

READING PLAN: PETER

Day One

Read 1 Peter 5:8-11

If you've spent any time around water, you've noticed the beauty of nature at its best. Standing by a stream, you can see how the water flows so effortlessly over rocks. The rocks NEVER move. The water, however, can slowly wear down a rock, smoothing out its rough edges. Reeds, on the other hand, are constantly being whipped back and forth by the water. They can even be ripped from their roots by the water and carried away.

This is the kind of imagery we see in the life of Peter.

Peter's first encounter with Jesus was while he was fishing. He questioned Jesus' power, then fell down at Jesus' feet out of respect for his power. Another time in a boat in the middle of the night, Peter walked on water to Jesus only to nearly drown because of fear. Peter also refused to let the Lord wash his feet, but after the Lord explained to Peter' the significance of this act, Peter said, "Then not just my feet but my whole body!"

It seemed like Peter's relationship with Jesus was, at times, as strong as a rock, and other times like a reed blown by the wind.

Can you relate? I know I can!

There are days when my faith is solid. Time with God is awesome and I see His hand at work throughout my day. Other days all I can do is pray "Help me!" I can't seem to find any significant constancy in my walk with him.

Aren't you glad our relationship with God isn't built on our ability to stay faithful? One thing that's certain - Jesus always calls us friends - just like Peter.

Questions:

1. Does your relationship with Jesus look more like a Rock or Reed?
2. Do you tend to be more of a rock or reed in your relationships with others?
3. What are some of the difficult areas of life for you as you try to stay in a close relationship with Christ and others?
4. What keeps you close to God or brings you back to God when you feel like you might have failed Him?

Day Two

Read Matthew 14:22-33

Everybody loves going to a great concert! The electricity of the moment is, well, electric! Your favorite music is blasting through a mountain of speakers. People are swaying, jumping, and dancing. To be in that kind of environment is truly memorable.

The only thing that would make it even more memorable is if the artist on the stage points directly at you and invites you onto the stage. Can you even imagine?! The thrill of that moment would be overwhelming. You're grabbed by security, ushered onto the stage and the musician takes you by the shoulder and invites you to join them at the microphone to sing along with them. Gah!

Nothing else matters at that point. It's just you and your terrible singing, enjoying the moment. You are the envy of everyone else in the audience.

Peter got invited onto the watery stage with Jesus. It was a moment that would be burned on his brain for a lifetime. Eleven others were there - watching. Sure the waves scared him. Maybe the others laughed at him as he sank under the waves. It didn't matter. Peter took the step out of the boat that night.

- Eleven stayed safe while one stepped out overcoming his doubts and fears.
- Eleven stayed dry while one got wet.
- Eleven saw a miracle while one experienced it.
- Eleven were amazed at what they saw while one had his life changed forever.

Jesus calls each of us into an adventurous existence with him. It can seem overwhelming to think about. There may be times you sink (or stumble or even fail). It's ok. It's always better to join Jesus in His work than to be a bystander and miss out on the experience of a lifetime.

Questions:

1. What do you think has been the boldest thing you've ever done in your relationship with Jesus? What did you learn about yourself when you did it? What did you learn about God?
2. What causes you to want to play it safe instead of obeying God with risky obedience?
3. What is a relationship in your life that God is directing you to step out of the boat on? What is holding you back from doing it?

Day Three

Read Mark 14:12-72

Ever have one of those moments that you'd soon like to forget? Maybe it was a moment of weakness and you did something you immediately regretted. It could have been a time when you betrayed something a friend shared with you, and they found out. We all have moments like that. They stick with us and cause a wound that's hard to get over.

In today's reading, Peter had several choices he made that would weigh heavily on him for days to come. Jesus used foot-washing as a teachable moment and Peter missed the point. Peter arrogantly proclaimed his faithfulness to Jesus only to cower at the very mention of his association with Jesus later. Peter resorted to violence to prove his loyalty to Jesus, and Jesus had to clean up the mess he made.

Peter was a lousy friend on the night Jesus was arrested - the night Jesus needed him to step up to the plate.

The great news in all this - Jesus knows our weaknesses and still pursues us. He knows we'll miss the point. He knows we'll fail at our commitments. He knows we'll betray Him. He still chooses to use us in significant ways for His work.

Jesus is a great friend when we fail to be.

Questions:

1. What do you value in a friend more - actions or words? Why?
2. Has a friend ever let you down? Have you ever let down a friend when they really needed your support? What did it feel like? How did it affect your relationship?
3. What is your process for getting back in a right relationship with Jesus? How does that relate to your earthly relationships?

Day Four

Read John 21:1-19

Peter was feeling the pain of his betrayal. Jesus had appeared to him with the other disciples since his crucifixion, but Peter knew there was unfinished business between them. Not until Jesus intentionally sat down with Peter and cleared the air, did Peter experience wholeness in his relationship with Jesus. He was now free to fulfill his calling - being The Rock Jesus needed to build His Church.

Peter led the others in proclaiming the message of Christ's death and resurrection. He delivered a passionate message to thousands on the Day of Pentecost, resulting in about three thousand people coming to trust in Jesus. This transformation in Peter's life propelled him into great things for God - and a deeper relationship with God.

We can oftentimes avoid those hard moments in life. We know we've messed up. We know the steps we need to take. But, having that conversation or fessing up to that bad choice can linger a while. Thankfully, we are not left alone in our sin! Just like Peter experienced, Jesus pursues us and brings wholeness back to our lives.

Questions:

1. Describe a time you've had a relationship that was broken and then healed and restored. What were your feelings before and after the fact? What did you learn from that experience?
2. How does the fact that Peter - both passionate and flawed - was still used by God resonates with you?
3. Is there any unfinished business in your relationships right now, either with a friend, family member, or with God? What is holding you back from restoring that relationship?
4. Make a plan to take the steps needed - write out what you'd say and when would be the best time to do it. Follow up with your steps.

Day Five

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19

There are times in our lives when we try to re-create ourselves. For some of us, it comes between 8th and 9th grade. You're about to start high school and you want to start your high school experience on a different foot. It also happens quite often for those leaving high school and heading off to college. We even do it over the course of summer between grades.

It's the "new you". You make a mental decision to be more: outgoing, more of a risk-taker, more focused on school, and less on social. We give ourselves permission to become someone different than we've been.

We also experience this in the Christian world - usually after a meaningful retreat or camp experience. God reveals Himself to us in a new way. We get serious about sin in our lives and find the peace that comes with that. We make renewed commitments to God and to our spiritual lives.

In today's passage, we see a different Peter than what we experienced in the Gospels. This stumbling, unsure, faithless disciple is now owning his role as The Rock - leading the charge of establishing The Church. He's a different man. Christ has made him a different man. He's empowered by the Holy Spirit. He's faced persecution. He's grown into the leader Jesus saw in him from the very beginning.

Jesus is doing the same thing in you.

He's shaping you into a leader and servant that He can use for His purposes. He's allowed difficult times in your life so that you'd learn more about trusting Him. He's sent you to places that were uncomfortable for you and stretched you. He hasn't given up on you - not even a little bit.

Today, thank God for his relentless pursuit of you!

Questions:

1. Re-read today's passage. What changes do you see here in Peter that is different from what we've studied this week?
2. Think about your own spiritual journey. Over the past year, how have you grown in your walk with Christ?
3. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your passion for sharing Christ with others? What scares you most about it? Who is your spiritual leadership circle (pastor, mentor, etc.) could you learn from regarding sharing Christ with others? Connect with them this week.