

The Disciples: Peter, the rock of the Early Church (Matthew 4:19; 10:2; 14:28; 16:15-22; 17:27; John 6:60-69; 18:10; 21:15-19; Acts 2-12)

Sometimes, I have a tendency to be impulsive. I have a tendency to get an idea in my head and just do it. Certainly, this can be good and this can be very bad. Many times, I have worked the night away, losing sleep because I am impulsive. I get an idea and I work all night completing my idea. At my last house we had wood flooring under the carpet in one particular room and so one night I got an idea. I wanted to tear up the nasty carpet and reveal that wood flooring. Well, Meagan went to bed and I went to work. One day, there was a closet in our living room that was kind of obtrusive and so I took it out. The only thing was that Meagan was at work when I began this. She came home to see the mess.

Sometimes impulsive people can get their foot stuck in their mouth. I have done this a number of times. I get backed into a corner in a meeting and I may say what I feel needs said, but I may lack discretion in the way I say it. Fight or flight, I fight. I am not saying this in a good way. In the past I have received news that I didn't like and so I immediately react with a quick email to the person. I have learned the hard way that with email it is better not to hit send too quickly.

I may have something in common with Peter. But Jesus used these traits in Peter and developed him as a very strong leader in the early church. Now, we have studied all but three of the Disciples of Christ. So, today we will study Peter and then next week we will study Philip. There is so very much to study with Peter, and I will do my best to lead you through some things about Peter without making you drink out of a fire hydrant. I will be summarizing passages so that we don't look up all of them.

I intend to show you that Peter was a strong leader in the first century church. He was the rock on which Jesus built the church. He followed Christ boldly and we should emulate his persistence in following Christ and his faith.

Galatians 2:9:

⁹ James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

Once again, we see that Peter, whom Paul calls Cephas, was a pillar of the church. Peter was one of those holding up the church.

- I. Now, let me give you some fast facts about Peter
 - a. Peter was called of Christ while he was a fisherman.
 - b. Peter's brother was another disciple whose name was Andrew
 - c. I think it is quite likely that Peter and Andrew were both disciples of John the Baptizer. (John 1:35-42)
 - d. Peter was a partner with James and John and they formed the inner circle of the disciples. As I stated last week Jesus had an inner circle of disciples. So, he had hundreds, if not thousands, of disciples and then he had the twelve and then within the twelve there was a smaller group of three or four.
 - e. Peter was married. In fact, we won't turn there now but we can see in a passage in Matthew 8:14 that Jesus was staying at Peter's house and Peter's mother in law was

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- ill. Also, in 1 Cor 9:5 that Paul referenced that Peter's wife went with him in work as an apostle.
 - f. Acts chapters 2-12 are all written about Peter. Peter has many sermons in those chapters and he boldly proclaimed Christ. Acts 12 has a humorous story of Peter's release from prison.
 - g. Peter wrote 1 and 2 Peter, two epistles towards the back of our New Testament.
 - h. Mark's Gospel was likely written based on Peter's testimony.
 - i. Peter died a death of martyrdom. Unanimous accounts record that Peter was crucified upside down saying that he was not worthy to be crucified the same way His Lord was.
- II. Peter had great faith which we can aim to emulate
- a. In Matthew 14:28 we see that the disciples are traveling by boat and Jesus is not with them. But they see someone walking towards them. Peter eventually realizes that this is Jesus and He is walking on water. Now, what do you suppose that Peter does? Do you think that Peter says, "Jesus, hurry up and get into the boat?" No, following Jesus' invitation, Peter jumps out of the boat and walks on water as well. Peter had great faith.
 - i. Peter could do this because he kept his eyes on Jesus. You see later on in the story Peter begins to sink because he looks at the wind. He took his eyes off of Jesus.
 - ii. We must also keep our eyes on Jesus. But we must also trust Jesus to begin with. We won't experience anything like this if we don't get out of the boat. Peter had to get out of the boat to walk on water. He had to risk that he just might sink.
 - iii. Many times I struggle with faith and I know that I am not alone. Swindoll writes the following about his brother and his faith going into the mission field. This story can say more about faith than I can.

Generosity is not as much an overflow of wealth as it is an overabundance of faith. Stinginess, on the other hand, is a sure sign that a person trusts things instead of God. And make no mistake, we serve what we trust.

My older brother, Orville, was never a wealthy man, but he was wonderfully generous with what he had. He never held back from the Lord . . . and that is still true! It was this overabundance of faith that led him to be a missionary for more than thirty years in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Just before that, he had done some short-term mission work in Mexico and had come north to gather his wife, Erma Jean, and the kids for the long trip down into the far reaches of South America.

Before leaving, they stopped off for a quick visit with our parents in Houston. Now, you have to appreciate the kind of man my father was. Look up the word responsible in the dictionary, and his picture is there! To him, risks are for those who fail to plan. Responsible people leave nothing to chance. As far as he was concerned, faith is something you exercise when your three backup plans fall through and you have run out of all other options. My father was a believer, but he never understood the life of faith. Not really.

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My brother, on the other hand, was stimulated by faith. He has lived his entire adult life on the raw edge of faith. To him, life doesn't get exciting until God, and God alone, can get us through some specific challenge. That drove our dad nuts!

Orville pulled up to the house in an old Chevy sedan on four of the slickest tires I had ever seen. My father always inspected tires when we came to visit. I wondered how long it would take for him to say something. I'm sure Orville did too. Not very is the answer.

After a great supper of good ol' collard greens and corn bread, onions and red beans, my mother and sister went into the kitchen, leaving my father at one end of the table, Orville at the other, and me sitting on one side. Then it started.

"Son, how much money do you have for your long trip?"

"Oh, Dad, don't worry about it. We're gonna be fine."

Before he could change the subject, my father pressed the issue, "Answer me! How much money do you have in your wallet?"

Orville smiled and shrugged as he said, "I don't have any in my wallet."

I sat silent, watching this verbal tennis match.

"Nothing in your wallet? How much money do you have? You're gettin' ready to go down to South America! How much money you got?"

With that, my brother smiled, dug into his pocket, pulled out a quarter, set it on its edge on his end of the table, then gave it a careful thump. It slowly rolled past me all the way to my father's end of the table and fell into his hand. Dad said, "A quarter? That is all you've got?"

Orville broke into an even bigger smile and said, "Yeah. Isn't that exciting!"

That was not the word my father had in mind. After a heavy sigh and a very brief pause, Dad shook his head and said, "Orville, I just don't understand you."

My brother grew more serious. Looking Dad in the eyes, he answered without blinking, "No, Dad, you never have."

I don't know how he actually made the trip to their destination . . . or how he and Erma Jean took care of all their little kids, but they never went hungry. And they served in Buenos Aires and traveled to other parts of the world for more than three decades. My father was a man who emerged through the Great Depression, lived in fear of poverty his whole life, seldom took a risk, and never experienced the joy of trusting God that made my brother smile so big that day.

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Jesus never said that having nice things is wrong. By His sovereign choice, He may ordain some to be as poor as Himself and His disciples. Yet He may want others to have an overabundance of money and material goods so that they might give in abundance. His chief concern is not the issue of wealth; He cares about us and where we turn for security. Whether or not we own nice things, He wants to be sure that they don't own us!

Generosity is not only a sure sign of faith; it's also a surefire way to stimulate it. As soon as something begins to feel just a little too crucial to our happiness or safety, it's time to show it who's boss by giving it away.

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III. Peter was bold in his faith as we should be.

- a. Matthew 16:15-22: In Matthew 16 Jesus asked the disciples who do people say that I am. Peter responded that Jesus is the Christ. Now, that is quite a statement. Peter in amazing faith was right there responding with the reality of who Jesus is. Jesus tells Peter that He didn't receive that from himself but from God the Father.
- b. Another passage of Peter's boldness in faith is John 6:60-69. In this passage Jesus had fed the 5000 men, which were probably more likely at least 20,000 counting women and children. Then Jesus preaches a tough passage on discipleship, and you know what, people started leaving. Almost all left Jesus. Then Jesus says to the disciples: Are you going to leave too? But Peter responds: "You have the words to eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that You are the Holy One of God."
- c. In the book of Acts Peter was the first to give a sermon in Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost. Thousands were saved.
- d. In Acts 3 and 4 Peter and John were arrested for preaching Christ.
- e. In Acts 12 Peter was again in jail for serving Christ. Peter was bold in proclaiming Jesus.
- f. We must also be bold (1 Peter 3:15). We must be ready to stand up for Christ. We must be ready to be bold serving and following Christ.

IV. Peter was repentant

- a. Spotlight passage: Luke 22:62
- b. In Luke 22 Peter denied Christ while Jesus was about to be crucified. Now, we are sometimes hard on Peter, but remember that the other disciples fled, Peter was still with Jesus observing from a distance. But Peter was also extremely repentant.
- c. Remember when we sin, we sin against God and we need to repent, but also remember that God forgives us, and we can be used of God as Peter was.

So, I can be very impulsive, but I pray that God can use that in me as He did in Peter.

Peter was bold in proclaiming the Gospel, Peter had strong faith, Peter recognized Jesus for who He truly was and is as the Christ.

¹ <https://insight.org/resources/article-library/individual/ragged-edge-faith-and-reckless-generosity>

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Pray.