

1. **Introduction:** This first lesson considers what we know about Peter's life.
2. **Commentaries and Scripture:** (1.) **Holy Bible**, ESV – Crossway Bibles, 2001. (2.) **1-2 Peter**, R.C. Sproul, Crossway, 2011. (3.) **1 Peter**, Wayne Grudem, IVP, Tyndale House Publisher, 1988. (4.) **James and 1-2 Peter**, Charles R. Swindoll, Tyndale House Publishers, 2014, (5.) **1 Peter**, Howard Marshall, IVP, 1991.
3. **Peter's First Letter:** R.C. Sproul in his commentary said, *“Imagine what it would be like to receive a letter from someone who was a personal friend of Jesus during His earthly ministry.”* That is a wonderful thought that comes true when we study 1 Peter.
 - Peter was an intimate friend of Jesus, an eyewitness throughout Jesus' earthly ministry.
 - Moreover, the letter was inspired by the Holy Spirit, the constant eyewitness. Peter's apostolic testimony is to be received as from the Lord Himself.
4. **About the Apostle Peter:** New Testament documents provide substantial information about the later life of Simon (renamed Peter), but very little about his early life.
 - We know Peter and his brother Andrew (a Greek name) were born and grew up in Bethsaida of Galilee. Their father's name was Jonah (in Hebrew the same as John).
 - The family earned their living by fishing in the Sea of Galilee (about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide). Bethsaida's population was a mixture of Jews and Greeks. The dominate language was Aramaic, but most people could also speak Hebrew, Greek, and some Latin.
 - Simon's family, as sellers of fish, no doubt interacted with buyers in both Aramaic and Greek. Simon most likely spoke Aramaic among friends and Greek wherever needed.
 - At some point, Simon married and moved to Capernaum, a few miles west of Bethsaida but also on the coast of the Lake of Galilee. Simon, Andrew, and their father seem to have been partners with James and John and their father Zebedee in a fishing enterprise.
 - Jointly, they had several boats and hired helpers.
5. **The Calling of Andrew and Peter:** From the Gospel of John, we learn that Andrew and John were first disciples of John the Baptist. In fact, Andrew met Jesus through John the Baptist. Andrew was so excited at meeting Jesus that he immediately sought out his brother, Simon, and brought him to meet Jesus.
 - **John 1:42:** *Jesus looked at him and said, “So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas (which means Peter).*
 - Peter's father is referred to both as Jonah and John (different forms of the same Hebrew name which means dove).
 - Simon, in Hebrew, means to listen or to hear. Cephas means “rock.”
 - The next time we encounter Peter, he and Andrew are working at the Sea of Galilee, casting their nets into the sea. Jesus called them to follow Him and become fishers of men. They straightway left their nets and followed Him (Mark 1:16-18).

6. **James and John Called:** The sons of Zebedee, James and John, were called about the same time as Peter and Andrew. James is John's older brother (Mark 1:19).
 - From comparing Matthew 27:56 with Mark 15:40 and 16:1, it appears their mother's name is Salome.
 - Comparing Mark 15:40 with John 29:25, it seems Salome is Jesus' mother's sister.
 - If this identification is correct, James and John are Jesus' first cousins.
 - Jesus called 8 other men to be His intimate disciples, making a total of twelve.
 - Among the twelve, Peter, James and John formed an inner circle with close relationship to Jesus. Peter became the spokesperson for the twelve.
 - Peter was bold, quick to speak, and willing to ask Jesus questions no one else would ask (Matthew 15:15, 18:21, and 19:27).
7. **Peter was Married:** When called, Peter was married and lived in Capernaum. When ministering nearby, Jesus made Peter's home His ministry headquarters (Mark 1:29-32).
8. **Peter was Impulsive:** Peter was big, vigorous, and impulsive. His impulsiveness from time-to-time got him into trouble. His place among the twelve was one of prominence.
 - He quickly became their spokesperson. But although he was a great leader, there is no record he was ever appointed to have a unique authority over the other disciples.
 - Peter's faith was strong and active, but like most people, he at times experienced human uncertainty and doubt. His tendency to doubt was perhaps most clearly shown in the "walking on water" incident when his doubt caused him to sink (Matthew 14:27-31).
 - When Jesus revealed His impending death and resurrection to the disciples, it was such a shock to Peter (and so much against what he believed about the Christ) that he took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him (Matthew 16:21-22).
 - Following Jesus' resurrection, as the early church developed, Peter was at times a controversial figure.
 - At Antioch, Paul felt it necessary to publicly rebuke Peter for hypocritically withdrawing himself from the Gentile believers when Jewish believers from Jerusalem arrived to join them (Galatians 2:12-13).
 - Peter's response to the rebuke was good and the impact of the disagreement was helpful in Jerusalem in establishing the church's policy on admitting Gentiles.
 - When the Jerusalem council took place (49 AD), Peter stood up and made it clear that the gospel of grace was for the Gentiles apart from the works of the Law (Acts 15:7-11).
 - Peter didn't adjust quickly to God's plan to bring the gospel to the Gentiles, but once he was convinced, he became a champion of the "mission to the Gentiles."
 - Peter defended the mission to evangelize the Gentiles even when the Jewish Christians were slow to accept the concept (Acts 11:1-18).
9. **The Inner Circle of Apostles:** The inner circle of Peter, James, and John were with Jesus in almost every situation, including on the Mount of Transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsemane.

- It was Peter who first made the great confession, “*you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God*” (Matthew 16:16).

10. **Peter’s Zeal for Jesus, His Failure, & His Restoration:** Peter’s great zeal and loyalty to Jesus led him to make promises he was unable to keep.

- On the night of Jesus’ betrayal, Jesus, speaking prophetically, said that without exception all His disciples would fall away that night.
- Peter, wanting to be loyal and steadfast, immediately said that though all the others should fall away, he would never fall away.
- Jesus responded that before the rooster would crow, Peter would deny Him three times.
- Peter, not realizing Jesus had made a prophetic statement, declared that even if he must die, he would not deny Jesus (Matthew 26:33-34).
- The problem was that Peter, like each of us, was humanly weak in facing clear danger.
- In the face of life-threatening danger, Peter simply could not do what he had declared he would do. When Jesus was arrested, Peter did find courage to follow the arresting party to the courtyard of the High Priest Caiaphas.
- But, while Jesus was being interrogated, bystanders pointed to Peter as a follower of Jesus. Peter three times denied that he was in any way associated with Jesus. A cock began to crow and Peter, realizing he had failed, began to weep bitterly.
- Jesus’ prophecy had been fulfilled (Matthew 26:69-75). Peter was a broken man, humbled and ready for restoration.
- Immediately after the resurrection, God showed Peter His restorative grace when an angel at the empty tomb told the women, who came to see the tomb, to tell the disciples and specifically Peter that Jesus was going to Galilee where Peter will see Him, just as he had been told (Mark 16:7).
- Though the message was for all the disciples, Peter was specifically singled out by name to receive the news that Jesus was risen from the dead.

11. **Breakfast on the Beach:** The climax of Peter’s restoration occurred, when he shared, by an open fire on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, breakfast with the risen Jesus and other disciples, (John 21:12). Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him more than the others did.

- Jesus used the word *agapao* signifying unconditional love. This choice underscored the kind of superior devotion Peter had claimed when he promised never to abandon Jesus no matter what else happened.
- Peter was distraught that he had denied Jesus in the face of danger. He was ashamed that having claimed greater devotion to Jesus than the other disciples, he then did exactly what he had said he would never do.
- Peter replied that Jesus knows that he, Peter, loves Him. But Peter used *phileo* for love, which signifies brotherly love. Peter’s choice of word was one of true humility and was just what Jesus was seeking. Jesus said, “*Tend my lambs*” (John 21:15).
- Matching Peter’s failure, Jesus asked the “love” question three times. (John 21: 15-17).

- Twice Jesus uses *agapao* in His question, but the third time He switches to the *phileo* used by Peter. In this way Jesus acknowledges Peter is forgiven and restored.
 - From that point forward, Peter stands out as a true shepherd of Christ's sheep, tending the lambs as a humble servant-leader.
 - The variation in the word used for love is interesting, but surely the amazing thing is that Jesus reaches out three times to the one who had denied Him.
12. **Peter on the Day of Pentecost:** After Jesus' ascension, Peter took the lead in choosing someone to replace Judas as the twelfth disciple (Acts 1:15-26). The person chosen had to be someone who was frequently present and active with Jesus and His disciples.
- Three people were considered. From the three, Matthias was chosen.
 - On Pentecost, the apostles received the Holy Spirit amid great signs of glory. After receiving the Spirit, the apostles spoke in tongues and exhibited other signs of the Spirit.
 - Unbelieving Jews derided the spectacle saying there were no miraculous signs of the Spirit, and the disciples were merely drunk. Peter responded with strong testimony explaining what was really happening (Acts 2:14).
 - Peter gave a powerful sermon which resulted in about 3000 converts. After the Pentecost experiences, Peter was widely recognized as the leader of the infant church.
13. **Peter at Times was Slow to Accept What God Required:** Sometimes Peter needed a little prodding to understand and do God's next assignment.
- When God wanted Peter to go to the Gentile Roman centurion Cornelius and his family and preach the gospel to them, it required 3 repeats of the vision God sent to him. After the third vision, Peter in 40 AD went to Cornelius and did as God asked.
 - Cornelius and his entire family were converted and baptized (Acts 10:9-48). God had prepared the way.
14. **Peter's Lapse at Antioch:** As he matured in faith, Peter had occasional lapses. At Antioch, Peter withdrew from Gentile believers when Jewish believers sent by James from Jerusalem arrived. Paul publicly rebuked Peter for hypocrisy. (Galatians 2:12-13).
- We know Paul's rebuke was effective. In the record of the Jerusalem Council (49 AD), Peter made it emphatically clear that the gospel of grace was for Gentiles apart from works of the Law (Acts 15:7-11).
 - Though he remained Apostle to the Jews, Peter also became a champion of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, preaching as he had successfully done with Cornelius.
 - Peter vigorously defended preaching to the Gentiles even when some Jewish Christians doubted it was the right thing to do.
15. **Peter's Influence on the Developing Church:** Peter greatly influenced the developing church during its infant years. From Pentecost until he was martyred, Peter displayed front-and-center leadership.

- Consider examples from Acts. Peter's preaching at Pentecost resulted in some 3000 conversions (Acts 2). He healed a lame man at the Temple (Acts 3). He courageously defied the Sanhedrin and refused to stop preaching about Jesus (Acts 4).
 - Peter presided over the grim task of dealing with the deception of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). He confirmed the gospel to the Samaritans and dealt with the deceit of Simon the Magician (Acts 8).
 - He healed the sick and raised the dead in Lydda, Sharon, and Joppa (Acts 9). He reached out to Gentiles and worked for the universal offer of the gospel (Acts 10).
16. **God Gives Second Chances:** For Peter, it could have all ended at dawn on that morning as the rooster crowed signaling his failure. God, in His grace, gave Peter another chance.
- God generously enabled Peter to become an important leader in the developing church.
17. **Peter Ministered to Jews and Gentiles:** We rightly think of Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles. However, the first recorded conversion of Gentiles was through Peter's preaching to Cornelius, the Roman centurion, and his family.
- At the Jerusalem council in 49 AD, Peter agree with Paul on preaching the gospel of grace to Gentiles without requiring them to adhere to works of the Law.
18. **Two New Testament Letters:** Peter wrote two New Testament letters. In addition, Mark, who worked with Peter, wrote the Gospel of Mark based on reminiscences he heard from Peter.
- Peter's influence in the infant church was large and effective. The book of Acts records a lot about Peter and his early ministry.
19. **Next:** Begin the detailed study of Peter's first letter.