

The Twelve: Solidifying the Rock, Part 2

Luke 6:14

Jesus gave Simon the name Peter at that very first meeting. It's the word *cephas* in Aramaic, the word *petros* in Greek, and it refers to a detached, but a very large fragment of rock. And the rock upon which Jesus would build his church is a *petra*. That's the next word he uses in Matthew 16:18. It's a *petra*, a massive, a living rock. Peter is a fragment from that larger rock. Jesus didn't name Peter "rock" because he was so rock-like dependable, not at this point, anyway. He named him Peter because he knew what he planned to do with Simon. He looked ahead. And Jesus intended to make Simon firm like a rock, like a *petros*. He intended to turn his life into the bedrock foundation for the entire church, the entire church age. Jesus could say that even from these early days because he identified in Peter the evidence of the father's work. He saw in Peter the indispensable quality and virtue of every true disciple. What is it? It's the necessary and foundational virtue of faith.

So when Andrew told Peter, "We have found the Messiah," Peter came. He started following Jesus from that point on. And by comparing Scripture with Scripture, we see that Peter was with Jesus at Cana of Galilee, where the water was turned into wine at the wedding. He watched Jesus there in Jerusalem clear the temple of the buyers and the sellers and the moneychangers. Remember later that it was said, "Zeal for your house has consumed me." He saw that in Jesus. He was around for the meeting of Nicodemus, maybe if not in the room, but close enough to get the report and find out what happened. Jesus taught him the foundational need for regeneration, for rebirth, for new birth from the Holy Spirit from God. Peter then traveled back to Galilee with Jesus. He witnessed the conversation Jesus had with the Samaritan woman when he came back and found him talking to a Samaritan woman. Then he saw the harvest of the Samaritans who came to Christ. Peter believed and he followed, and he saw all this marvelous, miraculous stuff.

Back in Galilee, as they get back there after the time of the Samaritans, Simon Peter felt the need to get back home to Capernaum to attend to his responsibilities. He had a family to

think about, his fishing business to get back to. And the Bible is clear that he was a married man. Peter had a mother-in-law—Mark 1:30, Matthew 8:14, Luke 4:38. We've seen that already, that Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law. So he was married. And Paul uses Peter's marriage as an example of the right to be supported in Gospel ministry, 1 Corinthians 9:5, "Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other Apostles and the brothers of our Lord and Cephas?" By the time Paul wrote that to the Corinthians, it was around AD 55. It would appear at that point that Peter's children, if he had any, were grown up and self-supported, so he wasn't dragging a whole family through the Roman Empire; but earlier on when Peter first met Jesus, he was still occupied with his family and his fishing business. As it says, he was a hard-working man. He was supporting his wife and his kids and feeding them and taking care of his dear mother-in-law.

Because of Peter's dedication in providing for his family, though, he missed Christ's intent in calling him to full-time discipleship. And so Jesus had to call him not once, but twice. We already covered this, but just turn back really quick to Luke 5:1-11. We've already been through this text together in our

study of Luke's Gospel. I'll resist the temptation to preach that sermon again, but man, it's such a good section of Scripture, isn't it?

The first call to full-time discipleship was in Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20, same event. Jesus was in Capernaum, and he was walking by the Sea of Galilee. He saw Simon Peter, Andrew's brother, and they were casting their nets into the sea, fishing. He said to them, "Follow me, I will make you fishers of men." And he did the same right after that with the other two brothers, James and John. All of them responded in the same way. They immediately left their nets to follow Christ.

But after that, when Jesus left Capernaum. He left Capernaum to travel throughout Galilee for his itinerant ministry to the towns and villages of Galilee. And again, Peter, Andrew, James, John, they had responsibilities. They had a fishing business to run, workers to manage, families to feed. So at that point, they didn't understand that Jesus' call to discipleship was intended for them to be full-time; leave everything and come.

So Luke 5:1-11, Jesus comes back to Capernaum after his itinerate ministry, and he gave those disciples a frustrating night of fishing just so he could make a point. All night caught nothing. He made a point that his call to discipleship was to be permanent. Jesus orchestrated a special miracle, one that would make an indelible impression upon a fisherman, in particular. And Jesus said to Simon, verse 4, "Put it out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Remember, it's morning. Fishing's done. They're done fishing. They're washing it and mending nets. They're getting ready to rest.

Put out your nets into the deep; let your nets down for a catch. So Peter protested. Then he obeyed. And then he witnessed an incredible miracle, which revealed to him that Jesus is no ordinary man. And how did he respond to that? Look at verse 8, "Peter fell down at Jesus' knees and said, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'" That gives us some insight into Peter's nature, doesn't it? He's spiritually sensitive, endearingly so. Yes, he dared to talk back to Jesus, but he didn't realize who Jesus was. When he discovered his error, he was quick to repent, to admit his fault. He was very self-

reflective about that. I mean, he didn't stop and say, Whoa, Jesus, you can understand my error, I mean, I, as an expert fisherman with vast fishing experience on these waters, and you, your just, Rabbi, I mean, how was I to know you had super powers? You didn't announce it.

The heart of every believer is to not make excuses, but to see and to admit sin and to repent. And Peter is here stricken with the thought that he had dared to contradict the holy. Look at Jesus. He's so gracious, isn't he? He says to Simon, "Do not be afraid; for from now on you will be catching men." So they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. All that illustrates is that when Jesus called, Peter followed. After the initial, early introduction found in John's Gospel, Peter believed in Jesus. He trusted in him. And then he followed him in faith.

When Jesus called Peter to discipleship on the shores of Galilee, again Peter believed, and he trusted and again he followed. Now, with Jesus' call to full time discipleship, it's clear, it's unambiguous, it's permanent, it's exclusive. Peter is here required to turn away from his life, from his business,

from all that he had established; once again we see that Peter trusted Jesus. He followed Jesus Christ immediately in repentant, humble, faith. What about us? Is that the character of our faith? Are we self-reflective and humble? Or do we stiffen our necks in pride and make excuses for our bad behavior? Are we quick to obey the Lord in faith? Or do we resist, failing to trust him, to follow the Lord no matter where he leads. The New Testament would have us see that Peter exemplified a typical faith. It's not a perfect faith, and neither is ours, but it's one that is common to every true believer. And in that sense, we're the same as Peter. We come to Jesus by faith. We trust in him as God's chosen Messiah, the Son of the living God. And it's by faith, and it's because of faith that we learn from Christ, too. Right?

That's a second point, that in hope, Peter learned from Jesus Christ. In hope, Peter learned from Jesus Christ. When Peter trusted Christ with everything, he left behind him an old life, a familiar life. He left behind him all that he had built, all of his built-up credibility, all of his old friendships, all the familiar places. And he embarked on an entirely new life. He set a course into the unknown, uncharted waters of apostleship.

He could have had no idea at this point in his life, early on that following Christ would take him into the very heart of the Roman Empire, to the city of Rome itself and ultimately to martyrdom.

But the call of Christ was nonetheless disruptive. So what caused Simon to set aside all that was familiar, all that was comfortable? Simply stated, it's the transforming power, the life-changing power of hope. In Hebrews 11:1, we learn about the character of faith, right? It's a definition, definitional verse there. We learn that faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. That means faith is focused on an object. Faith isn't self-focused; it's focused on an object. And the power of faith is the power of the object that we trust. So if your faith is in your career, you've got a pretty shaky foundation for your faith. If your faith is in your own strength, wisdom, power, money-making ability, whatever it is, your charm, your good looks, whatever it is. If that's where your faith is focused, the object of your faith cannot stand. If your hope and faith is pressed on, focused on the living God, who created heaven and earth and everything that's in it, who says, "I am God and there is no other," well, then you've got a



rock-solid foundation for your faith because your faith is focused on the right object, God himself. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. It's the conviction of things not seen. Faith is focused on an object. The thing that is hoped for, the thing which is hoped for is something that is not seen. Peter writes about this virtue of hope immediately after the greeting in his first letter. He says in 1 Peter 1:3 to 5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to," what, "a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." That's where we see that power manifest to raise dead people to life, "to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through," what, "faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Peter is describing what happened to him and what has happened to every Christian since him. It is a living hope because it is a life-giving, life-producing hope. God causes his people to be born again. And the life of that newborn creation in Christ, it is fixed upon and aimed toward this new and living hope. And when we pursue that hope throughout our lives, looking

toward it with the eyes of faith, God changes us. As we trust God, as we put our faith in Christ, we learn from him, his teaching, his ways; our mind is renewed, our life is transformed, we obey him. And that's exactly what we see in Peter's life, right? Faith in Christ taught Peter to hope in Christ, and the more he learned from Jesus' teaching, the more consistently he followed in obedience. The more he observed the Lord's life, the more certain he was, the deeper his conviction, assured of his own foundation for his own faith.

You should be in Luke 5 right now. So if you'll look just at Luke 6, the section immediately following where we are right now, what comes next is Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount. So we have the calling of the Twelve, the naming of the Twelve, that's where we are. And then right after this is Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount. Now, notice that sermon was not primarily for the crowds, though the crowds were there. It wasn't primarily evangelistic in nature.

Notice what Luke tells us in verse 20, Luke 6:20, when Jesus started preaching it says that he "lifted up his eyes on" whom? Not all the crowds, but "on his disciples." And in fact,

much of Jesus' best-known public teaching, the Sermon on the Mount, the Olivet discourse, which is all about the end times, even the kingdom parables, his teaching wasn't primarily aimed at a wide audience. He was using most concern to teach his disciples, satisfied to instruct those who trusted him, who followed him. It's actually a very small group.

Some of his most beloved, best remembered teachings are in the parables. And Jesus was very clear about his strategy for teaching in parables. Matthew 13:10 says, The "disciples came to him and said to him, 'Why do you speak to them in parables?'" Do you know what Jesus said? "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given." And after quoting a judgment prophecy of Isaiah, Jesus blessed his disciples in verses 16 and 17 of Matthew 13. He said, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see and did not see, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

So here's Peter, an early beneficiary of this exclusive privileged teaching. All the Apostles were. And not only that,

but Peter and the Apostles, they were privy to the private teaching ministry of Jesus, his more intimate teaching that the larger crowds never hear. We already mentioned the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah at Caesarea Philippi. None of the crowds were there for that. In fact, in Matthew 16:20, Jesus strictly charged the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

When you look at his teaching on the childlikeness of the believer in Matthew 18 or forgiveness in Matthew 18, also, the Upper Room discourse, the vine and the branches, all of that doctrine. Peter and the Apostles learned all of that from Jesus apart from the crowds, and even for them, apart from the larger group of disciples. And in those intimate settings, one man stands out and it's Peter.

It was the curiosity and the interest of Simon Peter that drew even more out of Jesus. He's the guy in the classroom who's always got his hand up. He's always wanting further explanation and elaboration, and I love that about him because he's bold. He's unafraid to ask a question, even that question. You know every teacher tells you, Look, the only question, stupid question is the one not asked. That's not true. There are stupid

questions. But look, good on you for asking the question even if it is a stupid question. That was Peter. He's unafraid to ask the question even if it might make him look foolish, even if others are quick to upbraid him for it.

Listen, if it weren't for Peter asking follow-up questions, think about how much we would have missed. In Matthew 15:15, if Peter hadn't asked, "Explain that parable to us," we wouldn't hear Jesus explain the source of defiling sin, that evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander, all those would defile a person. Where do they come from? They come from the heart. It's not what goes into you, but what comes out of you that's the issue. Or this, having heard how believers must forgive those who seek forgiveness, every time they seek it, in Matthew 18:21, Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how often?" I mean let's, let's be real here. "How often will my brother sin against me will I forgive him? As many as seven times."

We tend to laugh at Peter, right? Because he thought his shallow view of forgiveness was rather magnanimous. But without that question, we all tend to think the same thing exactly,

wouldn't we? We want limits. We all tend to be more interested in defining the limits of our own responsibility toward God and other people. We're more interested in that than we are in mimicking the character of our forgiving God. We're like that. It's sad, isn't it? So when Jesus answered Peter's question, telling him a parable of the unmerciful servant, thanks to Peter, we now understand in no uncertain terms that God wants us to follow his pattern of forgiveness, which is, thankfully, without limit.

So Peter kept reinforcing his hope in Jesus Christ by learning as much he could in Christ's presence. He was an eager learner, and he cultivated a heart of spiritual curiosity. He was one of the most teachable men in the bunch because he trusted Jesus implicitly, he loved him deeply, and he kept reaching out in hope to understand. By observing Peter's hunger for learning from Jesus, his desire to solidify his hope in Jesus Christ, we see in him a principle that Jesus taught, we see it come to pass in Peter's life. Also, his two friends in that innermost circle, the brothers James and John, Jesus told them in Luke 8:18, He said "Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has

not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.” Look, that’s the godly principle of learning, of being a careful listener.

Some people are pretty content with just a Sunday morning. But here’s the deal, those who cultivate a heart of listening, of hearing the Word, of responding to it in obedience, you know what they receive from the Lord? More light, more truth. But to those who are lazy about the truth or distracted with so many other things, those who are satisfied with superficiality, with mediocrity, satisfied with other things the world has to offer, you know what they’re going to suffer? They’re going to suffer the judgment of remaining in that ignorance. Those who are satisfied with superficial understanding of God, those who are satisfied and comfortable with mediocrity, that is a frightening place to be because it could indicate there’s a much deeper problem.

Look, God is under no obligation whatsoever to give more truth, to give more understanding, to give more light to those who are flippant about learning, to those who are indifferent, to those who are uninterested in change. Are you resistant to

change? Look, every single one of us is resistant to change to some degree, aren't we? But Christ, he did not save us to leave us the same. He saved us to change us. To those who love the Word, those who draw near to the truth, those who cultivate spiritual curiosity and cultivate a teachable heart, God is joyful, and he is eager to give them more light, more truth, more understanding. He wants to lavish it on people like that. I believe that Jesus demonstrated that very principle with Peter and James and John, bringing these three men closer, blessing them with more intimate access to him to teach them more and more.

Do you remember Mary and Martha? We just mentioned Martha. Sisters. Polar opposites, too, weren't they? I mentioned Martha earlier; she's always bustling around, fretting about all the issues of serving the guests, cooking the meals. In all her serving, she was starting on one occasion to get irritated with her dreamy-eyed sister, right? Mary. Remember that? Where was Mary? Luke 10:39 says, "She sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching." Martha had had about enough of that. So she stomped right up to the Lord, dead-set on enlisting him to set her sister straight, "Lord, do you not care?" Well, that's a



charge isn't it? "Do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" And then she continues because she thinks, Of course he would never admit to that. So "Tell her then to help me." Pretty bold, right? I mean you address him as Lord and then you dare to command him? The Lord is so gracious in his response. What does he say? "Martha, Martha, you are so anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. And Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." So tender toward the anxious and troubled heart, even though he's not in any way affirming it, is he? Instead, he affirms and commends Mary because she is focused on his teaching. The same attitude as Peter. Always eager to learn, always intently listening to the Lord's teaching, and so the Lord drew him in even nearer.