Jesus teaches using parables (the parable of the sower and the Kingdom parables). He explains the parables to his disciples.
- Jesus is rejected at Nazareth and He says that a prophet is without honour in his home town. He could not do any miracles there because of their great unbelief.

This is discipleship as Jesus intends! **When we compare the way we disciple it is far more passive, theoretical and mostly lukewarm!** It's more about being spectators or consumers - a “come and get” approach instead of a “come and give” approach.

Jesus sends them out:

Matthew 10:1-11:1

(Called, commissioned and empowered for mission)

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits,

to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.

(Sent to give freely)

These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. (NIV says “freely you have received, freely give”)

(Persecution will come - there is a cost involved)

“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

(Have no fear)

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven,

(Not peace, but a sword)

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. **Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.**

Four months later the 72 disciples are sent out (Luke 10). When they return, they are caught up with the miracles and power that had been given to them. But Jesus keeps them focused on their salvation!

Luke 10:17-20

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in

this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

In going out on mission, adjustments are made. We will miss out on these if our understanding of Christianity is a static or consumer one, with sitting and receiving only. We find that many go out on apostolic trips and the work done in them far outweighs what happened through them.

Too many of us want a good theory of the nations and want to sit and read about it. Let's forget about that and go on the next trip and something *will* change.

Matthew summarises Jesus' ministry like this (Matthew 9:35 - 38):

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, **teaching** in their synagogues and **proclaiming** the gospel of the kingdom and **healing** every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

We need to be teaching, proclaiming the Gospel and trusting that the Holy Spirit will demonstrate the Kingdom through miracles like healing. Jesus didn't wait for the disciples to go through school and become respectable before he sent them. He was concerned about them having His heart. He wasn't worried about Peter dressing properly and having manners, but whether seeking and saving the lost burned in his bones.

Peter was being prepared for mission throughout his time with Jesus. As painful as the process was, we see the purpose of it all in Acts where Peter becomes the apostolic spearhead, preaching and pioneering the Gospel, seeing 3,000 saved at one time. Now we see the value of every correction and bit of maturing he went through in the discipleship process.

Peter's denial of Jesus, and his subsequent reinstatement and calling, serves as one of the best examples of the purpose of discipleship - being shaped for mission. For Peter this was the melting pot!

Luke 22 : 31 - 34

Jesus foretells Peter's denial

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

Luke 22 : 54 - 62

Peter denies Jesus three times

And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

John 21 : 15 - 19

Jesus reinstates Peter, calling him again and prophesying his death

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

We serve a great God - Jesus uses us and gives us our mission despite our failures. Peter denied Jesus three times! **Some Christians think that if you deny Jesus once you're not going to heaven! But not with Jesus.** He is gracious and merciful and loving. If we have a heart after God he will re-instate our call and re-instate us. **God wants us to be men and women after his own heart**, he's not too worried about everything else.

3. Enabling by the Holy Spirit

In the first half of Acts Peter takes a leading role in continuing Jesus' mission of discipling the nations. **The difference? He was now filled and enabled by the Holy Spirit.**

- He took the lead in deciding to appoint an apostle to replace Judas. (Acts 1:15-22.)
- He was present in the upper room when God baptised the 120 disciples in the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2.)
- He stood up to preach to the crowd when the disciples were accused of being drunk after being filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. As the result of his preaching 3,000 were saved! (Acts 2:14-40.)

- Peter, along with John, healed the disabled man whilst they were on their way to the temple to pray. This results in persecution by the religious council, and 5,000 more are added to the Kingdom! (Acts 3-4.) They pray and ask God for greater boldness to preach His Gospel.

Acts 4 : 29 - 31

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

- He foretells the death of Ananias and Sapphira, and numbers continue to be added to the church. (Acts 5:1-11.)
- Peter is imprisoned and whipped for preaching the Gospel; his defense before the council. (Acts 5:17-42.)
- But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men'. (Acts 5:29.)
- Goes to Samaria after Philip preaches the Gospel there and the whole town is saved and prays for the new converts to receive the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:15-18.)
- He rebuked Simon the sorcerer, who desired to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:18-24.)
- Returns to Jerusalem. (Acts 8:25.)
- Visits Joppa while on a preaching circuit; stays with Simon, the tanner; raises Dorcas from the dead. (Acts 9:36-43.)
- Through a series of events, Peter preaches the Gospel to Cornelius and his household, and the Gospel now expands to the Gentiles. (Acts 10.)
- Advocates the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles in the hearing of the apostles and elders. (Acts 11:1-18; 15:7-11.)
- Imprisoned and delivered by an angel. (Acts 12:3-19.)
- Wrote two epistles which were included in the New Testament canon: 1 and 2 Peter.
- Dies a martyr's death.

Through the infilling of the Holy Spirit and taking hold of Jesus' heart we can do our mission. We can't forget that the Holy Spirit is there to help us fulfill our calling (Acts 1:8). Whatever power you need to transform you and fulfill your call, cry out for it.

We can't go to places and try and catch an anointing from people. **No one can give you what they've got. No one can give you a love for God.** You can have an encounter with God but

does something change? How do you get up off the floor? You need to grab the heart of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is not there to make us look good and prop up what we're doing. He's there to help us fulfill the mission of seeking and saving the lost!

How do you know your calling? It's actually not complicated. We have our calling already - to seek and save the lost. Start there and it'll come together.

This season isn't one where we stare at ourselves and make sure we're OK. God is demanding a people that are firmly in love with Jesus, who understand the Holy Spirit and His role, so we can change our world! **Throughout history, people like Wilberforce, Wesley or Whitfield had a heart for Jesus and seeking and saving the lost. That cannot be denied. That's how we do it.**

If we're a community who hunger and thirst for Jesus, it's going to be contagious. We're in a world where there are too many bad examples and that breaks our heart. We need to get over that. **Let's not worry about what others are doing and selling, let's worry about what Jesus has called us to do and let's get on with it.**

A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

We must have this. The disciples were able to follow Jesus and go with him. If you're desperate to save the lost and move into God's calling, how's your relationship with God? How well do you know Him? How desperate are you for God to work in your life? When we fall in love we pursue the person we love. Some of us take God and our relationship with Him for granted. We need this again to fulfill what God has called us to do. We need to get to times when we're on our knees crying out for the lost and to see justice come.

In terms of signs and wonders, I know that Jesus is doing a lot of things in the scriptures we're looking at and we can look at these scriptures and try and make formulas out of them - for example, if we want to see blind people blind, we need to spit in their eyes and get the spit-mud ratio right. When we do that we miss it. The point of the miracles was to show Jesus is the saviour. Let's not miss it.

Often people look at Christianity and know there is a sacrifice - we give up ourselves. But too many of us say it's too much of a sacrifice. Here's what Jesus says in **Matthew 11: 28 - 30:**

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Give up your yoke and let Jesus take charge. The picture here is Jesus being the second ox in the yoke, doing all the work for the other one – carrying the load. It's not a picture of Jesus driving the oxen who are under the yoke! Too many of us strain around this massive yoke of who we think we are and who we think we should be. But Jesus is saying we must relax, give that up, and let Him take the load.

Matthew 16 : 24 - 28

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. **For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?** Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

Yes there is a giving up to become more like Him but if we truly understand what discipleship is, we'll know that even though we get corrected on the way, it's still easy and light. Jesus wants to carry the yoke. He is the main attraction. Let him carry the load!

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

1. Are we aware of the purposes of discipleship (being Christ followers)? Character (becoming like Christ) and mission (doing what Christ did)?
2. Are we teachable, mouldable, grow-able and willing to change, so that we can be shaped for mission?
3. Are we using our talents (Matthew 25:14-30) or minas (Luke 19:11-27)? If we are, more will be added to us - greater trust, responsibility and influence, AND rewards later! God uses us as we are, but the more faithful we are in using what He gave us and our submission to Him shaping us, will give us greater spheres of influence. Always for the Kingdom!