

SIMON LETER



His Faith
and Ministry

Simon Peter: His Faith and Ministry

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Introduction

By studying people's lives, we can learn valuable lessons from their experiences. For example, a biography of a star athlete can teach us perseverance and hard work. Or a biography about a dedicated missionary can teach us to reach the lost passionately with the gospel. But what can we learn from the life of a common fisherman who lived 2,000 years ago?

Peter is a relatable human being—an everyday person doing everyday activities until he met Jesus. Although he is often remembered for his mistakes and doubts, he can teach us important lessons about faith. Hopefully, this study will help your students get to know Peter better as they learn important lessons about trusting the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson Format

God's Word is the primary catalyst for our spiritual growth. As God teaches us His truth through His Word, He captivates our attention and expands our understanding. Christ illustrated His teaching with tangible objects—a coin, a tree, or a sheep, and similarly, you can use illustrations to cement biblical principles in your students' minds. Rather than simply talking about how God's Word reveals our heart (James 1:22–25), bring a mirror to show your students.

Hot Shots encourage interaction between students and the teacher through exercises, handouts, and lively illustrations. Use the suggestions provided in each lesson, but feel free to enrich the lesson by using your own ideas.

Each Hot Shot lesson follows the same format.

- The **Warm Up** introduces the lesson topic through an activity, like a game, worksheet, or survey.
- The **Bridge** relates that topic to the lesson itself using an illustration or discussion prompt.
- And at the end of each lesson, the **Conclusion** reviews the main points.

Handouts may be copied for church use. They are also available as a free PDF download on the *Simon Peter* product page at positiveaction.org.

Before Each Lesson . . .

1. Read through the lesson and take note of the objectives, Scripture passages, and any preparation needed for creative teaching segments.
2. Adapt the lesson if necessary. Determine ahead of time if you'll need to modify the teaching methods or activities to fit your equipment or facilities.
3. Plan your schedule for class time. Each lesson can be taught in 20–30 minutes, but feel free to shorten or lengthen the lesson to fit your needs.
4. Be enthusiastic! Excitement on your part will help cultivate your students' interest. If you don't feel that one of the teaching ideas or Warm Ups provided will excite your teens, modify it to fit your group.

Course Objectives

This study will . . .

Survey the life of Simon Peter, one of Jesus' 12 apostles and a key leader in the early church.

Identify times when Peter showed great faith and times when his faith faltered because of fear and doubt.

Encourage students to trust Jesus to grow their faith as they follow and obey Him.

Lesson Overview

Lesson 1—Who Was Peter?

Jesus called a fisherman named Peter to be one of His disciples.

Peter had a leadership role among the 12 apostles.

Doubt is a normal experience, even for people of faith.

Lesson 2—Peter's Highs and Lows

Peter, at times, demonstrated strong faith in Jesus.

Peter, at times, demonstrated weak faith and misunderstanding.

Jesus always deserves our trust and faith.

Lesson 3—Peter's Recommissioning

The resurrected Jesus gave His disciples peace, the Holy Spirit, and a gospel-sharing mission.

Our faith depends on the resurrection of Jesus.

Even though Peter had previously denied Jesus, he could still go on to serve as a faithful follower.

Lesson 4—Peter's Bold Witness for Christ

God used Peter to reach many people with the gospel.

Peter boldly shared the gospel, no matter the risk.

God used Peter to perform many miracles.

Lesson 5—Peter's Ministry in the Early Church

God used Peter to unite believers within the Church.

God miraculously delivered Peter so that Peter could continue to serve the Church.

God used Peter to write Scripture to encourage and teach believers.

Lesson presentations for this study are available to download free at positiveaction.org.

LESSON 1

Who Was Peter?

Peter was an early follower of Jesus. He was a regular person who had the amazing privilege of working closely with Jesus. As we learn about Peter's life, we can learn more about what it means to trust and follow Jesus.

Content Objectives

- Jesus called a fisherman named Peter to be one of His disciples.
- Peter had a leadership role among the 12 apostles.
- Doubt is a normal experience, even for people of faith.

Warm Up

God works differently in each of our lives. Distribute a copy of Handout 1 to each student. Allow students to complete the handout individually. After students have had time to complete their worksheets, have them share some of their responses.

Bridge

Not only can we learn *about* one another, but we can learn *from* one another. Each of us has lessons we've learned, and we can share those lessons with others. As Christians, we have learned spiritual lessons that we can share with others to help them. We can learn spiritual lessons from Peter's life that can help us grow in our relationship with God.

As we begin a five-lesson study on the life of Peter, it's important to remember that Peter was a real person. We can learn about him and some of the lessons he learned while literally walking with Jesus. We'll see how God worked in his life through a series of spiritual victories and failures and how God was working to build Peter's faith.

Lesson

We don't have complete and detailed records of Peter's life. We don't know when he was born, what he was like as a child, or if he had any children. He never published an autobiography, and the earliest stories about him, written after the New Testament, are so fantastical and embellished that it's impossible to know if they contain any true historical details.

Almost all our information about Peter comes from the Bible. God has given us the trustworthy record of Scripture to help us learn and grow as Christians.

Preparation

You will need:

- Handout 1
(1 copy per student)
- Pens or pencils

Peter was a fisherman before he became a disciple.

When we meet Peter, he's already an adult and working as a fisherman. We don't know much about his childhood. However, we do know he had a brother named Andrew, and their father's name was John (Matt. 16:17). When Peter was born, his parents named him Simon. Later, Jesus changed his name to Peter, so sometimes he's called Peter or Simon Peter in Scripture (John 1:42). In addition to those names, Scripture in several places also refers to him as Simeon, reflecting how Peter's name would have sounded in Aramaic (Acts 15:14; 2 Pet. 1:1, translations vary). In this study, we'll refer to him primarily as Peter.

Peter's hometown was called Bethsaida (John 1:44), but he lived in another town called Capernaum (Mark 1:21, 29). Both of these towns were near the Sea of Galilee. Peter probably grew up fishing. He didn't have much of a formal education in the study of Scripture (see Acts 4:13). We know that he was married, but the Bible doesn't tell us anything about his wife other than that Jesus healed her mother (see Luke 4:38; 1 Cor. 9:5). Until Peter met Jesus, he spent his days catching fish with his brother Andrew and their business partners James and John. Everything in his life changed the day that his brother Andrew introduced him to Jesus.

Read John 1:40–42. Andrew had already met Jesus and had heard John the Baptist describe Him as “the Lamb of God” (John 1:36). Andrew was so excited that he also wanted his brother to meet the Messiah, the perfect ruler God had promised to send. During this first meeting, Jesus gave Peter his new name, which means “rock.” We will look more at Jesus' choice of names for Peter in our next lesson.

Shortly after Peter's first meeting with Jesus, Peter encountered Jesus again in a way that would forever alter the course of his life.

Discussion: Read Luke 5:1–11. What miracle did Jesus perform? *Jesus provided a miraculously large catch of fish.* How did Peter respond to Jesus' miracle? *He recognized that he was a sinner in the presence of someone with great power.* What career change did Jesus have for Peter and his fellow fishermen? *They would become fishers of men.*

Scripture doesn't indicate that Peter understood that Jesus was God at that moment. But he did understand that Jesus was a spiritual teacher with great power, and he left all he owned to follow Jesus (Matt. 19:27).

Peter was a leader among the disciples.

As we talk about Peter, the terms *disciple* and *apostle* will come up because Peter was both.

Disciples are students who learn from their teacher. Every Christian is a disciple because they learn from Jesus and strive to obey His teachings.

Apostles are special messengers. While the term is used for others in the New Testament, the gospels use this word to refer to Jesus' 12 disciples whom He sent out to tell others about Him (Mark 3:14)

Because Scripture refers to Jesus' 12 followers as "disciples," "apostles," and "the twelve," we commonly use these words interchangeably.

Peter had a prominent role among the apostles. Out of the twelve, Jesus chose three who seemed to have a closer relationship with Him—Peter, James, and John—to accompany Him to His transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–13). These three also went farther with Jesus when He prayed in Gethsemane before His betrayal (Matt. 26:36–37). Often, Peter took on a spokesman role for the disciples (Matt. 15:15; 18:21; 19:27). It's no coincidence that Peter's name appears first anytime all of the disciples are listed (Matt. 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:13–16; Acts 1:13).

Scripture tells us much more about some of the disciples than others. Peter, however, appears so much that we have more than enough material to cover in this series. God chose to preserve many details about Peter's faith journey as a disciple that we can study and apply for our own spiritual development.

Peter was a faithful follower of Jesus who sometimes experienced doubt.

For many people, Peter walking on the water with Jesus is the one familiar story about Peter. It's a perfect story to introduce his struggle between doubt and belief.

Peter and the other apostles had been following Jesus for some time and had heard Him teach the most wonderful spiritual truths. They were eyewitnesses to many amazing miracles, such as when Jesus . . .

- healed a woman who had suffered for 12 years (Matt. 9:20–22).
- brought a dead girl back to life (Matt. 9:18–26).
- restored sight to two blind men (Matt. 9:27–31).
- cast out a demon and gave a man who couldn't speak the ability to talk (Matt. 9:32–34).
- healed a man with a withered hand (Matt. 12:9–14).
- multiplied five loaves of bread and two fish to feed over 5,000 people (Matt. 14:13–21).

Jesus did all this and more, and Peter witnessed many, if not all, of these miracles. Yet even after seeing so many miracles, Peter's faith still faltered, as we see in an event that took place shortly after Jesus performed the miracle of feeding over 5,000 people. **Read Matthew 14:22–33.**

Discussion: Did Peter demonstrate faith or doubt? Peter showed faith by attempting to walk on the water to meet Jesus. Why did Peter doubt?

Peter believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Peter was present for Jesus' teaching and miracles. He believed. Yet his faith still wavered in a time of crisis. Even though Peter stepped out onto the water by faith and walked toward Jesus, the strong winds on the sea caused him to fear.

Discussion: Can you describe a challenging time when you found it difficult to trust the Lord? What would you do or say to encourage a friend in a similar situation?

Even though Peter doubted, Jesus rescued him from danger. Peter learned that he could trust Jesus. Everyone present worshiped Jesus because they recognized His incredible power. He was very different from a regular person. By calling Jesus the "Son of God," the disciples communicated that Jesus was closely connected to God the Father—much closer than any normal person.

We have only begun to outline the trajectory of Peter's faith, but we can already see how Christians can relate to his experience. As believers, we also have been introduced to Jesus. We've gotten to know Him by reading about Him in Scripture and trusting Him. Over time, our faith and confidence in Him should grow as He does good things for us and helps us through difficulties.

Closing

We need to make sure we don't reduce Peter to a caricature who always spoke up too soon and said the wrong things. Sure, there were times when his faith in Jesus wavered and when he spoke or acted recklessly without understanding the bigger picture. However, he was a real person, like us, who sometimes exhibited bold faith and sometimes allowed his faith to flounder. Yet Jesus patiently worked with Peter, just as Jesus patiently works with us as we follow Him. At times, we may doubt, but we can look to Jesus and see someone we can always trust and count on.

Discussion: Ask for any final questions or comments. Then close in prayer, asking for God's help to trust Him when we are tempted to doubt.



HANDOUT 1

My Biography

Answer the following questions and be prepared to share your responses.

What are two interesting things that have happened to you?

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. _____ _____ _____ _____ | 2. _____ _____ _____ _____ |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

What is something you enjoy doing?

| |
|----------------------------------|
| _____ _____ _____ _____ |
|----------------------------------|

What are two goals you have for your future?

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. _____ _____ | 2. _____ _____ |
|-------------------|-------------------|

Name one thing you're thankful for that God has done in your life.

| |
|----------------|
| _____ _____ |
|----------------|

What is an important lesson you've learned that could help others?

| |
|----------------|
| _____ _____ |
|----------------|