

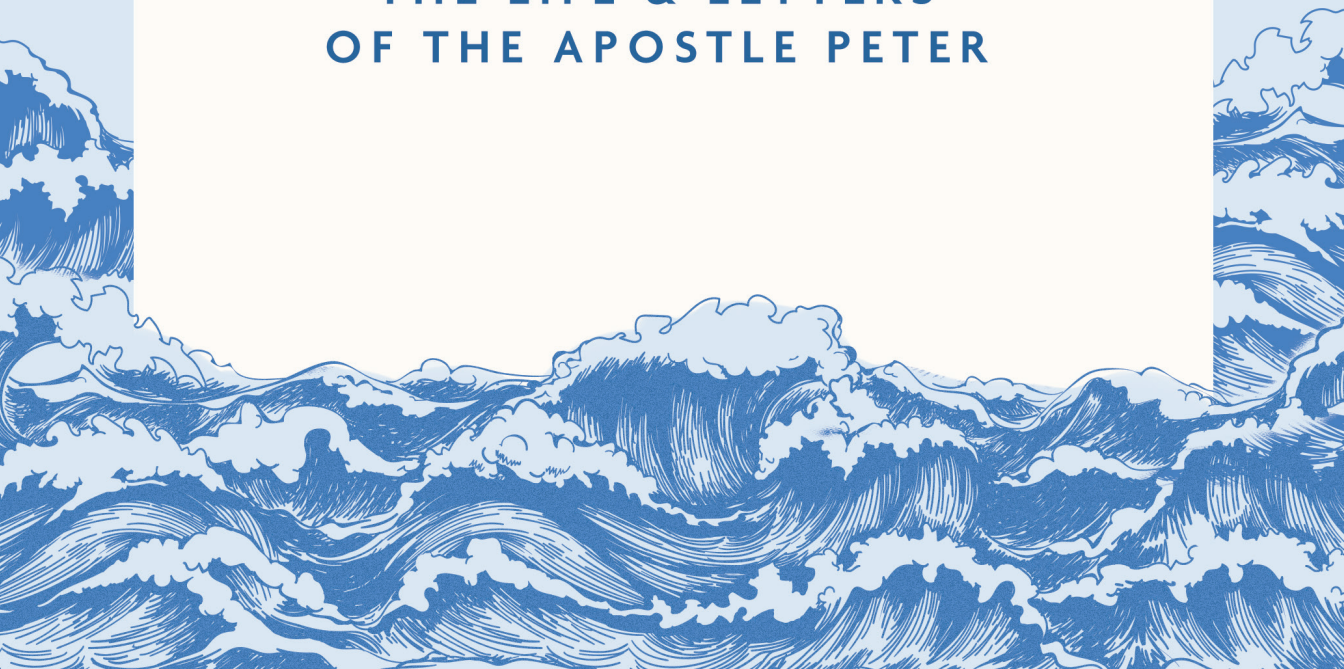
MARIAN JORDAN ELLIS

VIDEO
ACCESS
INCLUDED



ANCHORED

THE LIFE & LETTERS
OF THE APOSTLE PETER



week
one

SIMON PETER



A DISCIPLE
ANCHORED TO
CHRIST



“FOR WE ARE UNABLE TO STOP SPEAKING
ABOUT WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD.”

– THE APOSTLE PETER (ACTS 4:20)

Imagine a sailboat, tossing about at sea, straining against a raging storm. Facing tumultuous winds and crashing waves, the vessel is likely to crash against rocks or sink under pressure without one vital piece of equipment—the anchor. The same holds true for us today. Living as followers of Christ in a broken world, where pressures to conform to a godless culture continue to increase, we can feel like a ship facing gale-force winds. We desperately need an anchor to hold us steady, moored to the truth.

As we embark on this study, let's delve into the meaning of the word *anchor*. First, it is a verb, describing the action of securing a boat to prevent it from drifting away in the current, capsizing in a storm, or colliding with rocks. Through the life and letters of the apostle Peter, we will learn from a man who anchored his life to Jesus Christ.

This example is fitting since Peter, a fisherman by trade, had ample experience using anchors on fishing boats. He also knew a thing or two about winds, waves, and Jesus's unrivaled power to anchor a soul in a storm.

What strikes me is that *anchor* is also a noun used to describe the person who is the primary reporter of the news in a newscast. Famous news anchors of past decades include Walter Cronkite, Peter Jennings, and Katie Couric. Imagine Peter as a news anchor. He was a simple fisherman who became one of Jesus's closest friends and an evangelist boldly declaring the good news of what Christ accomplished. Therefore, in our study of God's Word, we lean close to listen to Peter's apostolic witness, which gives him a unique platform to equip, encourage, and teach us, the church, how to anchor our lives to Jesus.

day one

COME AND SEE

ANDREW, SIMON PETER'S BROTHER, WAS ONE OF THE TWO WHO HEARD JOHN AND FOLLOWED HIM. HE FIRST FOUND HIS OWN BROTHER SIMON AND TOLD HIM, "WE HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAH."

JOHN 1:40-41

Can you pinpoint a time, an event, or a decision that altered the direction of your life? Perhaps it was the moment you met your spouse, or the day you enrolled in a particular university? Maybe it was something heartbreaking, like the death of a parent or a devastating health diagnosis. For a young fisherman named Simon, his life trajectory was radically altered when, during his daily routine of working in his family's fishing business, he had a dramatic encounter with Jesus Christ.

After a long hard night of fishing that produced nothing, Jesus stepped into Simon's boat and invited him to take a step of faith. (As we will see later in today's study, Simon was already familiar with the Rabbi Jesus from a previous meeting, but this moment on the Sea of Galilee sealed the deal.)

READ LUKE 5:1-11.

What Instruction did Jesus give to Simon in verse 4?

Why do you think Simon was reluctant to follow Jesus's instructions?

Why would this miracle have impressed a seasoned fisherman to such magnitude?

Simon was a professional fisherman. He knew the enormous catch of fish was impossible apart from the power of God. His own efforts had produced nothing, but now, at the command of Jesus, he experienced a haul of fish so massive it boggled his mind. The fact that this miracle occurred at the word of Jesus left him gripped by holy fear. Peter fell at Jesus's feet in wonder and worship—forever anchoring his life to the Master.

Why do you think the miracle caused Peter to recognize his sinful human condition?

According to Luke 5:11, what did Simon do after this encounter?

While a supernatural catch of fish is impressive, a greater miracle was yet to unfold. Jesus invited the brash and impulsive fisherman to be His disciple, and a supernatural transformation would take place in Peter's heart. In beholding Jesus, Peter saw his broken humanity. He declared, "I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8). Peter's assessment was correct for himself and for us; in the presence of God's holiness, our sinful state is revealed, and we recognize our desperate need for grace. Thankfully, transforming grace is Jesus's specialty.

Jesus said, "It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."

MARK 2:17

The beauty of Simon Peter's calling, and one thing we discover in studying his life, is that Jesus didn't seek out perfect people. Instead, He came for normal, everyday sinners—just like Simon and just like me—whom He transforms by His amazing grace.

How have you personally experienced the grace of God? Describe a time when you recognized your sinfulness and need for Jesus's merciful forgiveness.

Simply writing Simon Peter's name brings a smile to my face and reminds me of my own experience of God's amazing grace. Although I've obviously never met the apostle who led the early church, I feel as though he's a mentor who's been teaching me how to follow Jesus for over twenty-five years.

Friends, this year I celebrated my 50th birthday. This milestone caused me to reflect on God's amazing grace that transformed my life. I lived my first twenty-five years in the darkness of sin, chasing after the pleasures of the world. Those years were marked by emptiness, brokenness, and shame. But at age twenty-five, I heard the gospel of grace, fell in love with Jesus, and committed my life to following Him. Because of that decision, the second half of my life has been marked by Jesus's power taking my brokenness and making me whole. Like Simon Peter, the direction of my life was forever changed by Jesus.

For this reason, I'm fascinated by the life and letters of Peter. Following his story through the Gospels inspired my own awe-filled worship of the Lord. In the Gospels we see Jesus's grace towards sinful women, His mercy to the outcast, and His power to heal and set captives free. Through what Simon Peter witnessed and experienced, I saw God's power to change my life.

But Peter has been there in my darkest days, too. Through the crushing pain of faith-testing seasons, the apostle's life and letters anchored me to God's faithfulness, encouraged me to hold fast to Jesus, and taught me how to stand firm in the face of the enemy.

But I'll be brutally honest, Peter's foot-in-mouth tendency, his confusion, and his impetuous and brash personality, gave me hope that the Lord could both love and use a girl like me. Like Peter, I'm a flawed human who has been known to speak before I think, misunderstand the will of God, and walk in fear when I should have walked in faith.

What I'm trying to say is this: Peter was human—*just like us*. The Bible doesn't attempt to hide his flaws or follies. Instead, Peter provides a tangible example of God's grace at work in a real person. Aside from Jesus, Peter is the most mentioned figure in the Gospels.¹ While the portrayals aren't always flattering, they are real. And this unfiltered realness helps each of us better know how to follow Jesus.

What aspect of your personality tends to make you feel shame? How does knowing Simon Peter had plenty of character flaws encourage you that God can use your life for His glory?



God's favorite instruments are nobodies, so that no man can boast before God. God chooses whom He chooses in order that He might receive glory. He chooses weak instruments so that no one will attribute the power to human instruments rather than to God, who wields those instruments.²

JOHN MACARTHUR

While Peter certainly had mountaintop experiences, he also suffered in the valleys. In addition to his heroic moments, we also feel the heavy weight of his shame as he denied Jesus. Peter is a man who loved God fiercely but still failed Him brutally. Through his successes and failures, the apostle teaches us to savor our Savior and anchor our lives to His truth.

All four Gospels reveal various aspects of Simon Peter's calling to follow Jesus, but John described the initial meeting. In this important encounter, Jesus spoke a prophetic word over Simon, declaring who he would become by the power of God. This declaration proves vital to our study.



JOHN THE BAPTIST

John the Baptist was a fiery prophet who led a spiritual revival in Israel that prepared the way for people to recognize and receive Jesus as Messiah. John's ministry called for repentance from sin and was characterized by water baptism that symbolized the cleansing power of God.

READ JOHN 1:28-42 and answer the following questions about Simon Peter's first encounter with Jesus.

What was John the Baptist's testimony concerning Jesus's identity and mission (v. 29)?

What did John the Baptist witness that confirmed Jesus's identity as the Son of God (vv. 32-34)?

Who began following Jesus because of John the Baptist's prophetic decree of Jesus as the "Lamb of God" (John 1:40)?

What did Andrew do after his initial meeting with Jesus (v. 41)?

What powerful word did Jesus give Simon (v. 42)?

In their first face to face encounter, Jesus gave Simon a new name. The name *Peter* in English is a translation of *Petros* in the Greek or *Cephas* in Aramaic, which means rock or stone.

For Simon, an immature and impetuous young fisherman from Galilee, this name change spoke of his future character and calling.

Jesus saw the rock Peter would become by the grace of God and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. He would become a sturdy stone used for the building of the church, and a man who, despite how he started the journey, would be used mightily for God's glory.



ANCHOR YOUR LIFE TO THIS TRUTH

Friend, there is a beautiful message for us in Peter's initial encounter with Jesus. God's grace transforms. Jesus sees who we will become as we follow Him. He specializes in taking a mess and making a masterpiece for His glory (Eph. 2:8-10). We all come to His table of grace with our sin, brokenness, and unrefined personalities, but are daily transformed by His Spirit into who God desires for us to be.

day two

SIMON PETER, THE DISCIPLE

AS [JESUS] PASSED ALONGSIDE THE SEA OF GALILEE, HE SAW SIMON AND ANDREW, SIMON'S BROTHER, CASTING A NET INTO THE SEA—FOR THEY WERE FISHERMEN. "FOLLOW ME," JESUS TOLD THEM, "AND I WILL MAKE YOU FISH FOR PEOPLE." IMMEDIATELY THEY LEFT THEIR NETS AND FOLLOWED HIM.

MARK 1:16-18

Growing up in a small town with a church on every corner, I'd heard about Jesus my entire life. And since my parents were faithful Christians, I was often in church on Sunday mornings. But here's the rub—I personally didn't know or follow Jesus. Sure, I learned loads of information about Him, but my lifestyle, habits, and desires resembled the world around me. Nothing in my life said I was a disciple of Jesus or that His life marked my own.

While I knew about religion, I didn't know Jesus. Therefore, if you had asked me if I was a Christian, I would have said, "Sure, isn't everyone?" The problem with bearing that label was that I was not a disciple of Jesus Christ, which is what He invites us to become.

How would you define "disciple"?

A disciple is someone who commits to learn and practice the teachings, lifestyle, and ministry of their rabbi (teacher). Digging into the Gospels, we see that Jesus was a Jewish rabbi who invited His disciples to follow His manner of life, learn from His teachings about the kingdom of God, and observe as He modeled how to live in relationship with

God the Father. His miracles demonstrated both His identity as the Messiah and the power of the kingdom. As the disciples walked with Jesus, they soon discovered that He was not merely a man, but God in the flesh. In time, He commissioned His disciples to go and make other disciples who would obey His teachings and live in the kingdom, just as they did.

I became a disciple of Jesus Christ after graduating from college and moving to Houston, Texas. At a friend's invitation, I reluctantly sat in the balcony of a church in our city. As I sat there, steeped in the brokenness of my sin and shame, the gospel message reached my ears and penetrated my heart. I beheld the glory of Jesus and knew I needed grace. What I remember most was a magnetic draw, gripping my soul and demanding a response. I literally felt pulled to get up from my seat and move. Propelled by the Spirit of God, I hurried down the balcony stairs to the altar, and surrendered my life to follow Jesus.

After that initial surrender, I immersed myself in solid Bible teaching. I publicly affirmed my commitment to Jesus through believer's baptism and turned away from my sinful lifestyle to follow Jesus and live a life of obedience to Him. Along the way, several godly women came alongside me and lovingly and patiently taught me how to walk with Jesus.

Twenty-five years later, I'm still following Him. Jesus Christ is the love of my life. But it's been a process. As a new disciple, I learned to walk in obedience to His truth, despite many stumbling and awkward moments. Then, as I slowly matured in the faith, I learned to disciple others. This is the process of discipleship that Jesus established, beginning with a young man named Simon Peter and a few of his buddies. They surrendered their lives to the Lord Jesus, learned from Him how to live in God's kingdom, and then taught others to follow Him.



God's grace does not come to people who morally outperform others, but to those who admit their failure to perform and who acknowledge their need for a Savior.³

TIMOTHY KELLER

Take a minute to reflect on your relationship with Jesus. Is it characterized by following Him and practicing His teachings? If so, what is the evidence? If not, how would you describe your relationship with God?



DIGGING DEEPER

Read Mark 2:1-12; 5:1-20.
Journal and meditate on Jesus's power and authority displayed in these passages. Consider how this shaped Peter's view of Jesus and how it shapes yours.

As we noted yesterday, Peter worked as a fisherman by trade. In ancient Jewish culture, sons followed in their father's footsteps. However, Peter's life path changed when he encountered the Lord. The glory of Jesus, revealed through the miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11), shook the seasoned fisherman to the core, eliciting an immediate response. Suddenly, Peter knew he was in the presence of the Divine, and with awestruck wonder was propelled to leave everything to follow Christ.

What sacrifices did Peter make to leave everything and follow Jesus?

Reflecting on your discipleship journey, did you "leave" anything to follow Jesus (sinful habit, career path, relationship)? Explain.

Simon Peter's decision to leave everything to follow the Lord allowed him a front row seat to Jesus's teachings, miracles, personality, and power. Our goal today is to dig into the Gospels and, by asking a few simple questions, get a better understanding of Peter's experience with Jesus.

Survey the following snapshots from Peter's experiences with Jesus using the following questions: *What did Peter observe? What did Peter hear? What did Peter learn? What did Peter feel?*

Write what you glean from each passage.

Mark 1:29-34

Mark 4:35-41

Luke 9:21-26

Mark 12:28-34

Mark 15:16-20

Luke 24:1-12,36-49



Peter asks more questions than all the other apostles combined. It was usually Peter who asked the Lord to explain difficult sayings (Matt. 15:15). It was Peter who asked how often he needed to forgive (Matt. 18:21) . . . He always wanted to know more, to understand better.⁴

JOHN MACARTHUR

Imagine you met the apostle Peter for coffee and asked him to tell you about Jesus. Based on what you read today in God's Word, what do you think Peter would testify about Jesus's personality, power, passion, and priorities?

This survey of Peter's experiences with Jesus is certainly not exhaustive, but it does lay a foundation for our study. Over the next six weeks, we will observe many more snapshots from his life, learning from him about what it means to anchor our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ.

ANCHOR YOUR LIFE TO THIS TRUTH

Friend, one of my core beliefs is that "revelation causes transformation." We will discover in studying Peter's life and letters that he was personally transformed as he beheld the glory of Jesus Christ. His testimony is not merely a historical account, but a personal story of beholding the Incarnate Son of God, who came to earth to rescue sinners and bring us into a right relationship with the Father. This revelation changed Peter from the inside out. As we look to Jesus, keeping His truth, power, compassion, and mercy ever before our eyes, we too, will be changed for His glory.

day three

THE GREAT COMMISSION

*"YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME ON YOU,
AND YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM, IN ALL JUDEA AND
SAMARIA, AND TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH."*

– JESUS, ACTS 1:8

What drives you? What gets you out of bed in the morning? We are all motivated by something. Some people are driven by fear, others by a deep need for acceptance, and still others by a desire to achieve. For the Christ follower, the grand purpose of our lives is to know Jesus and make Him known. Our primary motivation is the glory of God, and we are empowered by His Holy Spirit to do His will. As we examine the life of Peter, we find a man who modeled a tremendous sense of purpose. He knew his life's mission was to share Jesus with the world. Filled by God's Spirit, he was propelled to step out of fear and walk by faith in the will of God.

As we continue a biographical sketch of Simon Peter's life, our goal is to know the personality, convictions, and worldview of the human author the Holy Spirit used to write the epistles of 1 and 2 Peter. One note for those who like an orderly chronological timeline: we will temporarily skip significant moments in Peter's life, such as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Fear not! We will return to those vitally important events soon. In the meantime, let's shift our focus to Peter's calling as an apostle and how the outpouring of the Holy Spirit enabled him to fulfill the mission given to Him by Christ.

READ LUKE 6:12-16.

After gathering His disciples together, what did Jesus designate some to be?

Who was named first among the group?



The essence of other religions is advice; Christianity is essentially news. Other religions say, “This is what you have to do in order to connect to God forever; this is how you have to live in order to earn your way to God.” But the gospel says, “This is what has been done in history. This is how Jesus lived and died to earn the way to God for you.” Christianity is completely different. It’s joyful news.⁶

TIMOTHY KELLER

“The Greek word for ‘apostle’ is derived from the verb *apostellō*, or ‘to send.’”⁵ Out of Jesus’s seventy-two disciples, he selected twelve to be His apostles. These were men who were sent by Jesus to take His message to the world. They maintained a close relationship with Jesus, received private instruction, and witnessed His miracles. In Matthew 10 we see Jesus send them out to minister in ways that were characteristic of His ministry—to preach the message of repentance, cast out demons, and heal the sick. He told them to take little with them and warned them of the persecution they would face. It seems this was a warm-up mission, prepping them for what He would commission them to do with some of the last words He spoke on earth.

READ THE GREAT COMMISSION IN MATTHEW 28:16-20.

Based on whose authority were disciples sent out into the world?

What did Jesus commission them to do?

What promise did He give them as they were going?

I like to think of an apostle much like an ambassador. An ambassador is someone who represents their country to a foreign nation. For example, just as the United States sends an ambassador

to France, Peter and the other apostles were sent out as representatives of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. And so are we.

Although we aren't apostles in the same sense as the Twelve, why should we also consider ourselves "sent" ones? How are you currently fulfilling the Great Commission?

Now that we have a better understanding of the role and significance of the title *apostle*, let's dig into a few pivotal scenes from Peter's early ministry.

READ ACTS 1:1-11.

What command did Jesus give the disciples and what was the promise they were to wait for (vv. 4-5,8)?

What specific promise did Peter and the other disciples receive from the angels as they watched Jesus ascend into heaven (v. 11)?

When the Counselor comes, the one I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me. You also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

JOHN 15:26-27

After Jesus was resurrected, the Scripture says He spent time with the apostles over a period of forty days, teaching them about the kingdom. In His last moments on earth, He told them about the coming of the Holy Spirit and how they would be empowered by the Spirit to take the gospel to the whole world. Then He ascended to the Father.

When the day of Pentecost came, the promised Holy Spirit spectacularly arrived, filling all the believers. They were able to speak in the different languages of the people gathered for the feast. In that moment, Peter spoke to the crowd.

READ ACTS 2:14-47 and then answer the following questions.

What would you say were some of the main points of Peter's sermon?



The meaning of Pentecost is God's equipping His church with the power of His Spirit so that He will be glorified among the nations.⁷

STEPHEN J. COLE

What bold assurance did Peter give the crowd (v. 36)?

Gripped by conviction, the crowd wanted to know what they should do in response to Peter's message. What instructions did he give them and what was the result (vv. 38-41)?

In verses 42-47 we read about the birth of the early church. What characteristics stand out to you about these Christ followers?

Today, we looked at two world-changing events that birthed the church and forever marked the apostle Peter: Jesus's ascension into heaven followed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Tomorrow we will continue our study of Peter's apostolic ministry and discover how God used him to lead the early church.

Based on our study today, how do you see Peter becoming the “rock” that Jesus promised he would become?

Sharing a personal testimony involves describing how knowing and following Jesus has transformed us. What are some ways you’ve been changed because of your relationship with the Lord?

ANCHOR YOUR LIFE TO THIS TRUTH

Peter witnessed both Christ’s supernatural miracles and His brutal suffering on the cross. But it was the resurrection that marked a cataclysmic shift in Peter’s life—nothing could sway him from sharing the gospel, for he beheld the risen Christ with his own eyes. The apostle Peter would go on to endure the fire of persecution and die a martyr’s death because he was convinced that Jesus lived and was the unrivaled Lord God Almighty. We too hold fast to this truth.

day four

NO OTHER NAME

*"I DON'T HAVE SILVER OR GOLD, BUT WHAT I DO HAVE, I GIVE YOU: IN
THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH, GET UP AND WALK!"*

– PETER, ACTS 3:6

What do the fictional characters Superman®, Batman®, and Wonder Woman® have in common? They are superheroes renowned for feats of incredible strength, fighting prowess, and larger than life bravery to confront evil. It's easy to position the leading men and women of the Bible as heroes, too. But honestly, I bristle at that title because I am sure the apostle Peter would not want that accolade. He would quickly remind us of this truth: apart from Jesus, I can do nothing (John 15:5)!

While Peter would give all glory to Jesus, there are aspects of his life we should want to emulate. First, Peter modeled a surrendered life. He gave all to Jesus and committed his life, even unto death, to the gospel. He also demonstrated that bravery doesn't mean fearlessness; rather, true bravery means facing opposition by relying on God's promises and power. Peter is also an excellent example of a transformed life, reminding us that anyone can be transformed by God's grace. So, with those characteristics in mind, we may not call him a hero, but we should certainly seek to follow in his footsteps. Today, we continue our study by looking at Peter's leadership in the early church and how he spearheaded a movement that would take the gospel around the globe.

Here are three different events in the life of the early church in which Peter played a major role. I encourage you to study all three. However, if your time is limited, dig into one or two of them now, and perhaps come back later to complete all three.

EVENT #1

READ ACTS 3:1-24 and answer the following questions.

Summarize the event described in verses 1-10, noting the miracle that took place and people's responses to the miracle.

To whom did Peter give the credit or glory for the miracle (vv. 11-16)?

What important event did Peter say he and the other apostles had witnessed (v. 15)?

Peter affirmed Jesus is God by attributing what aspect of God's nature to Him (v. 15)?

What did Peter call people to do in response to seeing the miracle and hearing his message (v. 19)?

The miraculous healing of the lame man caused quite a ruckus! Word spread across Jerusalem, crowds clamored to the scene, and soon the religious leaders gathered around Peter and John threatening retribution if they continued to talk about Jesus. Recall that, not long before this event, Peter hid from the religious leaders and denied even knowing Jesus. But in this moment he was filled with boldness, power, and conviction.

EVENT #2

READ ACTS 4:1-22 and answer the following questions.

Why were Peter and John arrested?

What question did the religious leaders ask Peter and John and how did Peter respond (vv. 7-12)?

When the religious authorities saw Peter and John's boldness and the Holy Spirit's power at work, what did they conclude about them (v. 13)?

I simply love that the religious authorities described Peter as "having been with Jesus." What a compliment! Peter's boldness, passion, and the evident power of the Spirit in his life made the association abundantly evident.

Do your words and actions provide clear evidence that you have "been with Jesus"? If so, in what way? If not, why not?

Friend, let's not miss this truth: the power to witness comes from our relationship with Christ. The more we are with Jesus, the more we look and sound like Him, and the more His Spirit flows through us to bless others. I pray that the world would see us and recognize the presence of Christ because we love the broken, speak the truth, and walk in the power of His Spirit.

What command did the religious authorities give Peter and John and how did the apostles respond to it (vv. 17-20)?

Even with the threat of punishment, Peter and John continued to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. Their experience before the Jewish rulers moved the church to pray for more boldness to proclaim the gospel. The Holy Spirit answered their prayers and validated their message through miraculous healings, and as a result, the church grew rapidly. This growth stirred up more jealousy in the religious leaders, which resulted in persecution.

EVENT #3

READ ACTS 5:12-41 and answer the following questions.

How did the Holy Spirit minister through Peter and the other apostles (vv. 12-16)?

What happened to the apostles because of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit?



"If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours."

- JESUS, JOHN 15:18-20

Describe Peter's and the other apostles' attitude and response to the Jewish rulers' threats and persecution (vv. 29-32,40-42).

Why did the apostles rejoice over what happened to them (v. 41)?

Peter and the other apostles should not have been surprised by what they experienced. Jesus had warned them to expect hatred and persecution because of His name (John 15:18-20).

Most of us have likely never experienced the kind of hatred and persecution Peter and the other apostles did. Why do you think that's the case?



DIGGING DEEPER

Read John 15:18-20.
Journal and meditate on this difficult teaching from Jesus. Consider the cost of following Him and your response if/when you encounter this kind of opposition.

Perhaps we don't experience the same hatred and persecution because we are not as bold with the gospel as the early believers were. And perhaps the world doesn't hate us because we look too much like it. May we be empowered and led by the Spirit like Peter and the other apostles, willing to testify about Jesus regardless of the consequences.

Peter was called by Jesus and then sent to proclaim the gospel. He shared his eyewitness experiences and declared boldly the forgiveness and grace available in Christ alone. He called people to turn from sin and trust Christ as Lord. He explained how anchoring our lives to Christ can transform our past, present, and future.

Peter was convinced of this truth.

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

ACTS 4:12



ANCHOR YOUR LIFE TO THIS TRUTH

Today we learned a true Christian leader depends upon the Holy Spirit's power and operates under the authority of Jesus Christ. Peter's abiding relationship with Christ fueled his ministry. Friend, the same Holy Spirit who empowered Peter is with you as you go to your office, walk through your local grocery store, and drop your kids off for school. Peter and the early apostles were not superheroes, possessing power you and I don't. We, too, can allow the Holy Spirit to fill us and lead us to minister to the world in ways that glorify Jesus and draw others to know Him. Take a minute today to surrender and invite the Holy Spirit to use your life in fresh ways.

day five

THE GOSPEL ADVANCES

WHILE PETER WAS STILL SPEAKING THESE WORDS, THE HOLY SPIRIT
CAME ON ALL WHO HEARD THE MESSAGE. THE CIRCUMCISED BELIEVERS
WHO HAD COME WITH PETER WERE ASTONISHED THAT THE GIFT OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT HAD BEEN POURED OUT EVEN ON GENTILES.

ACTS 10:44-45, NIV

The blockbuster movie franchise, Mission Impossible®, features special agent Ethan Hunt, who embarks on a series of heroic assignments to save the world from impending doom. These action-packed films offer those who love adventure the opportunity to watch good triumph over evil.

When reading the Bible and studying church history, we see another “mission impossible” unfold. The Great Commission Jesus gave his disciples would have been impossible without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the hand of God upon those who stepped out in obedience. Perhaps that’s why it’s called a “co-mission”—we aren’t doing it alone!

The gospel is a message announcing the good news that those who trust in Jesus as their Savior by God’s grace experience forgiveness of sin, freedom from guilt and shame, and adoption into God’s family. I love how Pastor Tim Keller explains the historical significance of the gospel’s pronouncement.

A gospel was news of some event that changed things in a meaningful way. It could be an ascension to the throne, or it could be a victory. When Greece was invaded by Persia and the Greeks won the great battles of Marathon and Solnus, they sent heralds (or evangelists) who proclaimed the good news to the cities: “We have fought for

you, we have won, and now you're no longer slaves; you're free." A gospel is an announcement of something that has happened in history, something that's been done for you that changes your status forever.⁸

I love that last line: "A gospel is an announcement of something . . . that's been done for you that changes your status forever!" Friend, Jesus's death and resurrection changed our status forever! In a single breath of faith, we move from sinner to saint, from rejected to accepted, from lost to beloved. That announcement has been made to thirsty souls for over two thousand years! As a woman radically redeemed by the grace of God, I love to testify—the gospel is GOOD NEWS!

While God could have employed any number of means to share this glorious truth with the world, His master plan includes me and you. God uses normal people to share the beautiful message of Jesus's victory over sin and death. His master plan also included a geographic strategy of how the gospel message would travel to the farthest parts of the globe.

Read the following passages that describe the spreading of the gospel message. Circle each location on the map provided on page 11.

ACTS 2:14

Peter preached the gospel in _____ on the day of Pentecost. Three thousand were added to the church.



THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

Jesus appointed a handful of people to embark on a glorious quest to take his message of grace to the world. Two thousand years later, with over 2.6 billion people on the planet who identify as Christians, we marvel that the mission assigned by Jesus was (and continues to be) accomplished.⁹

ACTS 8:1-3

The persecution that arose after the stoning of Stephen caused Jesus's followers to be spread to the regions of _____ and _____.

ACTS 8:14-16

Peter and John went to _____ to confirm a movement of God in that region and pray for the new believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

While Jesus told the disciples that the gospel was for people of every race, tribe, and nation, many were slow to understand how a Jewish Messiah could be embraced by non-Jews (Gentiles). As the leader of the early church, God used the apostle Peter to welcome the Gentiles into the family of God. Acts 10 marks a major turning point in gospel advancement and proves critical for our future study of 1 and 2 Peter.

READ ACTS 10.

What do you learn about Cornelius in verses 1-8?

Summarize the vision Peter received from God (vv. 9-16).

According to verse 28, what worldview (or views on race and religion) did Peter hold prior to his vision from God?

Summarize the gospel message Peter shared with the Gentiles (vv. 34-43).

What happened to the Gentiles after they heard this message and what was Peter's response (vv. 44-48)?

Why are the events in this chapter so significant?

It's likely that Peter and the other disciples would have remained in Jerusalem without the hand of God moving them out of their comfort zones. The Lord allowed circumstances and trials to move the apostles closer and closer to people who normally would not have stepped foot near the temple in Jerusalem. God's heart for the nations to know Him should be our heart too. But sometimes, like the apostle Peter, we need a little push.

READ ACTS 11:19.

To what regions did the gospel spread due to the increasing persecution?

Circle these locations on the map on page 11.



The tenth chapter of Acts is one of the most important chapters in Acts, perhaps also one of the most important chapters in the Bible. It is so important because it tells how a gospel that was originally thought of in exclusively Jewish terms came by the intervention and revelation of God to be practically as well as theoretically a gospel for the whole world. This chapter describes God's flinging open the door of His Church to Gentile believers and thus marking a key transition point in the spread of the Gospel.¹⁰

JAMES M. BOICE



ANTIOCH

Once persecution broke out in Jerusalem with the stoning of Stephen, the epicenter of the Christian movement shifted to Antioch. There, followers of Christ were first called Christians (Acts 11:26), and from there the missional ministry of Paul was launched (Acts 13:1-3).



We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

ROMANS 8:28, NIV

READ 1 PETER 1:1.

The apostle Peter wrote from the city of Rome to the believers in the Roman provinces of . . .

Circle these locations on the same map.

In just a few decades, the message of Christ's victory over sin and death spread from Jerusalem across the Roman Empire. Through the declaration of the gospel message, the status of thousands and thousands of people was changed from sinner to saint and from gentile to child of God. This mission was God's plan and He used those who were witnesses of Jesus to take the message to the world.

One thing that strikes me is how God permitted the pressure of persecution to scatter the disciples to places they might not have gone without the hardships that propelled them there. While the enemy was at work in the persecution, we see the Lord using all things for our good and His glory. His sovereign hand was on display in this scattering of the church.

Think about your own story. How has God permitted something difficult to propel you into His purpose for your life?

Consider those in your circle of influence (family, friends, coworkers). Who has God placed in your life that needs to know Jesus? In the space provided, write a prayer asking God to give you boldness to speak and an open door to share the gospel with them.

Just as Peter left everything to follow Jesus and become a fisher of men, we too are called. As we surrender our lives to Jesus and obey His call to make disciples, we are part of the greatest mission of all!



ANCHOR YOUR LIFE TO THIS TRUTH

God's master plan to share the gospel with the world includes you. Let this truth shape how you view your everyday life—you are the way God wants to reach your neighborhood, family, and friends. You are on mission with Jesus!

SESSION TWO VIDEO | THE QUESTIONS

watch

Watch the Session Two video and take notes below.



To access the video teaching sessions, use the instructions in the back of your Bible study book.

Discuss

1. What's one thing that stood out to you from the video teaching and why?
2. What are some significant questions that you have asked or have been asked of you?
3. Why did the disciples struggle to truly understand who Jesus was? What sometimes causes you to struggle to understand who Jesus is?
4. In regard to Peter walking on the water, are you more encouraged that he was willing to step out of the boat, or discouraged because he took his eyes off Jesus and fell into the sea? Explain.
5. What are some "winds and waves" of your world that tempt you to doubt and take your eyes of faith off of Jesus?
6. When Jesus asked the disciples "Who do people say that I am?" they reported what they were hearing. Who are people today saying Jesus is? What is causing their confusion?
7. If someone were to ask you "Who is Jesus?" how would you answer?
8. From this video teaching, what do you glean from Peter's life and letters that show what he's learning about being anchored to Jesus? What are you learning about being anchored to Jesus?