

## **SMALL GROUP: PETER**

### **CATCH UP**

This section is designed for each person to share their experiences from last weeks' application. This should be an encouraging time and not a time to shame someone for not doing their assignment - simply let a couple of people share how their project went. Be sure to encourage the group to talk about their struggles, oppositions, and defeats as well as their successes.

### **WARM UP**

Play a game called Good News/Bad News. It goes something like this. One person calls out something that would be Good News. The next person has to come up with a crazy Bad News result of the Good News. Here's a couple of examples:

- Good News - I got a new pair of pants! Bad News - They have a Thomas the Train pattern on them
- Good News - My mom and dad are letting me take the car "out" tonight! Bad News - When they said out, they simply meant "out of the garage" only.

The most creative Bad News scenario wins!

### **READ UP**

- Luke 5:1-11
- John 21
- Galatians 2:11-21

The Apostle Peter was a key player in getting the Gospel spread around the world. He was an everyday kind of guy who said the wrong things at the wrong time. However, Jesus gave Peter a completely new identity. He called him The Rock, (Not to be confused with Dwayne Johnson) because Jesus would build The Church on the work that Peter would do through Christ's power. Peter was also just a regular guy who worked a day job as a fisherman in a community of other fishermen. Even though God led Peter to do many things for The Church in its early years, Peter wasn't the kind of guy that most people would pick as a leader of anything.

Throughout Peter's story, he had doubts and fears. He questioned Jesus' decisions continually. He bragged about his own abilities (which often fell short BTW) and was clueless at times regarding Kingdom things. He even ran the opposite direction when faced with ridicule for his relationship with Jesus. He's not the kind of guy you'd want leading your cause. None of this, however, kept Jesus from hand-picking Peter to do great things for the Kingdom.

When we first meet Peter, he's working his day job as a fisherman. Peter has been out all night fishing - unsuccessfully I might add. Jesus approached and told him to throw his nets out again. Peter thought Jesus is crazy. Here's this Rabbi trying to tell him how to do his job! But he did what Jesus asked. To Peter's surprise, he caught so many fish the "nets began to break" (Luke 5:6).

Peter's immediate response: "Go away from me Lord; I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:8).

There's a real truth to "catch" from this story. The more we get to know a holy, perfect, and righteous God, the more we recognize and experience the pain of our own sinfulness. Peter witnessed a divine miracle. This revealed the kind of person Jesus was to Peter, and it ultimately revealed the wide distance between his sinful life and God's holy nature. Jesus was no longer just a religious man to Peter - He was something much greater.

Peter's response to that distance is quite common for many of us as well. His response to Jesus wasn't to be closer to Jesus, but rather to get away from Him! Peter recognized Jesus's divine authority and Peter wanted to run the other direction! He felt shame and separation. Jesus' response, however, was one of grace, and undeserved, unmerited kindness. Jesus didn't condemn Peter, He did the exact opposite - He invited him to be his disciple. "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." (Luke 5:10). Jesus graciously guided Peter's eyes away from focusing on his sinful limitations and back towards the Good News of redemption and purpose Jesus came to bring to every sinner.

Throughout the various interactions Peter had with Jesus, we see failure after failure. However, it would be wrong to just see the failures. Through all the jerk moves Peter had, he kept seeking to make Jesus the center of his heart's full affections. This is why Peter was allowed to do great things for God!

Peter's willingness to be corrected by God allowed God to keep calling him back from those times that he slipped up.

What a great encouragement this should be to us! We need to keep seeking God in the middle of our failures. Whenever we have moments like Peter, we need to keep seeking God and responding to his voice. We need to strive to recognize and believe in the grace that God gives us through Christ. We need to let God do the work of restoring us and putting us back on the path He's marked out for us. This is the struggle of faith - believing God doesn't quit on us.

The greater news in all this is the fact that we are not in it alone nor are we without hope. The irony of Peter's life is the fact that he helped create the structure God uses to keep us focused and in check. That's why we have been given The Church, the fellowship of believers. These are the people God uses to point out the inconsistencies in our faith and walk with us toward deeper fellowship with Jesus.

## **TALK UP**

1. In what ways do you see your faith mirrored in Peter's?
2. What are things we believe about ourselves that are not true according to God's Word?
3. What does Jesus say that refocuses Peter on him in the readings for today?
  - a. For the Gal 2:11-21 reading, what does Paul say about the Gospel to Peter that refocuses Peter on it.
4. What are some areas for you that distract you from staying focused on following God?

## **ACT UP**

A great way to keep focused on God instead of your failures and shortcomings is to commit yourself to serve others. Find an opportunity to serve someone today. So many older people stuck at home need encouragement right now! Call them or send them a card. Help out a neighbor or church member who may need help with work around their house or someone to run errands for them.

## **PRAY UP**

Ask God to reveal areas of your life that you've assumed God has given up on. Ask him to renew your thinking on those things and look for ways to grow in that area of life.

## **GATHER UP**

Before everyone leaves, make sure you confirm next weeks' meeting day and time – and confirm those who can make it.