

Twelve Ordinary Men: Peter

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening, for a short while, and with the Lord's help and enabling, if we could turn to Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 6.

Luke chapter 6, that's there we're given a list, the list we were looking at, the last Lord's Day of the twelve disciples of Jesus. So Luke chapter 6, page 1039 in the Pew Bible, 1039.

Luke chapter 6, and we're reading at verse 13. It says, In this past week, I've put my L plates, back on.

I've put my L plates back on. It's been 18 years since I first passed my driving test, but now I have applied for a D1 driver's license. If you passed your test before 1997, you don't need to do the D1 training.

But the reason I'm looking for, trying to get a D1 driver's license, is because Hugh Ferrier and I have been asked to lead a free church camp this summer. Dangerous, I know that is, Hugh and I together.

[1 : 53] But in order to help keep taking the children out and about, we need another driver for a minibus. So I offered to put on my L plates and learn to drive the minibus.

And you know, in many ways, that's the image and illustration that we're always thinking of when it comes to studying these disciples. When it comes to discipleship, we have to think of the L plates. Because as we began our study of the 12 disciples last Lord's Day, we said that a disciple is a learner. A disciple has their L plates on. Therefore, the word disciple, it means learner.

Therefore, every disciple of Jesus is a learner. I am a learner. You're learners. We're all learners. We're all learning together. And we'll keep on learning together until our graduation in glory.

And so as disciples of Jesus, we all have our L plates on. Even these 12 men that we just read there. These men whom we saw last Lord's Day, they were chosen and called and commissioned by Jesus Christ to serve Jesus Christ.

[2 : 59] These 12 men had their L plates on because they were all learning. They were disciples of Jesus. And this evening, we turn our attention to the name at the top of the list, the top of this list of learners, the name Peter.

And it's interesting, there are four lists of learners in the New Testament. They can be found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke's Gospels, and also in the book of Acts. There are four lists of learners. But at the top of each list of learners is the name Peter. The name Peter. And so I'd like us to think about Peter this evening. And I want us to think about Peter under three headings, the boys and girls.

Peter's declaration, Peter's denial, and Peter's discipleship. Peter's declaration, Peter's denial, and Peter's discipleship. So first of all, Peter's declaration.

Peter's declaration. You know, when thinking about Peter, in comparison to many of the other disciples, where we know almost nothing about their character, their conduct, or their conversation, we know a lot about Peter.

[4 : 09] And for that reason, you know, we could do a character study on Peter for six to eight weeks. But we won't. Maybe we'll do that another time. But as you know, Peter's proper name, as it is there, we saw that in verse 14.

Peter's proper name or his birth name was Simon, which was actually a very common name in Israel, much like the name Donald here in Lewis, a very common name.

But there were common, this common name, Simon, in Israel. And there are at least seven other Simons mentioned in the Gospels.

There was the other disciple at the end of this list. He was called Simon the Zealot. Jesus had a brother called Simon. There was Simon the tax collector, Simon the Pharisee, Simon the leper,

Simon of Cyrene, who carried the cross for Jesus.

And even Judas Iscariot's father was called Simon. And so Simon was a very common name in Israel. But this Simon's full name, his full title was Simon Bar-Jonah.

[5 : 14] The word bar means son. So Simon, son of Jonah. Simon's father was Jonah. More than that, we know that this man, Simon Bar-Jonah, he was from the rural village of Bethsaida.

So he lived out in the countryside. He was born in the countryside, but he came to live and work in the fishing village of Capernaum, which is beside the Sea of Galilee.

We also know from the Gospels that Simon was married. He presumably had children. We know this because his mother-in-law was someone who became sick, and Jesus healed her.

But as a husband and a father, Simon worked for a living, as you know, as a fisherman. He had a fishing business with his brother, Andrew, and they worked together with their colleagues and friends, James and John.

But Simon's first encounter with Jesus, very interesting, was when he was at work. It's always important to be a good witness at your work, because that might be the first encounter someone has with Jesus.

[6 : 16] Simon's first encounter with Jesus was when he was at work. It was just a normal day on the shore, seashore of the Sea of Galilee. As fishermen, Andrew and James and John, they were all mending their nets after a night's fishing.

But when Jesus passed by, he called to them, and he said to them, we touched on this last week, follow me, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And you read the passage immediately.

Immediately, they left their nets and followed him. But you know what's really clear is that Simon didn't leave his nets to follow Jesus just because James and John and Andrew followed Jesus.

Simon didn't leave his nets to follow Jesus just because his brother followed Jesus, and just because his friends followed Jesus. No, Simon didn't follow Jesus because he was following the crowd. Because as you know, it's always dangerous to follow the crowd.

Following the crowd will always end in disaster. But Simon followed Jesus because Jesus' call, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

[7 : 27] Although it was a public call, it was also very personal, and it was very powerful. Jesus' call to follow him, it cut right to Simon's heart.

It had this inward effectual call that Simon couldn't resist. He couldn't reject, he couldn't refuse the call of Jesus. It was an irresistible call.

It was the irresistible grace of God working in his heart. And that's what it is with every disciple of Jesus. It's a powerful, personal call where Jesus speaks to us in our heart, and he effectually calls us.

It's an irresistible call by the irresistible grace of God. But as you know, and as we read, Simon was given the name Peter. He was given the name Peter when he made a declaration as a disciple of Jesus.

And we read that in Matthew chapter 16. And we read there in Matthew chapter 16 that there was confusion among the crowds over the identity of Jesus. Jesus asked the disciples as they were on the road from Caesarea Philippi.

[8 : 40] Jesus asked the disciples, who do people say that the Son of Man is? So what are people saying about me? Who do they think I am? And the disciples, they have to confess that there's confusion among the crowds of people who were following Jesus at the time.

Because some say, said the disciples, some say you're John the Baptist. Others say you're Elijah. Some say you're Jeremiah or just one of the other prophets. But then as we read, Jesus turned that conversation, and I love how he does it.

He turned the conversation on its head and presented it to the disciples. He made it very pointed and very personal. And you know, I think it's one of the greatest questions that Jesus asks in the Gospels.

Because he asks all of us. He's asking us all this evening the same question. Who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am?

And it was at that moment that from out of these twelve ordinary men that we read that Simon, this man, steps forward and he makes a confession of his faith.

[9 : 50] He says to Jesus, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And you know, it's amazing.

The name Simon means listening. The name Simon means listening. And at that moment, Simon had lived up to his name. Because he had been listening and learning from Jesus.

And when asked about the identity of Jesus, when asked, who do people say that I am? Simon is straight in there confessing his faith. He says, you are the Christ. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And yet, you know, for some of you here, or probably at home this evening, you're like Simon. And you've been like Simon all your life.

You've been listening to Jesus. Learning from Jesus. Sitting under the word of Jesus. But unlike Simon, you still haven't confessed your faith in this same Jesus.

[10 : 59] And you know, the thing is, I have no doubt that you believe in your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. But why is it so hard for you to confess that with your mouth?

You believe it in your heart. Why don't you confess it with your mouth? Why is it so hard for you to confess to me or to someone you know or someone you trust that, yes, Jesus is the Christ.

He's the Son of the living God. Jesus is my Lord. He's my God. Jesus is my Savior. He's my friend. But instead, what I'm often told is, well, I'm not good enough.

I don't know enough. I lack assurance. I lack assurance. You know, I want to be as clear as I can be when I say this.

Your lack of assurance is because you refuse to confess your faith with your mouth. Even as a Christian, we lack assurance when we don't confess our faith with our mouth.

[12 : 04] Confessing our faith with our mouth, it's not only an affirmation to others that we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. But it's also an assurance to us.

That's why I think testimonies are so important. That's why I think telling your testimony is so important. And not only affirms to others that you were born again, but it also assures you.

I find it every time I tell my testimony at a fellowship, in a congregation. It assures me that Jesus Christ is my Lord and my Savior. And that's what we see with Simon here.

Because when he believed in his heart and when he confessed with his mouth to Jesus and in front of all the other disciples, he confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

He not only affirmed the identity of Jesus, but he was also then given assurance from Jesus. He was given assurance from Jesus.

[13 : 00] Because Jesus then said to him, we read it earlier in Matthew 16, Jesus said to Simon, blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, full title, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

Simon Bar-Jonah, God has worked by his grace in your heart. And then Jesus says to him, and this is, I love this, what he says, I tell you, you are Peter.

And on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Now, boys and girls, the name Peter means rock.

The name Peter means rock. So you tell Peter next time you see him, he's a rock. The name Peter means rock. Now, because of this, for centuries, the Roman Catholic Church, as you know, they've claimed that the church of Jesus Christ was built on Peter, which is why the Vatican in Rome is literally said to be built upon the tomb of the apostle Peter.

But of course, that's not what Jesus was referring to. Because the rock upon which Jesus was going to build his church wasn't Peter's coffin, but Peter's confession.

[14 : 18] You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. My friend, it was Peter's confession, Peter's declaration. It was upon that rock that the church of Jesus Christ would be established and built and expand throughout the whole world.

It was upon the confession of the Christian, because that has been the confession of the Christian throughout the centuries. From the first century down to the 21st century, every Christian points at Jesus and says, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

That was the confession of David in Psalm 62. We were singing earlier. What did David say? He said, he only my salvation is, and my strong rock is he.

He only is my sure defense. I shall not moved be. My friend, it's by the grace of God that we come to discover the identity of Jesus and declare with Peter that he is the Christ.

He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And so we see Peter's declaration. Then we see, secondly, Peter's denial. Peter's declaration and then Peter's denial.

[15 : 35] Peter's denial. You know, when we remember someone, we often remember them for the wrongs they did, rather than the rights they achieved.

We remember them for what tainted and tarnished their reputation, rather than their trophies and their triumphs in life. We remember their sins and their shortcomings, rather than the impact and the influence that they had on others.

A recent example would be our former Prime Minister, Boris Johnson. Sadly, he will often be remembered for the party gate during the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than being remembered as the Prime Minister who was leading one of the first countries to roll out a vaccine for COVID-19. We remember him for the wrongs he did, rather than the rights he achieved. And sometimes that's often the same with the Apostle Peter. We often remember Peter for his denial of Jesus, rather than his declaration of Jesus.

And not only his declaration of Jesus as a disciple, when he said, you are the Christ, but also his declaration of Jesus, when he preached on the day of Pentecost, and over 3,000 souls were saved.

[16 : 53] Maybe it's just me and my negative attitude. Or maybe it's our sinful nature. That we remember Peter's sins and shortcomings, rather than the impact and influence that he had on many others.

But the thing about Peter's denial is that he didn't see it coming. He didn't see it coming. Which should always remind us of what Paul said.

Take heed, lest you fall. Peter didn't see it coming. Out of all of these 12 ordinary men, as you know Peter, you read that in the Gospels, Peter was always the outspoken one.

He was the opinionated one. Peter was often very impetuous and very impulsive. He could be hasty and he could be hot-headed. Which was often a sign that he was still ignorant and immature in his faith.

And we saw that. We read that in Matthew 16. Because shortly after Peter had made his declaration of faith that Jesus is the Christ, we read later in the chapter that Jesus began to disclose to his disciples that he was going to die in Jerusalem.

[18 : 01] But Peter, who was confused about the message of Jesus and clouded in his mindset, he was having none of it. And he pulled Jesus aside and he rebukes Jesus to his face.

And Peter rebuked Jesus because he believed that Jesus was destined for glory, not the grave. As the Christ and as a descendant of King David, Peter thought that Jesus was going to become the next king in Israel and overthrow the power and the presence of the Romans in their nation.

He was confused about the message. He was clouded in his mindset. Which is why Jesus turned to this outspoken and opinionated disciple and he brought him back down to earth with a bang.

He said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan. Imagine hearing those words from Jesus.

Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me. You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.

[19 : 12] Which ought to remind us straight away that our mindset, our mission, our message as disciples of Jesus must always be Christ-centered rather than man-centered.

We must always be Christ-centered rather than man-centered. But like many of us, myself included, Peter was a slow learner. He was a slow learner.

Because on the night when Jesus and the disciples, when they participated in the Last Supper and partook of the Lord's Supper for the first time, you remember how Jesus said to his disciples, he said, Tonight you will all fall away because of me.

For it is written, in Zechariah, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. But Peter, Peter ignored the inspired word of God and he proceeded to proudly promote himself and then push all the other disciples under the bus.

He says, Though they will all fall away because of you, I never will fall. I will never fall away. You know, I don't know which was more foolish, ignoring the inspired word of God or proudly promoting yourself.

[20 : 33] And yet Solomon was right when he wisely said, Pride comes before a fall. Take heed, lest you fall. Pride comes before a fall.

That's what the greater than Solomon also said too. Jesus said to Peter, Truly I tell you, tonight, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.

But Peter, he was so proud of his position as a disciple. He was adamant that he would never deny his Savior. And he says to Jesus, Even if I must die with you, I will never, never deny you.

But as we said, the thing about Peter's denial was that he never saw it coming. He wasn't taking heed to himself. He wasn't self-aware, which is so important.

We need to be self-aware, especially when it comes to pride and when it comes to temptation. We need to be self-aware. We need to watch in case we fall. We need to flee from pride in our heart and temptation all around us.

[21 : 37] We need to be like David in Psalm 139. You know, I love the way David closes Psalm 139. We were singing earlier. David has spoken about the omniscience of God, how God knows everything, the omnipotence of God, how God is all-powerful, and the omnipresence of God, how God is absolutely everywhere.

But at the end of it all, he brings it back to himself, and he says, Lord, search me and know my heart. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

I don't know if you remember the prayer of the Highland kitchen maid. Lord, show me myself and show me thyself. Show me myself.

Search me, O God, and know my heart and then show me thyself. But as you said, the thing about Peter's denial was that he didn't see it coming. He wasn't taking heed. And as we read in Matthew 26, as Peter was sitting outside the courtyard while Jesus was inside being put on trial, this servant girl comes up to Jesus and she says to him, you were with Jesus, the Galilean.

But Peter denied it. Then another servant girl came up to him and said, this man, this man was with Jesus of Nazareth. But again, he denied it, saying, I do not know the man.

[23 : 02] And then for a third time, boys and girls, a third time, others came up to Peter and said, you are one of them and you were with Jesus. And for the third time, Peter said, with cursing and with swearing, I do not know the man.

I do not know the man. I do not know the man. And immediately, we read, immediately, the cock crowed. And as the cock wailed, we read that Peter wept.

Peter wept. And you know, it's remarkable that Peter had declared his faith in Jesus Christ. He had sat at the Lord's table for the first time only to deny his faith hours later.

And you know, Peter's denial, it often holds people back from professing their faith in Jesus Christ. Maybe it holds you back. Maybe it holds you back from professing your faith and sitting at the Lord's table.

Because you fear that like Peter, if he were to make a declaration of faith and say, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, you'd be afraid that you'd also deny him just like Peter.

[24 : 21] And you don't, you don't want to faint or fail or fall because you love Jesus. And you don't want to let Jesus down. You don't want to bring down the name of Jesus.

But here's the thing. Your profession of faith is not a profession that you are perfect. Everybody who professes their faith and sits at the Lord's table is not perfect.

None of us are perfect. So your profession of faith isn't a profession that you're perfect. It's a profession that you're a sinner in need of a savior. It's a profession that you will faint and you will fail and you will fall.

Maybe not publicly, but probably privately. And yet the wonder of God's grace is that he forgives all of us who faint and fail and fall because we faint and fail and fall every day.

We're fainting and failing and falling. But the wonder is he loves you before you first loved him. And this is the thing we need to come back to.

[25 : 27] He loves you before you first loved him. That's why when Jesus restored Peter, after denying Jesus three times, all Jesus asked.

I love chapter 21. John 21. Great chapter. Jesus asked Peter three times, do you love me? Do you love me?

Do you love me? And maybe with Peter you're saying tonight, Lord, you know. You know that I love you. You know that I love you. You know that I love you.

So don't let Peter's denial hold you back from declaring your faith in Jesus Christ. And so we see Peter's declaration, boys and girls, Peter's denial, and lastly, Peter's discipleship.

Peter's declaration, denial, and then Peter's discipleship. So Peter's discipleship. Even though as a disciple of Jesus, Peter was often very outspoken and opinionated.

[26 : 36] He was impetuous and impulsive. He was hasty and hot-headed, not to mention his public sins and his public shortcomings. And yet, as a disciple of Jesus, Peter was someone who learned.

And that's because Peter had his L-plates on. He had his L-plates on his whole life. Peter learned a lot. And you know, you go through the life of Peter.

This was a shame that we're not doing a study on Peter. We'll come back to it one day. There's so much we've missed and skipped over this evening. But you know, Peter, when you look at his life and then you look at what he wrote later on, we see that Peter learned.

Peter learned to trust Jesus when he walked on water towards Jesus. Peter learned to pray when he saw the explanation and the example of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Peter learned forgiveness through the practical teaching of Jesus' parables. Peter was the one who asked, how many times do I have to forgive my brother? Peter learned obedience when Jesus told him to cast his net into the sea.

[27 : 47] Even though he had caught nothing the night before, he did what Jesus said. Peter learned perspective when he saw Jesus transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration. He had an eternal perspective.

Peter learned patience when he cut off the high priest's ear. Peter learned to love when Jesus asked him, do you love me?

Am I first in your life? Peter learned dependence when he preached on the day of Pentecost and 3,000 souls were saved. Peter learned to lead throughout the church of Jesus Christ.

Peter, as a disciple, he learned a lot from Jesus. He learned a lot from Jesus. We see that in his letters because when Peter wrote in his letters, his New Testament letters, 1 Peter and 2 Peter, he's writing to a persecuted church.

He's writing to a church that is struggling and yet he writes as a man with maturity and a man with experience. He wrote as a man who had learned from his mistakes.

[28 : 54] Peter wrote as a man who had learned from his mistakes. And you know, it's great when you see someone who's willing to admit that they're wrong and to learn from their mistakes.

And you know, with this, I'll conclude this evening. I always find, out of the four Gospels, I find Mark's Gospel fascinating. It's one of the quick Gospels.

Mark's favorite word is immediately. He's rushing right to the end of the Gospel to tell us that Jesus is the Savior of sinners. But Mark's Gospel is also fascinating not only because it was the first Gospel that was written, but also because it said that Peter helped Mark to write his Gospel.

Peter was Mark's eyewitness. He gave him all the eyewitness accounts to a lot of what's recorded in Mark's Gospel. But a lot of what's recorded in Mark's Gospel when you read it, it contains Peter's mistakes.

Peter's mistakes are all there to be seen. And yet, as a disciple that had learned and matured, Peter didn't say, leave that out. Don't mention that bit.

[30 : 07] He didn't ask it to be altered or amended so that no one would read about his mistakes. No, Peter, he let us read the good, the bad, and the ugly so that like Peter, we would first of all learn from our master but also learn from our mistakes and learn from his mistakes so that we would learn, that we would be learners, that we would be disciples, that we would grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And so we see Peter's declaration, Peter's denial and Peter's discipleship. He was just one of twelve ordinary men who lived and loved Jesus and learned from Jesus and we can learn a lot from his example, learn a lot from his mistakes that we might serve Jesus better for his glory.

So may the Lord bless these thoughts to us and let us pray. Amen. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee that we're able to study the disciples and that we're able to learn from their experience of how they grew in grace, how they learned more about the Lord, how they discovered more about who Jesus is and why Jesus came and that even though they made many mistakes, that even we can learn from these too.

help us, Lord, we pray, to be like Peter, to be willing to declare our Jesus and to declare him wherever we go and whatever we go through, not to deny him, but even when we do so, Lord, to keep coming back, to keep coming back to the one who is so forgiving and so loving and saying, like Peter did, yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.

Bless us, we pray, watch over us in the week that lies before us. Help us, we ask, to keep learning, to keep looking, to keep loving and to keep leaning upon Jesus as the author and the finisher of our faith.

[32 : 18] Cleanse us, we pray, go before us. Bless our fellowship this evening as we meet together. Remember Jonathan, Lord, as he meets with us and as he explains his testimony of what the Lord has done in his life and we pray that it would be not only an encouragement to us but also an encouragement to him.

Be near to us then we pray, go before us, cleanse us we ask for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Now we're going to bring our service to a conclusion.

We're going to sing in Psalm 116. Psalm 116, it's in the Scottish Psalter, page 395. We're singing from the beginning down to the verse marked 6.

Psalm 116, page 395 from the beginning.

But before we sing, I'm looking for some answers. Okay? Question 1, what does the name Peter mean?

[33 : 31] Rock, well done. What does the name Simon mean? Listening, well done, good job. That was a trick question, sorry. Question 2, how many times did Peter deny Jesus?

Three. Okay, part 2 of the question, how many times did Jesus ask Peter, do you love me? Three. So he denied him three times and then he asked him three times, do you love me?

And every time he said, yes Lord, you know that I love you. So how forgiving Jesus is. And then what are tonight's headings? declaration, yeah, Peter's declaration.

Peter's denial. Discipleship, well done. Good job. Are you listening? I think we should ask the adults next week.

I think they would all start sweating straight away. Okay, so we're going to sing in conclusion Psalm 116. Now this is the confession of the Christian.

[34 : 39] Jesus asks us the same question he asked Peter, do you love me? And our response as it was for the psalmist, I love the Lord because my voice and prayers heeded here, I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me his ear.

We'll sing down to the verse marked six and we'll stand to sing if you're able to God's praise. I love the Lord because my voice and prayers heeded here, and while I live will call on him who bowed to me his ear.

Of death the courts and sorrows in about we come as all the pains of us within ...

the world and of the world and I say, deliver my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly hail.

What merciful unrighteousness, give graciousness our Lord.

[37 : 02] Consistently, my most rock, no needneth me help not ford.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.