

Bible Studies about Peter

Study 1: The Calling of Peter

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2008

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Background

It is with genuine excitement that we present to you this, the first of the studies in our series about the disciple Peter in which we will take a look at his calling. The full series of studies includes:

Bible Studies about Peter

Study No.	Title	Reference
1	The Calling of Peter	BH050-PET
2	Peter's Concept of Christ	BH051-PET
3	Peter's Walk on Water	BH052-PET
4	Peter at the Transfiguration of Christ	BH053-PET
5	Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane	BH054-PET
6	Peter's Denial of Christ	BH055-PET
7	Peter and Christ's Resurrection	BH056-PET
8	Christ's Forgiveness of Peter	BH057-PET
9	Peter's Great Commission	BH058-PET
10	Peter and Pentecost	BH059-PET
11	The Ministry of Peter	BH060-PET
12	Peter's Vision from God	BH061-PET
13	An Introduction to 1 Peter	BH062-PET
14	An Introduction to 2 Peter	BH063-PET

Source: Watson, M., (1999-2008), *Bible Studies about Peter*, © Bethany Hope Bible Studies.

Of all the disciples we read about in the New Testament, Peter was perhaps one whose life was most filled with paradox. An intriguing character, from whom we can learn so much. His original name was Simeon, a Hebrew name (Acts 15:14, 2 Peter 1:1). He may have chosen to adopt Simon as a Greek name because of its similar sound. His father was called Jonah (Matthew 16:17), and Peter was also married (Mark 1:30).

Peter worked as a fisherman, and originated from Bethsaida (John 1:44), which literally means 'fishing house'. Bethsaida was a fishing village on the Sea of Galilee, and west of Jordan. It was the birthplace of Andrew, Peter and Philip (Matthew 11:21, John 12:21). He also had a home in Capernaum in Galilee (Mark 1:21ff).

The Message

The calling of Peter is covered in Mark 1:17. What was it that made Jesus choose Peter? He could have chosen great orators, learned men or military leaders. Instead He chose a man who was a humble fisherman, a man who we later learn was at times impulsive and unstable.

The Bible tells us that the response of Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew to Jesus' call to follow Him and become fishers of men was *"And immediately they left their nets and followed him."*¹ What must they have thought when they heard Jesus' call? What was it that made them throw caution to the wind, giving up a hard but secure job to step into the unknown? Some would perhaps say that this was foolhardy - a kind of blind faith. Others would say that here we see implicit trust in the person and character of Jesus, in their heart and minds recognising Jesus for whom he is. Our prayer should be that we too are blessed with insight to recognise the call of Jesus, and the courage to follow that conviction.

Peter's brother Andrew had been one of John's disciples² and he had been with John when John had acknowledged Jesus as the Lamb of God³. It seems clear that Andrew must have spoken to his brother about John's teachings, and when Andrew encountered Jesus *"He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus."*⁴ It was in this first meeting that Jesus looked at Simon and said *"You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter⁵).*⁶ It may have been that Peter recognised that Jesus was indeed (as John the Baptist tells us) *"the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal"*⁷, the fulfilment of many of John's prophecies.

Jesus named Peter not for what he was but for what, by God's grace, he would become. This is something that we should gain encouragement from to know that Jesus sees beyond the people that we are today. He sees into the heart of the people, a people who *"do not belong to the world, but [he has] chosen [us] out of the world."*⁸ By God's grace we are *"a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that [we] may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light."*⁹ The Bible tells us that Jesus is *"the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."*¹⁰ I praise the Lord to know that the work he has begun in us has yet to be completed, and I thank him for his wonderful grace and his love that knows no measure.

We can't know for sure what it was like to live in Jesus' time. But historical accounts and the Bible itself indicate it was a time of great tension between the Jews and the Romans. For how long had the Jews hoped and prayed for the Messiah to come? They were yearning for a political leader to deliver them from Roman oppression. For simple people like Andrew and Peter, an encounter with the Messiah would have been both liberating and daunting. Did they perhaps wonder why the hoped for Messiah would choose people such as them? What expectations might they have had of Jesus? Spend a few moments putting yourself in their shoes.

¹ Mark 1:18

² John 1:40

³ John 1:35-36

⁴ John 1:41-42a

⁵ Both 'Cephas' (from the Aramaic) and 'Peter' (from the Greek) mean 'rock'

⁶ John 1:42b

⁷ John 1:27

⁸ John 15:19

⁹ 1 Peter 2:9

¹⁰ Hebrews 12:2

We may frequently ask ourselves in our own Christian life why did Jesus choose us? Surely, despite our failings we can take encouragement from the call of Peter and how Jesus chooses people not for what they are but by God's grace what they might be in Him.

There is also a challenge, because in light of our discussion there is no way that Peter could have followed Jesus out of blind faith. Peter was convicted by the kind of conviction that changes the heart of a person, one that changes their very lives.

Questions

1. In what way have you heard the call of Jesus in your life?
2. How have you responded to this call?
3. Why do you think that God chose you?
4. What does this teach you about the character of God?
5. What do you think about Peter leaving his nets, and all that this entailed, to follow Jesus?