

The disciples of Jesus – Peter, the impulsive apostle

The life of Peter rings true for most of us. Although he was an apostle his humanness is so clearly portrayed in the scriptures. He was definitely devoted to Jesus, but his weaknesses are evident. He was impulsive and often spoke or acted before he thought. Why would the Lord have chosen such a man to be a disciple, and one of the closest three at that, and then to be more than a disciple, to be an apostle? Let us not be too quick to judge Peter, because many of our own flaws are highlighted in his life.

Matthew 26: 31 – 35 Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: “‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’

But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”

“Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.”

But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same.

1) The background of Peter

- Peter was a fisherman from the town of Bethsaida on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. He had a brother named Andrew.
 - John 1: 43 – 44 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. There he met Philip, who was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. Jesus said to Philip, “Come with me.”
 - Matthew 4: 18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.
- Peter’s father’s name was Jonah or John. The Greek variants between the two are very similar and could have been the same name, or he could have had two names, like Simon and Peter, Saul and Paul, Joseph and Barnabas.
 - Matthew 16: 17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.
 - John 1: 42 Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).
- Peter was married. Jesus healed his mother-in-law, and Paul also referred to Peter as having a believing wife.
 - Matthew 8: 14 – 15 When Jesus came into Peter’s house, he saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.
 - 1 Corinthians 9: 5 Don’t we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas?
- Peter’s brother, Andrew, introduced him to Jesus, and Jesus changed his name from Simon to Peter
 - John 1: 40 – 42 Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).
- Jesus called Peter, and gave the purpose of his calling
 - Matthew 4: 18 – 20 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.
- When Jesus calls, he calls with a purpose.
 - When he changed Simon’s name to Peter, which means “a piece of a rock” he intimated that Peter’s purpose was to be a stable pillar in the kingdom. This was contrary to Peter’s impulsive nature at that time, which was anything but stable.
 - The other purpose that we see is that Peter would fish for people. He wouldn’t do it out of his own prerogative, but Jesus would send him to do so.
- Jesus calls each one of us with a purpose.
 - Do you know yours?

2) Peter, the impulsive apostle

- Peter was a mixture of faith and impulse. We aren’t always sure when sure when he acted on belief or on impulse.

- As we have seen when Jesus called him, he immediately left his nets and followed Jesus.
- When Jesus was walking on the water Peter got out of the boat to walk on the water with him, but thought about what he had done afterwards.
 - Matthew 14: 28 – 30 “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,” he said.
Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”
- Peter opposed Jesus when he said he was going to be crucified.
 - Matthew 16: 22 – 23 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”
Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”
- Peter refused that Jesus wash his feet
 - John 13: 6 – 9 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”
Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”
“No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.”
Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”
“Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”
- Peter cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest in the Garden of Gethsemane when they arrested Jesus
 - John 18: 10 – 11 Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.)
Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”
- Peter denied Jesus after his arrest
 - Luke 22: 59 – 60 About an hour later another asserted, “Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.”
Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.
- Peter’s impulsive ways often ran contrary to the will of the Lord and got him into trouble and a sound rebuke or the need to be rescued.
- Peter was the type of person that no one was sure what impulsive action they were going to do next. He so often reacted before thinking.
- Do you react before thinking? Or do you wait to hear, and understand, the will of the Lord and act on that?

3) Peter the rock of the church

- Peter was the one who spoke up claiming that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- Jesus commended him and said that on that rock, that revelation, he would build his church and Peter would be a pillar of his church.
 - Matthew 16: 16 – 18 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”
Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.
- In order for Peter to be a pillar of the church he needed to be restored, which Jesus did.
 - John 21: 17 The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”
Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”
Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.
- On the day of Pentecost, we see the disciples being filled with the Holy Spirit and it’s Peter who preaches to the crowds leading three thousand to faith in Christ thereby establishing the first church in Jerusalem.
- Peter is the one who looked at a lame beggar and told him to get up and walk, healing him instantly resulting in their arrest by the Jewish leaders.
- Peter proclaimed the Gospel to the Jewish leaders stating that “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)
- Jesus transformed Peter from an impulsive fisherman into the rock that caught men.
- Whatever you were, or are, Jesus can transform you into the person who he wants you to be.
- He can change us from acting on impulse to being led by his Holy Spirit, being fruitful in his kingdom, and bringing glory to his name, as he did with Peter.