

Appendix 1. Participant Handouts



If you are working with a class or small group, feel free to duplicate the handouts at no additional charge. If you'd like to print 8-1/2" x 11" or A4 size pages, you can download the free Participant Guide handout sheets at:

www.jesuswalk.com/peter/peter-lesson-handouts.pdf

Discussion Questions

You'll typically find between 3 and 9 questions for each lesson. Each question may include several sub-questions. These are designed to get group members engaged in discussion of the key points of the passage. If you are running short of time, feel free to skip questions or portions of questions.

For the lessons with more questions, you may want to split the lesson into two sessions (bold-faced below). See below the number of discussion questions in each lesson.

Suggestions for Classes and Groups

Individuals who are studying online can probably complete one full lesson per week, though they'll need to be diligent to do so. But some of the chapters just have too much material for a one-hour class discussion. You may want to be selective, or to extend your weekly class sessions beyond the number of lessons in this material.

1. The Call of Peter (in each Gospel). 5 Questions.
2. Peter's Growth as a Disciple (Matthew 14-18). 4 Questions.
3. Peter's Confession and the Keys to the Kingdom (Matthew 16:13-27). **8 Questions.**
4. Peter's Glory and Humiliation (Luke 9:27-36; John 13:1-17). 4 Questions.
5. Peter's Crisis and Denial (Luke 22, Mark 14). **6 Questions.**
6. Peter and the Risen Christ (Luke 24; John 20-21). 5 Questions.
7. Peter's Leadership in the Early Church (Acts 1-4). **6 Questions.**
8. Peter's Authority and Power (Acts 5-8). 5 Questions.
9. Peter's Ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 9-11). **9 Questions.**
10. Peter's Escape, Hypocrisy, and Counsel (Acts 12-15). 3 Questions.
11. Peter's Death and Legacy (John 21:18-19; 1 and 2 Peter). 4 Questions.

Additional materials for your reference:

Appendix 2. References to Peter in the New Testament <https://www.jesuswalk.com/peter/apx2-peter-ref.htm>

Appendix 3. Chronology of Peter's Life <https://www.jesuswalk.com/peter/apx3-chronology-peter.htm>

Appendix 4. The Synoptic Problem, <https://www.jesuswalk.com/peter/apx4-synoptic.htm>

Appendix 5. Primacy of Peter vs. Papal Primacy <https://www.jesuswalk.com/peter/apx5-primacy.htm>

Appendix 6. The Legend of Peter's Upside-Down Crucifixion,
<https://www.jesuswalk.com/peter/apx6-upside-down-crucifixion.htm>

Appendix 7. Can a Human Minister Forgive or Absolve from Sin?

<https://www.jesuswalk.com/peter/apx7-absolution.htm>

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1. The Call of Peter (in each Gospel)

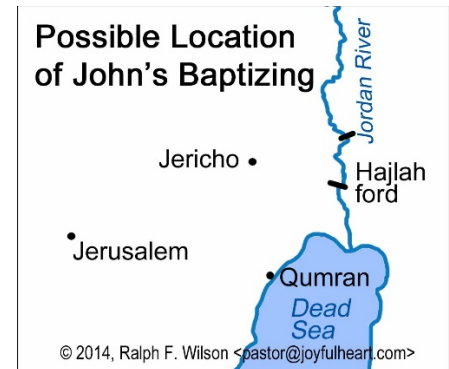
1.1. Peter Meets Jesus in Judea (John 1:42)

Simon is an extremely popular name among Jews because it is the name of Jacob's second son, Simon. The name from *šim 'ôn*, "hearing."

Son of John or Jonas is Peter's patronymic or father's name. This would distinguish him from some other Simons. In English, we often have fathers' names built into our surnames: Wilson (Will's son), Hanson (Han's son), Johnson (John's son), etc.

Cephas is the Aramaic word for "rock."

Peter, from *petros*, is the Greek word for "rock, stone." Why does Jesus call him Cephas/Peter/Rock? Because of a rock's firmness and strength as a foundation as we'll see in Matthew 16:17-19



1.2. Set Free by the Blood of the Lamb (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Q1. (1 Peter 1:18-19) Why is Christ's blood so expensive? What does allowing his blood to be shed for you say about your worth? About God's love for you?

1.3. Fishers of Men (Mark 1:16-20)

We have two different accounts of the call of Peter in the Synoptic Gospels.

- 1. Fishers of Men (Mark 1:16-18 = Matthew 4:18-20).** Matthew and Mark give the final response to Peter's calling on the beach at Capernaum.
- 2. Miraculous Catch of Fish (Luke 5:1-11).** Luke gives the miraculous catch of fish as the reason for Peter's submission to Jesus.

Casting net. The casting net is thrown out over the water in the shallows by a single person. Weights at the edge pull the net to the bottom, trapping any fish that might be under it. The net opening may be 10 to 20 feet (3 to 6 meters) in diameter.

Seine net or drag net. Large vertical wall-like nets, with floats along the top, with the ends attached either to the shore or to another boat.

Q2. (Mark 1:16-18; Matthew 19:27-30). Why do we sometimes put off following through with things we know God is calling us to do? Is it fear? Is it an unwillingness to pay the cost of that decision? Is there something you feel God calling you to do? What does it tell us about Peter and Andrew that they "immediately left their nets and followed"?

1.5. The Miraculous Catch of Fish (Luke 5:3-8)

Q3. (Luke 5:3-11) Why does Peter hesitate to put out into the "deeper waters" after fishing all night? Why do *we* hesitate? What is the reward of deeper waters vs. the shallows? How much



does deep repentance depend upon how a person can see his sin in relation to God's holiness? Who gives this revelation? Can Peter experience true repentance from his sin if he does *not* leave everything and follow? What is the relationship of obedience to repentance?

1.6. Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law (Mark 1:29-30)

Q4. (Mark 1:29-31) What does this incident teach us about Peter and his life situation? How does the mother-in-law's healing affect the life situation? How can Jesus' healing affect your life situation?

1.7. Peter Searches for the Missing Master (Mark 1:35-39)

Q5. (Mark 1:33-39) Why does Jesus get away? What does Jesus praying tell us about him? About our own needs? Why does Peter organize a search party to find Jesus? What does Peter assume Jesus should be doing? How do Peter's plan and Jesus' plan for the day differ from each other?

Lessons for Disciples

Here are some of the lessons from these early incidents in Peter's life. You may find others as well.

1. Christ's death on the cross is likened to an atoning sacrifice – the Lamb of God sets us free from sin and an empty lifestyle (John 1:29, 35; 1 Peter 1:18-19). His blood is precious, exceedingly valuable, suggesting how much God values us (§1.1, 1.2).
2. Answering Christ's call involves accepting his direction for our lives and leaving our old life behind (Mark 1:17-18; §1.3).
3. Though we must leave our old lives in order to gain his, the blessings and benefits in this life and the next from following Jesus are incalculably greater (Matthew 19:27-30; §1.4).
4. Jesus sometimes calls us to do things we feel are irrelevant, such as letting down the nets after a night of catching nothing. But obedience can yield remarkable results (Luke 5:3-11; §1.5).
5. Sometimes God can bless us with a sudden and extremely uncomfortable realization of our own sin and corruption. Fear can push us away; faith helps us to receive his grace, accept his cleansing, and move into a new relationship with him. Repentance and surrender are keys to growth (Luke 5:3-11; §1.5).
6. As we invite Jesus into our complex and messy lives, he will begin to heal and fix some of our embarrassments and things that drag us down. He cares about blessing and reordering our whole lives (Mark 1:29-30; §1.6).
7. Jesus sets a pattern of getting away for a time of prayer at the beginning of each day to seek clarity and direction. We disciples are to adopt this pattern (Mark 1:35-39; §1.7).
8. Peter learns quickly that he shouldn't try to direct, control, or know better than Jesus. Disciples find that Jesus knows what he is doing; we follow, not direct him (Mark 1:33-39; §1.7).

2. Peter's Growth as a Disciple (Matthew 14-18)

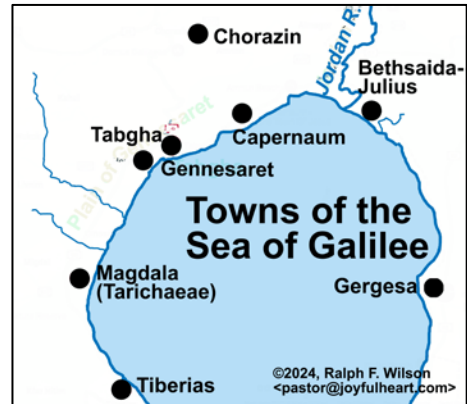
2.1. Chief of the Twelve Apostles

Q6. How is Jesus' inner circle of Peter, James, and John a strategic leadership style to advance the Kingdom? How is it important for Jesus' needs?

2.2. Peter as a Spokesman for the Disciples

2.3. Peter Walks on the Water (Matthew 14:22-34)

Q7. (Matthew 14:22-34) Do you think Jesus wanted Peter to walk on the water? Why does Peter ask Jesus if he can come to him? What does this tell us about Peter? What do we learn about faith from this incident? What are we modern-day disciples to learn from this?



2.4. Peter and the Temple Tax (Matthew 17:24-27)

This tax had originally been instituted by Moses to support the service in the tabernacle (Exodus 30:11-16). The tax is equal to a half shekel, about two days' wage, levied on all Jewish men, and collected even outside Palestine in the communities of the Jewish Diaspora to support the temple in Jerusalem.

Q8. (Matthew 17:24-27) Why do you think Matthew includes the story of the temple tax in his Gospel? What does Jesus want Peter to learn about who He is? Why does Jesus have Peter get the tax through a miracle rather than by normal means? Why does the fish have enough tax for both of them?

2.5. 77-Fold Forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-22)

One can legitimately translate the Greek as "seventy-seven times" (NIV, ESV, NRSV, NJB), or "seventy times seven" (KJV, NASB), but literally $70 \times 7 = 490$ or 77 is not the point.

True forgiveness is deciding not to hold a sin against a person any longer. Forgiveness is not excusing. ("She didn't mean it.") Forgiveness is not minimizing the sin. ("It wasn't that bad.") Forgiveness isn't minimizing our pain. ("I recovered okay.") Forgiveness doesn't require us to forget the offence, only to commit ourselves not to hold it against the person when we do remember.

Q9. (Matthew 17:24-27) Why do you think Peter is frustrated with Jesus' command to forgive? What does this tell us about Peter? Why is forgiveness often so hard for us? Why do we want to limit forgiveness ("seven times")? What does Jesus' "seventy-seven times" or "seven times seventy" teach Peter about forgiveness? Who is Jesus calling on you to forgive?

Lessons for Disciples

1. Peter, James, and John are part of Jesus' inner circle of especially attentive learners, who he includes in some intimate situations. An inner circle can be an effective strategy to disciple some of those whom God sends to us (§2.1)
2. Peter asks Jesus to call him to come to him on the water, recognizing the need for him to operate within his Master's will (Matthew 14:22-34; §2.3).

3. Peter begins to sink when he loses his focus on Jesus, and begins to assess the dangers of the wind. We learn we must keep our eyes on Jesus (Matthew 14:22-34; §2.3).
4. Faith is a vital element in God's working in and through us, "according to your faith be it done to you" (Matthew 14:22-34; §2.3). However, even our early attempts at faith, though inadequate, still please our Father, who is working to grow our faith.
5. Jesus involves Peter in the miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth to help him understand better Jesus' relation to the Father as a Son. He also shows Peter not to pick a fight over every misunderstanding (Matthew 17:24-27; §2.4).
6. There are no limits as to how many times we are to forgive those who sin against us (Matthew 18:21-22; §2.5k).

3. Peter's Confession and the Keys to the Kingdom (Matthew 16:13-27)

Caesarea Philippi is largely a pagan area, so Jesus has more time to spend teaching his disciples.

3.1 Peter's Confession in All the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 16:13-15, 20-27)

All three Synoptic Gospels share six elements in common surrounding the confession:

1. Question: Who do people say Jesus is? (Matthew 16:13-14)

2. Confession: Peter's Confession of Jesus as the Messiah (Matthew 16:15-16)

(This lesson has more Discussion Questions than usual due to the many important lessons for us to understand. If you don't have time to answer them all, that's okay.)

Q10. (Matthew 16:15-16) Why does Jesus ask his disciples who they think he is? What does Peter's confession tell us about his faith at this point? If Jesus were to ask you who you think he is, what would you say? Do you follow Jesus in a way appropriate to who you say he is?

3. Secrecy: Jesus commands them to keep this Messianic secret (Matthew 16:20)

Q11. (Matthew 16:20; optional) What would have happened if Jesus had publicly acknowledged he was the Messiah? What group(s) would likely try to subvert Jesus' cause for their own political ends? Would Jesus be in charge of his own movement any longer? What happens when the church embraces politics and politicians. What happens to the clarity of the Gospel message?

4. Prediction: Jesus says he must suffer, be killed, and rise from the dead (Mt. 16:21)

Q12. (Matthew 16:21) Why does Jesus tell his disciples three times that he will suffer, be killed by the Jewish leaders, and be raised on the third day? What does he need his disciples to understand? What values is he trying to instill in these disciples?

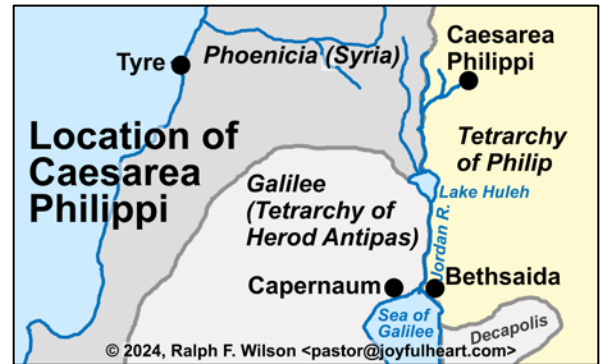
5. Objection: Peter refuses to accept Jesus' prediction of suffering (Matthew 16:22-23)

Q13. (Matthew 16:22-23) Why does Peter rebuke Jesus? In what way is Peter acting as Satan here? In what ways do we rebuke God by telling him what to do and not do in our prayers? How can it be that Peter can be exalted by Jesus one moment and rebuked the next moment? What is Jesus' disciple-training process here by strongly rebuking Peter?

6. Requirement: Deny self, take up cross, and follow (Matthew 16:24-25)

In English, one's cross can be "an affliction that tries one's virtue, steadfastness, or patience." But Jesus is talking about literal death, about gruesome punishment for following him. Cross in this saying is a metaphor for death, not for a burden!

Three-fold Obedience: (1) denying self, (2) taking up one's cross, (3) following Jesus.



Q14. (Matthew 16:13-16, 20-23; Luke 9:23) Why does understanding “cross” as “burden” distort Jesus’ meaning in this passage? How does the commitment to die if necessary to serve Christ change a disciple? What is the mindset of a disciple who is prepared to die vs. one who makes no such commitment? What values is Paul trying to instill in Timothy when he says, “All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12)?

3.2. Jesus’ Special Words to Peter (Matthew 16:16-19)

1. Jesus blesses Simon Bar-Jonah (Matthew 16:17)

2. Jesus calls Peter the rock upon which the Church is built (Matthew 16:18)

Jesus is comparing the Church to a structure or temple that Jesus is building on a firm foundation, a solid rock, so strong that “the gates of hell” won’t be able to destroy it. Some teach that Peter is the rock in the sense that his *faith* is like a rock. Thus, the church is built on *Peter-like faith* rather than on Peter himself. But the text says Peter himself is the rock.

The phrase “gates of hell” is ambiguous.

- a. **Gates of Hell = Power of Death.**
- b. **Gates of Hell = the Ungodly Forces of the Underworld.**

3. Jesus grants Peter the keys of the Kingdom (Matthew 16:19a)

Isaiah 22:22; Revelation 3:7; Luke 11:52.

4. Jesus grants the power to bind and loose (Matthew 16:19b)

1. **Forgiving and not forgiving sins.** John 20:22-23.

2. **Permitted and forbidden.** Rabbinical term for what was to be regarded as ‘bound,’ that is, forbidden, or ‘loosed,’ that is, permitted. Matthew 18:16-18; Acts 15:1-29.

Primacy of Peter. Jesus clearly makes Peter leader of the disciples here. Peter as the “rock” refers to his foundational role in both the early church in Jerusalem and the other churches where he had a formative evangelistic and teaching role. The “gates of hell” probably refer to the powers of the enemy that attack the Church, rather than the power of death. The “keys of the kingdom of heaven” represent Peter’s authority to open the kingdom to those who trust in Jesus. It includes “binding” and “loosing” – both establishing doctrine and practice as well as forgiveness and admission into Church. Peter clearly has a *primary* foundational role, but the other apostles also have a foundational role. (Ephesians 2:19–20). Peter is personally given the keys to the kingdom, that is, authority from Christ in the Church.

Q15. (Matthew 16:18) In what sense is Peter a rock? In what sense might we say that Jesus’ church is built upon him?

Q16. (Matthew 16:19) What does the power to loose and bind consist of? How are these important to the church as a whole. In what way is granting the keys to the kingdom another way of granting the power to loose and bind?

3.3. Peter’s Other Confession (John 6:67-69)

Q17. (John 6:67-69) How did Peter’s confession of Jesus as “the Holy One of God” stabilize him and the other disciples in the midst of many falling away from Jesus. How can who we believe Jesus to be affect the way we live day-to-day and act in times of crisis?

Lessons for Disciples

These few verses provide lots of lessons for disciples to learn and absorb.

1. Withdrawing on a retreat with a ministry team for a time of private reflection and training goes back to Jesus and his disciples (Matthew 16:13a; §3).
2. A clear public confession of who we believe Jesus to be is the foundation of effective witness and building a community (Matthew 16:15; §3.1.2).
3. Jesus is the Davidic messiah, the Christ, and the Son of God (Matthew 16:15; §3.1.2).
4. Jesus keeps his true title secret so that his mission won't be subverted by those who would immediately politicize it (Matthew 16:20; §3.1.3).
5. Jesus predicts his death and resurrection, Peter rebukes him, and Jesus rebukes Peter. We must avoid telling God what to do, since we don't have only a human perspective (Matthew 16:21-23; §3.1.4-5).
6. Jesus cautions would-be followers to be prepared to die, if need be. Following Jesus can be dangerous (Matthew 16:24-25; §3.1.6).
7. Jesus' blessing of Peter isn't based on what he has discovered about Jesus' identity, but what God has revealed to him (Matthew 16:17; §3.2.1).
8. Peter is a rock in the sense that Jesus uses him to provide a foundation for the church in its early stages, especially in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and Caesarea (Matthew 16:18; §3.2.2).
9. Though Christ's enemies will attack the Church, they will not succeed in overthrowing it (Matthew 16:18; §3.2.2).
10. Jesus grants Peter the "keys to the Kingdom" in the sense that Peter opens the way to salvation for many by his evangelism and ministry, in addition to the decisions he makes that provide direction for the early church (Matthew 16:19a; §3.2.3-4).
11. The "power of the keys" are given not to Peter exclusively, but shared with the other apostles, and later given to leaders of Christ's church all over the world (John 20:22-23; Matthew 18:17-18).

4. Peter's Glory and Humiliation (Luke 9:27-36; John 13:1-17)

4.1. The Transfiguration (Luke 9:27-36)

In vs. 31 The word translated "departure" (NIV, ESV, NRSV) or "decease" (KJV) is the Greek noun *exodus*. It can mean both "movement from one geographical area to another, departure, path, course" and serve as a euphemism for "death."

This "mountain top" experience is necessary for several reasons:

1. **Glory.** Jesus' inner circle of disciples needs to see his glory so they might be able to grasp better who he is. They have been confused by Jesus' teaching of suffering and death. They need to integrate the suffering with his glory.
2. **Witness.** Jesus has made them witnesses who can later testify, as only eyewitnesses can, of who he really is. Two of the three write down their impressions (John 1:14; 2 Peter 1:16-18).
3. **Reassurance.** Jesus himself may have needed this reassurance and confirmation of his role, as he begins the next phase of confrontation, suffering, and death.

Q18. (Luke 9:27-36) What does the account of the transfiguration tell us about Peter's spiritual acuity? What is the ultimate effect of the transfiguration on Peter and John? Why does God give us mountaintop experiences? How are they useful when we get back to normal life?

4.2 Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet (John 13:1-17)

Context of Last Supper: "A dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest." (Luke 22:24)

Washing the Disciples' Feet (John 13:4-5)

At the Last Supper, the disciples are probably arranged around a very low table, reclining on their left arms and supported by divans or cushions, leaving their right hands free to feed themselves, as was the custom of the day. Their feet, sandals removed, are splayed out behind them, with some space between their feet and the walls so those serving the meal can bring the various dishes to the table.

It is customary for a host to provide a basin of water so guests could wash their own feet upon entering. Washing *someone else's feet* is a task reserved for the most menial of servants. A Jewish commentary on the Book of Exodus suggests that Jewish slaves could not be required to wash the feet of others, that this task was so demeaning that it should be reserved for Gentile slaves or for women, children, or pupils. A wife might wash a husband's feet; a child might wash a parent's feet. Rarely, a disciple might honor a distinguished rabbi by washing his feet. But for a superior to wash an inferior's feet is never ever done! Except by Jesus.

Q19. (John 13:6-9) Why is Peter protesting Jesus washing his feet? What is it in Peter that rebels against this? What in us sometimes rebels when Jesus seems to get too close to our will? What does Jesus' response to Peter teach us?

Q20. (John 13:4-17) Why does Jesus shock his disciples by performing such a lowly act? Why is shock important? What message is he trying to instill in them by this footwashing?

4.3. Humble Yourself (1 Peter 5:1-7)

Q21. (1 Peter 5:1-7) Why do you think the once-boasting Peter now urges humility so strongly? Why does pride make God our adversary? What might God “lifting us up in due time” look like? What does pride have to do with casting all our cares upon the Lord?

Lessons for Disciples

We find several lessons Jesus is teaching Peter – and us – that will help form us as disciples.

1. Jesus is filled with the very Shekinah glory of God. He is more than a man; he is God. Sometimes we, like Peter, catch glimpses of his glory and hear God’s voice clearly to establish us and move us forward in faith (Luke 9:27-36; §4.1).
2. Sometimes we want to memorialize great spiritual experiences in some human way, like Peter’s suggestion to build booths for Jesus, Elijah, and Moses. But memorials are trivial in light of reality (Luke 9:32-33; §4.1).
3. Peter’s pride shows up in his arguing about who is greatest prior to the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:24) and resisting Jesus’ washing his feet. He submits only when Jesus insists (John 3:6-9; §4.2).
4. In Jesus’ spiritually analogy, a bath probably corresponds to baptism; washing feet corresponds to dealing with everyday sins (John 13:10; §4.2).
5. The power of Jesus’ Acted Parable of Washing the Disciples’ Feet is the radical action of the revered rabbi washing the feet of his inferiors, his disciples. Jesus teaches that followers must be willing to voluntarily humble themselves, not maintain themselves in pride (John 13:1-17; §4.2).
6. Peter’s teaching on humility cites Jesus’ own teaching, that leaders must be eager to serve and teach by example, not hungry for power (1 Peter 5:1-4; §4.3).
7. Since God opposes and becomes an adversary to the proud (Proverbs 3:3), we must humble ourselves in order to experience God’s grace and final exaltation (1 Peter 5:5-6; §4.3).

5. Peter's Crisis and Denial (Luke 22; Mark 14)

5.1. Peter Seeks to Know Jesus' Betrayer (John 13:24)

5.2. Peter's Denial Predicted (Luke 22:31-34)

The word "sift" is *siniazō*, "to sift by shaking in a sieve." As part of the refining process, after winnowing, grains of wheat that fall to the ground are now sifted in a large sieve to separate large pieces of foreign matter from the grain kernels. The ideas of shaking and separating the grain from rubbish are at the forefront of Jesus' words.

Q22. (Luke 22:31-34) Why does Jesus' rebuke Peter's bravado about never forsaking his Master? Why does Jesus warn the disciples about Satan's shaking? How does Jesus indicate Peter's future role in the church? What promise does verse 32 contain? Are there people around you who need strengthening after a shaking?

5.3. Sleeping in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42)

Jesus Deep Distress (Mark 14:33-34)

- "Deeply distressed" (Mark 14:33)
- "Sorrowful" (Matthew 26:37)
- "Troubled" (Mark 14:33; Matthew 26:37)
- "Overwhelmed with sorrow" (Mark 14:34; Matthew 26:38)
- "In agony" (Luke 22:44)
- Sweating profusely (Luke 22:44)

Jesus knows what lies ahead. Matthew 27:45-47; Mark 15:33-34.

Q23. (Mark 14:33-34) Why did Jesus invite the inner circle to be closer to him in the garden? Why is Jesus disappointed in Peter, James, and John? What does it mean for us to "watch and pray"? How does prayer help in temptation? When should we do that?

5.4. Resisting Temptation (1 Peter 5:8-11)

Q24. (1 Peter 5:8-11) Why does Peter refer to the devil as a lion? What does that teach us about the devil? What are the three or four commands in verse 9? What does Peter teach us about resisting the devil and his temptations? What does verse 10 tell us about God's restoration?

5.5. Cutting Off the Servant's Ear (John 18:10-11)

Context: Buy a Sword (Luke 22:36b). This is not a soldier's long sword, but a small sword common in the ancient world, "sword, dagger." Travelers would carry them for protection.

Q25. (Luke 22:49-51; John 18:10-11) What do we learn about Peter when he cuts off the servant's ear? How does it illustrate impulse? Courage? Spiritual dullness? Unwillingness to accept Jesus' plan for salvation? What does healing Malchus's ear tell us about Jesus?

5.6. Peter's Denial

Q26. What have been Peter's acts of courage at the arrest and in the high priest's courtyard? Why do you think Peter ends up denying Jesus? How would you rebuke Peter according to Galatians 6:1b? Has your courage failed lately? What should you do about it?

5.7 Peter's Betrayal Differs from Judas's

Q27. What do Peter's denial and Judas's betrayal have in common? How do they differ from one another?

Lessons for Disciples

The passages we have studied here are rich in lessons to help us grow.

1. The experience of being "sifted them as wheat" is not uncommon. Jesus intercedes for us in our struggles. And Jesus asks Peter, and us, to strengthen others after we have come out of our own trials (Luke 22:31-34; §5.2).
2. Jesus, though the divine Son of God, is also fully human, and thus understands some of our deepest sorrows. He suffers intense pain, deep distress, sorrow, being troubled, in agony as he prays in the Garden resisting temptation and preparing for the cross (§5.3).
3. Like the disciples in the Garden, we are asked to "stay here and keep watch," imploring us to remain alert, watchful, and prayerful (Mark 14:34; 38; §5.3).
4. To resist temptation, we must have a healthy respect for our enemy ("like a roaring lion"), resist him, remain steadfast, and be willing to suffer (1 Peter 5:8-11; §5.4)
5. Jesus heals the servant whose ear is cut off by Peter, showing compassion in the midst of suffering, an example for us to follow (Luke 22:49-51; John 18:10-11; §5.6).
6. Peter is brave in the garden and to go to the high priest's courtyard. But once there, fear overtakes courage and he denies Jesus three times – predicted by Jesus (§5.6).
7. Both Judas and Peter betray Christ. Judas's betrayal is motivated by unbelief, disillusionment, and greed. He is sorry for his sin, but does not return to God. Peter's betrayal is motivated by fear, is not premeditated, and is quickly replaced by repentance and faith (§5.7).

6. Peter and the Risen Christ (Luke 24; John 20-21)

6.1. The Empty Tomb and Graveclothes (John 20:4-7; Luke 24:12)

Luke mentions “strips of linen lying by themselves” (Luke 24:12) and John tells of “the strips of linen lying there” (John 20:6) – not scattered about the tomb but lying together. The napkin (KJV) or burial cloth (NIV) that had been on Jesus’ head was folded separately. Ladd says that this was a separate piece of cloth that was wrapped over the head and under the chin to prevent the jaw from sagging.

1. If Jesus’ body has been stolen, grave robbers wouldn’t have taken the time to unwind the shroud. In fact, the shroud would have helped them carry the body more easily.
2. If Jesus has been in a coma and revived, somehow he would have had to unwind the grave shroud in order to walk free.

The Resurrection Foretold: Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:21), Galilee (Matthew 17:22-23), going up to Jerusalem (Matthew 20:19), after the Transfiguration (Mark 9:9-10), on Thursday night of Holy Week (Matthew 26:32).

Q28. (John 20:3-9) What is the significance of the presence and position of the grave clothes in the tomb? Why do you think it was difficult at this time for Peter to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead?

6.2. Jesus’ Appears to Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5)

6.3. Jesus Appears to the Disciples in Galilee (John 21:1-14)

Matthew 28:7, 10; cf. Mark 16:7; Matthew 28:10.

Q29. (John 21:7-14) What does Jesus preparing breakfast for the disciples say about his love for them? His provision? What does Peter’s early morning swim say about his exuberant love for Jesus? About his faith? How exuberant is your love for Jesus?

6.4. Jesus Restores Peter (John 21:15-17)

Q30. (John 21:15-17) Why does Jesus bring up to Peter his claim that he loves Jesus more than the other disciples? Why does Jesus repeat his question and the assurance three times? What does this incident teach us about God’s mercy and willingness to restore sinners to ministry?

6.5 Jesus Prophesies Peter’s Death (John 21:18-19)

Q31. (John 21:18-19) How did Peter’s death glorify God? How do you hope that at your death God will be glorified? What can you do to help that be the case? Jesus tells Peter “Follow me,” even though the following will result in crucifixion. How are you following Jesus through the struggle you currently have?

6.6 Peter Inquires about John’s Death (John 21:20-22)

Q32. (John 21:20-22) Why doesn’t Jesus tell Peter about the circumstances of John’s death? What does this tell us about Jesus? About Peter? Why does Jesus give Peter a mild rebuke? What does Jesus tell Peter to do instead of asking about things that have nothing to do with him? Why is that so important?

Lessons for Disciples

As Peter seeks the risen Lord after the Resurrection, we can discern a number of lessons for disciples.

1. The position of the graveclothes still in the tomb are a powerful testimony that what happened is resurrection rather than a body being stolen (Luke 24:12; John 20:6-7; §6.1).
2. Jesus predicted the resurrection ahead of time at least five times recorded in the Gospels. The disciples doubt in the face of this indicates that they are not predisposed to expect the resurrection that took place, lending credence to the Gospel accounts (Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; Mark 9:9-10; Matthew 26:32; §6.1).
3. Jesus' preparations to meet his disciples on the beach in Galilee – a fire, fish, and bread – indicate his intimate love for his disciples. He loves us too, and seeks to meet with us (John 21:7-14; §6.3).
4. Peter's response of swimming ashore after recognizing Jesus on the beach indicates his great love for the Lord (John 21:7-14; §6.3).
5. Jesus reminds Peter of his pride in claiming to love Jesus more than the others. Three times he asks Peter to speak his love, and three times Jesus calls him to care for his sheep – one time for each of the denials. Jesus can restore to service even vile sinners who repent. He is full of grace! (John 21:15-17; §6.4).
6. Love for Jesus is expressed by loving his sheep, his people, and caring for them (John 15:17, §6.4).
7. Jesus cryptically tells Peter the form of death he will experience – crucifixion. But his final words are to focus on his daily walk, not his future martyrdom: "Follow me!" (John 21:18-19).
8. When Peter enquires about the Apostle John's death, Jesus tells him it is none of his business. Rather, focus on following him. Many times, we want to know things from God that aren't our business. But sometimes, God graciously shows us things we would not know except for his revelation (John 21:20-22).

7. Peter's Leadership in the Early Church (Acts 1-4)

7.1. Appointing a Twelfth Disciple (Acts 1:15-26)

Q33. (Acts 1:15-26) What is Peter's leadership style in appointing Matthias? What is the difference between the way he leads and how a dictator might lead? (Extra credit) How is Peter's style similar to James' leadership at the Council of Jerusalem? (Acts 15:1-21).

7.2. Peter's Pentecost Sermon (Acts 2:14-37)

Verse 38 is one of the most important verses in the Book of Acts.

1. Repent. "Repent" is *metanoō*, literally, "change one's mind." Here it has the sense, "feel remorse, repent, be converted." Repentance is more than feeling sorry for some past action – or for getting caught. It is sorrow combined with faith and a willingness to go a new direction. Another word for that conviction is **faith**, belief. Faith and repentance are interlinked; you can't have true repentance without faith. One who *truly* believes will turn from his or her sin! In the NT the words "faith," "believe," and "repent" are used interchangeably, since they are so closely related.

2. Be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Peter links baptism with "the forgiveness of sins" as part of an act of repentance that acknowledges the need for cleansing from sins. Baptism or ritual immersion had been practiced by the Jews for centuries as a ceremonial cleansing from sin or uncleanness in a bath called a *mikveh*. The mode of baptism used by the early church was immersion, following the Jewish custom.

3. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. One of the key concepts here is to see the Holy Spirit as a gift, not something we earn by righteous deeds.

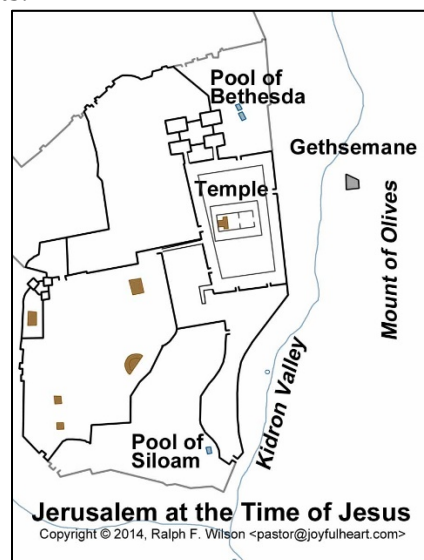
4. The gift of the Holy Spirit will be given to both Jews and Gentiles.

Q34. (Acts 2:38-39) In the case of a new believer (excluding here the children of believers), what is the relationship between faith and repentance? Between faith and baptism? According to the promise of Acts 2:39, when does the Holy Spirit come to a new believer?

Salvation from a Corrupt Generation (Acts 2:40)

- "Corrupt, crooked, untoward.
- Perverse, twisted, depraved.
- Wicked, evil.
- Unbelieving, faithless.
- Adulterous, unfaithful.
- Sinful.

Q35. (Acts 2:38-40) In what sense do the values our culture promotes damn us to hell if we follow them? What will save us from our corrupt cultures today?



In the map of Jerusalem, you can see the Pool of Bethesda in the northeast corner of Jerusalem, and the pool of Siloam at the southeast corner. Both of these public pools were built as a mikveh, for the purpose of ritual purification.

7.3 Ministry Preparation of Peter and the Apostles (Acts 2:41-47)

1. Preparation from hearing Jesus' teachings over three years.
2. Experience working with large crowds.
3. Preparation from the post-resurrection teaching of Jesus (Luke 24:45–48; Acts 1:3)
4. Preparation from talking over what Jesus had done (Acts 1:12b–14; 2:1).

7.4. Peter and John Heal the Lame Beggar (Acts 3:1-10)

Peter “decreed” a miracle. This is my counsel. If the Holy Spirit tells you to command or decree a miracle, by all means do so! Jesus is able to heal anyone at any time through anyone because of the presence and power of his Holy Spirit. But if a miracle doesn't result when you command a miracle, it probably wasn't the Holy Spirit's voice telling you to do so. Rethink your approach. Not all of us are gifted in the same way as Peter and John.

7.5. Peter's Sermon in Solomon's Porch (Acts 3:11-26)

1. We didn't heal this man by our own power, rather in this healing God glorified his servant Jesus (verses 12-13a).
2. You are responsible for killing God's Holy and Righteous one, the Author of Life, but God raised him from the dead (verses 13b-15).
3. Faith in Jesus' name and power healed this man completely (verse 16).
4. You acted in ignorance; however, Christ's sufferings were part of God's plan (verses 17-18).
5. Now you must repent of your sins and be forgiven (verse 19a).
6. Until the right time, the Messiah will be in heaven; at that time God will send the Messiah to restore everything (verses 19b-21). (This is what present-day Christians refer to as the “the Second Coming.”)
7. Jesus is the prophet whom Moses prophesied would come (verses 22-23).
8. All the prophets have foretold Messiah's coming and you are heirs of this promise. In Jesus the Messiah, God fulfills his promise to Abraham to bless all peoples through his offspring (verses 24-25).
9. Thus, the Messiah is sent first to you Jews to bless you by turning you from your wicked ways (verse 26).¹

The result of Peter's sermon is two-fold: (1) thousands of people believe and join the new group of Jesus followers and (2) Peter and John are thrown into jail. Notice the rapid progression of the growth of Christian believers in Jerusalem:

- 120 (Acts 1:15),
- 3,000 (Acts 2:41),
- Daily additions (Acts 2:47),
- 5,000 males² (Acts 4:4), as here,
- “Increasing in number” (Acts 6:1), and
- “A great many of the priests” (Acts 6:7).

¹ For a close analysis of Peter's sermon, see *The Early Church: Acts 1-12: Discipleship Lessons from Holy Spirit* (JesusWalk, 2021), [Lesson 3](http://www.jesuswalk.com/early-church/3_power.htm) (www.jesuswalk.com/early-church/3_power.htm).

² “Men” is specific, “males” (*anēr*).

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7.6. Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-22)

There is some confusion about whether this should be translated “cornerstone” or “capstone.” In Hebrew it is two words: *rō`sh*, “head” and *pinna*, “corner.” I would guess that “cornerstone” is probably meant here.

Q36. (Acts 4:19-20) We are told to submit to the civil authorities God has placed over us (Romans 13:1). How are we to balance submission to God with submission to government? How can we be faithful to God and still be humble? How can we best declare the gospel to the particular culture in which God has planted us?

7.7. On Giving Testimony (1 Peter 3:15-18)

1. Focus on Christ rather than your fears (Luke 12:4-5)
2. Be ready to give an answer regarding your faith.
3. Reply with gentleness.
4. Keep a clear conscience.

Q37. (1 Peter 3:15-16) Why is it so hard for us to be a witness when we are being persecuted? Why is it easy in tough places to be the wrong kind of witness? Which one of Peter’s four instructions do you find most needed in your particular situation?

7.8. A Prayer for Boldness (Acts 4:23-31)

Q38. (Acts 4:23-31) What does Peter’s and John’s report inspire in the hearers? What does this say about Peter’s faith and attitude toward persecution?

Lessons for Disciples

1. Peter is not dictatorial. Rather, he leads by framing an issue and bringing it before the church leaders to resolve (Acts 1:15-26; §7.1).
2. Peter preaches under the power of the Holy Spirit, backing each point by Scripture (Acts 2:14-37; §7.2).
3. Peter overcomes the tarnish of crucifixion by pointing to Jesus’ miracles and his resurrection from the dead. He places the blame on the Jewish people for the terrible injustice their rulers have committed (Acts 2:14-37; §7.2).
4. Peter calls his hearers to repentance and baptism, which will result in the forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39; §7.2).
5. Peter calls his hearers to be saved from what he calls a “corrupt” generation that is headed for destruction (Acts 2:40; §7.2).
6. The apostles’ ministry preparation included (a) hearing Jesus’ teachings over three years, (b) experience working with large crowds, (c) hearing Jesus’ post resurrection teachings, and (d) talking over and making sense of what Jesus had done with the Christian community (§7.3; Acts 2:42-43).
7. When Peter and John instantly heal a lame man at the temple, a crowd forms and Peter preaches powerfully, pointing to healing in Jesus’ name, Christ’s resurrection, prophetic promises, and the need for repentance (Acts 3:1-26; §7.4-7.5).
8. Peter speaks before the Sanhedrin “filled with the Holy Spirit,” declaring boldly that the healing was in the name of Jesus, whom they crucified and rejected. But there is salvation in

no other name. They are told not to preach this way any longer, but they say, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 4:1-22; §7.6).

9. Regarding witnessing, Peter teaches us to: (a) focus on Christ rather than your fears, (b) be ready to give an answer regarding your faith, (c) reply with gentleness, and (d) keep a clear conscience (1 Peter 3:15-16; §7.7).
10. Peter reports with enthusiasm to the church about the Sanhedrin episode and leads them in prayer for greater boldness to speak the word, resulting in the place being shaken (Acts 4;23-31; §7.8).

8. Peter's Authority and Power (Acts 5-8)

8.1 Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5)

Ananias and Sapphira are not criticized for private ownership or partial giving. Rather, their sins are:

1. Lying (Matthew 6:1-4).
2. Unbelief or testing God.
3. Disdain for the holiness of Christ's Church. (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:9, 16-17)
4. Disdain for church leaders (Hebrews 13:17).

Q39. (Acts 5:1-11) What does this passage teach us about Peter's role in the church at this time? What does it teach about the sanctity of Christ's Church? What does it teach us about giving?

8.2 Peter's Shadow Heals (Acts 5:15)

Healing via Proximity to Holy People and Objects (Acts 5:15)

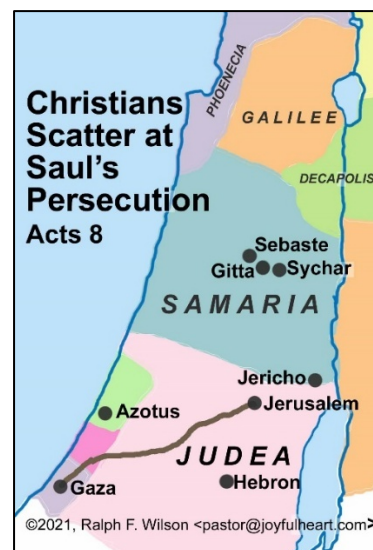
Mark 6:55-56; Acts 19:11-12; 2 Kings 13:21. "Point of contact" for faith.

Q40. (Acts 5:15) What does healing via Peter's shadow teach us about Peter? About how Peter was perceived by the populace? How do you think Peter kept humble when he was the object of such reverence and powerful results? How can physical objects and phenomena assist in people being healed?

8.3 The Apostles' Arrest (Acts 5:17-29)

1. Israel's God, "the God of our fathers" has acted.
2. Jesus is raised from the dead.
3. The Jewish leaders had condemned Jesus to death, and are responsible for having the Romans crucify him.
4. God has exalted Jesus to the place of honor as Prince. Peter is referencing a well-known Messianic psalm (Psalm 110:1)
5. Jesus is Israel's Savior from sin.
6. The apostles claim to be eyewitnesses to these things (Acts 5:32a; 1:22).
7. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is an additional testimony.

Q41. (Acts 5:17-29) What role does Peter have before the Sanhedrin? Peter had experienced fear and denial at the high priest's house a few months ago. How is he different now? To what do you attribute it?



8.4 Peter and John Minister in Samaria (Acts 8:5-25)

Q42. (Acts 8:14-17) What does it tell us about Peter and John that they are selected for this sensitive mission to Samaria? What does this tell us about Peter's spiritual power? Why doesn't the Spirit fall on the Samaritans when they are first converted?

8.5 Peter Rebukes Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9-11, 18-24)

Q43. (Acts 8:5-25) What does the incident with Simon the Sorcerer teach us about Peter's spiritual gifts? About his authority? Why must Simon's sin be exposed and condemned publicly rather than dealt with privately? How is Simon's sin similar to that of Ananias and Sapphira? How is it different?

Lessons for Disciples

1. By discernment from the Holy Spirit, Peter exposes in Ananias and Sapphira the sins of lying, unbelief or testing God, disdain for the church's holiness, and disdain for church leaders. Peter accurately prophesies their death (Acts 5; §8.1).
2. People's faith in Jesus for healing is inspired by even Peter's shadow touching them. Sometimes physical objects can aid faith, so long as they don't create idolatry or magical thinking (Acts 5:15; §8.2)
3. When the twelve apostles are arrested, Peter speaks for them before the Sanhedrin pointing to Jesus' resurrection, God's exaltation of Jesus, Jesus as Savior from sin, and the culpability of the Jewish leaders in Jesus' death (Acts 5:17-29; §8.3).
4. Even when ordered by the Sanhedrin not to speak in Jesus' name, the apostles never stop proclaiming the good news of Jesus (Acts 5:41-42; §8.3).
5. When Philip preaches in Samaria, he sees many healings, salvation, and baptisms. But when there isn't a clear manifestation of the Holy Spirit, the Jerusalem church sends Peter and John. They lay on hands, and there is a clear manifestation. This delay in the coming of the Spirit is probably to give the Jerusalem church time to accept that non-Jews can be saved (Acts 8:5-15; §8.5).
6. Peter rebukes Simon the Sorcerer with great authority for wanting to purchase the ability to convey the Spirit through the laying on of his hands. Through the Spirit, Peter discerns wickedness, bitterness, and captivity to sin (Acts 8:5-25, §8.5).

9. Peter's Ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 9-11)

9.1 Paul Meets Peter in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-27; Galatians 1:18-19)

We know of at least three additional meetings: at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15; Galatians 2:1-10), in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14), and in Rome, according to tradition.

9.2 Healing of Aeneas (Acts 9:32-35)

Q44. (Acts 9:32-35). What do we learn about Peter from the healing of Aeneas? What spiritual gifts is Peter using? What is the effect of his ministry in Lydda and the surrounding area? Why do healing and evangelism often work so well together?

9.3 The Raising of Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43)

Tabitha (Aramaic *T'bhîṭa*; Greek *Dorka*) means "gazelle," an antelope found in Syria and Palestine.

Her name Tabitha suggests she might have a Jewish background.

Q45. (Acts 9:36-42) What does this account of the raising of Dorcas tell us about Peter's ministry during this time of his life? About his reputation? About his faith? What does it tell us about the effect of one faithful woman's ministry to the poorest of the poor?

9.4 Staying with Simon the Tanner (Acts 9:43)

Q46. (Acts 9:43) Simon the Tanner is smelly and his home is smelly. What does Peter residing there tell us about Peter? About Simon? As a social reject, how does Simon serve God?

9.5 Peter and Cornelius the Centurion (Acts 10-11)

Caesarea Maritima

Caesarea Maritima was originally a Phoenician fortification. In 22 BC, Herod embarked upon a lavish, 12-year campaign of constructing sumptuous palaces and public buildings. The reconstructed city was dedicated in 10 BC amidst magnificent competitive games, with horse races, single combat with gladiators and beasts in honor of Caesar – all held in a Roman amphitheater that covers an area slightly larger than the Colosseum in Rome. Like most coastal cities during this period, Caesarea had a mixed population. This is the seat of the governor of the Roman Province of Judea and is the administrative and military center of Palestine.

Cornelius the Centurion (Acts 10:1-2)

Our text tells us several additional things about Cornelius's character (Acts 10:2, 22). He is:

1. Devout, that is, reverent, godly, pious in a good sense.
2. Fears God. "God-fearer" in the NT indicates a devout Gentile who attends synagogue.
3. Gives generously to the poor.
4. Prays continually. His prayer is not a once-a-week thing, but constant, continual.
5. Righteous.



Peter's ministry on the coast of Judea. [Larger map.](#)

6. Respected by the Jewish people.

Q47. (Acts 10:2, 22) What do we learn about Cornelius's character? Why do you think God chose to reveal himself to Cornelius, rather than the average pagan? Is he more worthy of salvation?

Q48. (Acts 10:4) Do you think you can actually bring pleasure to God? How can you increase God's enjoyment in your life? (Psalm 141:2; Philippians 4:18; Revelation 5:8; cf. 8:3-4)

Q49. (Acts 10:9-16) Why does God have to bring this noon-time vision to Peter? What prejudices does Peter have against Gentiles? How does his religion prevent him from reaching out to Gentiles? What specifically does God tell him about "common and unclean"? How does this revelation affect his attitude towards Jewish dietary laws?

Q50. (Acts 10:28-29, 34-35) How does prejudice against races, sects, and cultures prevent the spread of the gospel? What does this prejudice look like to outsiders? How does it violate the law of love? In what ways is this a discipleship hurdle for Peter?

Q51. (Acts 10:38) Since Jesus is God, why is he dependent upon the Spirit's anointing? Are we dependent upon the Spirit's empowerment in a similar way, or is it different for us?

Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection (Acts 10:39-43)

1. We are eyewitnesses of what Jesus did (verse 39a).
2. The Jews crucified him but God raised him from the dead (verses 39b-40).
3. He was seen after his resurrection by specific witnesses (verse 41)
4. We are told to preach that Jesus is the One whom God appoints as Judge of all (verse 42), implying the need for us to repent.
5. Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins (verse 43).

Q52. (Acts 10:44-48) Clearly, tongues were a sign to Peter that Cornelius's household had been baptized with the Spirit. Does the Scripture support a doctrine that speaking in tongues is a "necessary sign" of the baptism of the Holy Spirit? If so, how? (Christians disagree on these matters, so be gentle as you share your thoughts with one another.)

Lessons for Disciples

Peter's evangelistic mission reveals several important truths about God's love and acceptance of Gentiles.

1. Peter is an effective evangelist to the Jews, but he also successfully evangelizes Gentiles by the Spirit (§9).
2. Peter senses faith in Aeneas and declares his healing, resulting in many conversions in the area (Acts 9:32-35, §9.2).
3. Dorcas is a prime example of a Christian woman who practices doing good works, helping the poor, and bringing credit to the name of Jesus (Acts 9:36-43, §9.3).
4. The Christian community in Joppa has faith for raising Dorcas after her death and call for Peter. Peter kneels, prays, and calls, "Tabitha, get up." Many more turn to Christ (Acts 9:36-42, §9.3).
5. Simon the Tanner of Joppa, though rejected by the community, opens his smelly place where Peter can stay. He serves the Lord this way (Acts 9:43, §9.4)

6. An angel appears to Cornelius the Gentile centurion in Caesarea, telling him to send for Peter. Cornelius seeks God. He is devout, fears God, gives generously, prays continually, is righteous, and is respected by the Jews (Acts 10:1-2, §9.5).
7. Cornelius's prayers and gifts to the poor come before God as incense. Our good works bring pleasure to God (Acts 10:4, §9.5).
8. Peter has a vision telling him to eat unclean animals. He understands it to mean he shouldn't consider any person common or unclean or show favoritism – concerning Gentiles in particular (Acts 10:11-16, 28, §9.5).
9. The source of Jesus' power to do miracles, Peter says, is God anointing him with the Holy Spirit. Thus, his miracles are due to the Spirit's work, not Jesus' inherent divinity. Jesus can be a model for Spirit-filled people today (Acts 10:38, §9.5).
10. As Peter preaches about Jesus to Cornelius's household, the Holy Spirit falls with signs of speaking in tongues and praise, showing that God had accepted them. After the fact, Peter baptizes them (Acts 10:39-43, §9.5).
11. The Book of Acts indicates that tongues is sometimes a sign of the Holy Spirit coming upon people, but it is never taught as the "necessary evidence," as some insist (Acts 10:39-43, §9.5).
12. When the Jerusalem Jewish Christians hear the full story of the conversion of Gentiles, they drop their earlier criticism of Peter and rejoice that God has granted Gentiles eternal life (Acts 11:1-18, §9.5).
13. Repentance is "granted" by God through the Holy Spirit's work of prevenient grace, for which we can be thankful; it is not purely of our own volition (Acts 11:18, §9.5).

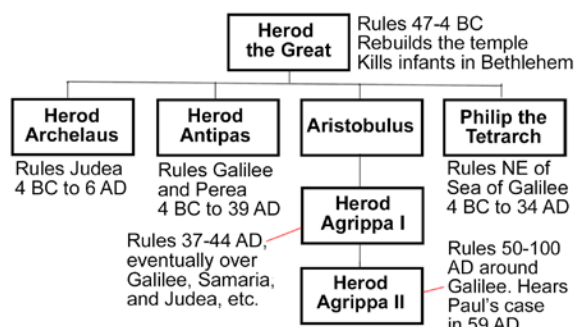
10. Peter's Escape, Hypocrisy, and Counsel (Acts 12-15)

Herod Agrippa I, considered the bad sheep of the Herodian family, emerges as one of the dynasty's most powerful kings. Growing up in Rome, he becomes friends with several powerful men who become emperors, and falls in and out of favor. Beginning in 37 AD, his lands grow rapidly to include Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and considerably more. At his death in 44 AD, Herod Agrippa is one of the most powerful kings of the east and rules over a similar amount of territory as had his grandfather Herod the Great.

Three prominent men are named James in the New Testament:

1. **James the half-brother of Jesus**, who assumes leadership in the Jerusalem church and wrote the Letter of James in our New Testament. He is also known as James the Just.
2. **James the Apostle, the son of Alphaeus**, another of the original 12 apostles. He is also known as James the Lesser.
3. **James the Apostle, son of Zebedee** the fisherman, is one of Jesus' earliest disciples, and along with his sibling John the Apostle, these brothers are known as the "Sons of Thunder." He is one of Jesus' inner circle – Peter, James, and John. He is the one Herod executes.

The Herodian Dynasty (much abbreviated)



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Where Herod Agrippa I fits in with the rest of the Herodian Dynasty. [Larger chart.](#)

10.1 Peter's Imprisonment and Deliverance (Acts 12:1-17)

Q53. (Acts 12:6-17) What does this teach us about Peter? About the extent of God's power? About prayer? About our level of faith as we pray for impossible things?

10.2. Rejoicing in Suffering (1 Peter 1:3-9)

10.3. Peter in Antioch

Along the banks of the Orontes River, ancient Antioch's ruins lie near the modern city of Antakya, Turkey. Established by the Seleucids about 350 BC, by Peter's time Antioch was the third most important city in the Roman Empire, capital of the Roman province of Syria, with a population of perhaps half a million, many times larger than Jerusalem. A sizeable revival here has huge implications for the entire Roman Empire. Within a few years, Antioch becomes the mother church for a series of missions to the Roman world.

Q54. (Galatians 2:11-14) What does this teach us about Peter? About Paul? About our need for humility as Christian leaders?



Expansion of the Church to Antioch. [Larger map.](#)

10.4. Peter's Word at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29)

Judaizers believed that you have to become a full Jew before you can be saved as a Christian. And to become a full Jew, you go through various steps (such as circumcision) and take upon you various obligations (to obey the Mosaic law).

Peter's testimony and argument at the Jerusalem Council emphasizes God's choice and his manifest grace.

1. **God's initiative** (verse 7; Acts 10:5, 20).
2. **Visible acceptance** (verse 8; Acts 10:44-47).
3. **Faith** (verse 9)
4. **Testing God** (verse 10)
5. **Grace.** Both Jews and Gentiles are saved by the Lord's grace (verse 11)

James' Summation (Acts 15:12-29)

1. Abstain from food polluted by idols. Often, the meat sold in shops has been ritually offered to a god before it is sold.
2. Abstain from blood. Eating blood is not uncommon in the Greek-speaking world, but is offensive to Jews because of clear prohibitions in the Law.
3. Abstain from the meat of strangled animals. To strangle the animal would leave the blood in the meat.
4. Abstain from sexual immorality. Sexual immorality is rampant in Roman and Greek cities. Believers needed to resist this temptation.

Q55. (Acts 15:1-29) What was the danger posed to the growth of Christianity by the Judaizers, who insisted that Gentile converts to Christ weren't saved unless they were circumcised? How divisive is this issue? How does Peter's testimony about God pouring out his Spirit on the Gentiles at the House of Cornelius make a difference at the Jerusalem Council?

10.5. Peter's Emphasis on Faith and Grace

Lessons for Disciples

1. Peter's miraculous escape from Herod's secure prison teaches us that nothing is impossible with God (Acts 12:1-17, §10.1).
2. When Peter appears at the door, the unbelief of the Christians gathered to pray for Peter's release exposes the lack of faith with which we often pray (Acts 12:12-17, §10.1).
3. In Peter's First Epistle he teaches that trials help increase and refine our faith so that it is genuine (1 Peter 1:3-9; §10.2).
4. Peter shows hypocrisy in Antioch when he avoids eating with the Gentiles when Judaizers from Jerusalem are present, to avoid upsetting them. He is wrong and is rebuked by the Apostle Paul. Even mature leaders can make errors; we need to be humble enough to accept correction when we are wrong (Galatians 2:11-14, §10.3).
5. When the question of circumcision of Gentile converts is brought before the Council of Jerusalem, Peter's testimony about how God poured out his Spirit upon the Gentiles in Caesarea, showing that God accepted them, is key to deciding the issue (Acts 15:1-29, §10.4).
6. At the Jerusalem Council and throughout his preaching and letters, Peter emphasizes salvation by grace through faith (Acts 15:9-11; 1 Peter 1:3-5; §10.5).

11. Peter's Death and Legacy (John 21:18-19; 1 and 2 Peter)

11.1. Peter's Ministry in Antioch, Asia Minor, and Greece

Three third century sources – Origin, Eusebius, and the *Apostolic Constitutions* – mention Peter as being the first in succession of patriarchs of Antioch. Both Roman and Antiochian traditions credit his ministry there. Tradition says Peter ordained the first Patriarch or Bishop of Antioch, Evodius (who flourished 50-66 AD).



Peter's Ministry in Asia Minor

“To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Peter 1:1)

Peter's Ministry in Corinth

(1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5)

11.2. Peter's Ministry in Rome

Babylon = Rome

“She who is in Babylon ... sends you her greetings, and **so does my son Mark.**” (1 Peter 5:13)

Mark is not Peter's biological son, but his spiritual son.

“This also the presbyter [John] said: Mark, having become **the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ.** For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord's discourses, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely.” (Eusebius, *Church History* 3.39.15).

I conclude that Peter's ministry in Rome probably began during or after 57AD, giving him a ministry in the city of perhaps five to seven years (if he is there continuously) before his martyrdom in 64 or 65 AD.

11.3. Preaching, Miracles, and Evangelism

“When Peter **preached the word publicly at Rome, and declared the gospel by the Spirit,** many who were present requested that Mark, who had been for a long time his follower and who remembered his sayings, should write down what had been proclaimed” (Clement of Alexandria, *Sketches*, in Eusebius, *Church History* 6.14.6).

“While Nero reigned [54-68 AD], the Apostle Peter came to Rome, and, through the power of God committed unto him, **wrought certain miracles, and, by turning many to**

the true religion, built up a faithful and steadfast temple unto the Lord. When Nero heard of those things ... [he] sprung forward to raze the heavenly temple and destroy the true faith. He it was who first persecuted the servants of God; he crucified Peter, and slew Paul" (Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 2).

According to Irenaeus (180 AD), some the early bishops of Rome include: Linus (2 Timothy 4:21), served 68 to 80 AD, ordained by Paul. (2) Anacletus (Cletus), 80 to 92 AD, who set up about 25 parishes in Rome. (3) Clement of Rome, about 92 to 100 AD, ordained by Peter, wrote *1 Clement* to the Corinthian church, which is available to us.

11.4. Peter's Opposition to False Teachers

According to church tradition, Simon Magus leaves the backwater city of Samaria and comes to Rome, becoming the head of a widespread heresy. There he is rebuked in Rome by Peter once more. Lacks consistency, but an early Gnostic heretical group was known as the Simonians.

Condemnation of False Teachers (2 Peter 2:1-3a; 3:17b-18)

11.5. Peter's Teachings on Practical Christian Living (1 Peter)

The Theme of Priesthood (1 Peter 2:5, 9)

What kinds of offerings do we priests offer to God?

1. Obedience (Romans 12:1; cf. Matthew 6:1-5; Psalm 19:14).
2. Financial Gifts (Philippians 4:18; Hebrews 13:16).
3. Proclaiming the Gospel (Romans 15:16).
4. Praise (Hebrews 13:15, from Hosea 14:2, KJV; 1 Peter 2:9b).

The Theme of Holiness

Q56. (1 Peter 1:14-16, 22; 2:11) How does indulging in sin "wage war" against our souls? What are the results in our inner person when we indulge in sin rather than immediately repent? What does it mean to be holy?

The Theme of Submission (1 Peter 2:13-3:7)

The Theme of Following in Jesus' Steps (1 Peter 2:21-25)

(1) Jesus doesn't sin with his words. (2) He doesn't deceive his enemies. (3) He doesn't retaliate. (4) He doesn't threaten. (5) He *does* trust his Father.

Q57. (1 Peter 2:21-25) Why is the question, "What would Jesus do?" so powerful? How do you implement in your daily life the idea of "following in his steps"?

11.6 Peter's Death by Crucifixion

An horrific persecution of Christians is precipitated by a huge conflagration in Rome. On the night of July 18-19, 64 AD a fire begins in the region of the Roman circus and consumes half the city before it is brought under control after six days. "Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace."

Peter's Crucifixion. Jesus' prophecy: "You will stretch out your hands," the posture of crucifixion (John 21:18-19)

Outside the New Testament, several early Christian writers testify to Peter's crucifixion. By about 200 AD, an account in the *Acts of Peter* describes Peter's crucifixion as upside down. I find it attractive and would like to believe it, but upon investigation I don't find it really credible.

11.7. Peter's Exalted View of Jesus (1 Peter)

1. Jesus as the Lamb of God (1 Peter 1:18-21)

In these three verses, Peter helps us see Jesus as: Redeemer, Lamb of God, Preexistent One, and Risen Lord.

2. Jesus as the Sin-Bearer (1 Peter 2:24-25)

Jesus is our prime example, sinless, sin-bearer, Healer from sins, and Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.

Q58. (1 Peter 2:24-25) In what sense did Jesus die for our sins? In what sense is he your Shepherd now? What does this relationship require of you?

3. Jesus as our Atoning Sacrifice (1 Peter 3:18a)

1. **Christ died for sins**, he is killed for our sins.
2. **Once for all.**
3. **The righteous for the unrighteous.**
4. **To bring you to God** (Ephesians 2:16-17; Hebrews 4:16; 10:22; Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:20).

Q59. (1 Peter 3:18a) Meditate for a few minutes on this verse: "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God." Now personalize it to imagine (1) your sins, (2) your unrighteousness, and (3) your reconciliation with God. Each of these ideas is awesome! Which of these three aspects of the verse has God impressed most strongly on you today?

Lessons for Disciples

1. Peter ministers in Judea, Samaria, along the Judean coast, in Antioch, Asia Minor, Corinth, and Rome, performing miracles, preaching and drawing people to Jesus, and establishing them as disciples of Christ (1 Peter 1:1, §11.1).
2. Particularly in Rome, Mark becomes Peter's scribe and interpreter, helping to form the Gospels (1 Peter 5:13, §11.2).
3. Peter may have ministered in Rome between about 57 to 64 AD, and wrote 1 Peter from Rome (as "Babylon," the new world power's capital; 1 Peter 5:13, §11.2).
4. According to tradition, Peter performed miracles in Rome and declared Christ, drawing thousands to follow Jesus. He also ordained Clement who later became bishop of Rome (§11.3).
5. Legend has Peter combating heresy in Rome (2 Peter 2:1-3; §11.4).
6. Peter seems to have had a heart for teaching practical Christian living to those he wins to Christ, such as the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5, 9, §11.5).
7. Another theme is holiness of life in contrast to conformity to the sinful lifestyle of the world (1 Peter 1:14-16, 22; 2:11, §11.5).

8. Peter also taught the need for submission to secular authorities as well as to husbands and masters, this in contrast to rebelliousness (1 Peter 2:13-3:7, §11.5).
9. Another theme is following Jesus' example in daily life, "following in his steps" – in particular as we struggle against injustice and persecution (1 Peter 2:21-25, §11.5).
10. Jesus prophesied that Peter would die by crucifixion, and this is the unanimous witness of tradition, that Peter died by crucifixion under Emperor Nero about 64 or 65 AD (John 21:18-19, §11.6).
11. 1 Peter develops the meaning of Jesus' death with three passages that discuss Jesus as the Lamb of God, as the Sin-Bearer, and as our Atoning Sacrifice (1 Peter 1:18-21; 2:24-25; 3:18a, §11.7).

Appendix 3. Chronology of the Apostle Peter's Life

Dates are approximate, drawn from the work of evangelical Bible scholars.

Birth in Bethsaida	About 1 AD
Public Ministry of Jesus	ca. 28-30
Peter's Call and Conversion	ca. 28
Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection	Friday, April 7, 30
Day of Pentecost	30
Stoning of Stephen precipitates persecution, scattering of believers	33
Conversion of Saul in Damascus	34/35
Ministry of Philip in Samaria, Peter and John sent to bestow Spirit	37-38
Paul visits Jerusalem and meets Peter and James	37/38
Peter preaches to Cornelius's household in Caesarea	37
Caligula plans to erect his statue in Jerusalem	40
Caligula is assassinated, Claudius becomes emperor	41
Claudius gives Judea and Samaria to Herod Agrippa I	41
Herod Agrippa executes James, son of Zebedee	Passover 41
Herod Agrippa imprisons Peter, who miraculously escapes	41
Herod Agrippa dies at Caesarea	Spring 44
Paul joins Barnabas in Antioch	45-46
Paul and Barnabas Famine-Relief Visit to Jerusalem, meets with Peter (Acts 11:30; Gal 2:1-10)	46-47
Paul and Barnabas, first missionary journey	47-48
Peter visits Antioch (<i>Letter to the Galatians</i> , about 48 AD)	48
Council of Jerusalem	48/49
Claudius expels Jews from Rome	49
Paul in Corinth	50-52
Claudius dies, Nero begins rule	54
<i>Letters to the Corinthians</i> mentioning Cephas in Corinth	55-56
<i>Letter to the Romans</i> , not mentioning Peter in Rome	early 57
Paul's House Arrest in Rome	60 to 62
Peter writes <i>1 Peter</i> from "Babylon" (Rome)	60-63
Death of James the Just, Jesus' brother	62
Great fire in Rome	July 64
Peter and Paul executed in Rome	64-65
Roman-Jewish War	66-70
Death of Nero	68
Fall of Jerusalem	70
Death of the Apostle John, son of Zebedee	About 99 AD