

# Simon Peter, the Restored Disciple

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 40:26–31

Background Scripture: Mark 8:27–29; Luke 22:7–38;  
John 18:15–18, 25–27; 21:15–17

Today's Scripture: Mark 8:27–29; Luke 22:31–34; John 18:25–27; 21:15–17

## I. Identity of the Messiah

### Mark 8:27–29

**<sup>27</sup> Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?”**

**<sup>28</sup> They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”**

**<sup>29</sup> “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”**

**Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”**

27a. This first passage of Scripture comes from the third and final year of Jesus' ministry. He has just fed the five thousand. As a result, the people intend to “come and make him king by force” (John 6:15). When he refuses to accept such an earthly crown, many stop following him.

Over the next several months, Jesus is on the move. Then Jesus and the disciples cross the lake to Dalmanutha, where they face the Pharisees. Following this encounter, Jesus returns to Bethsaida on the other side of the lake. From there, Jesus and his disciples travel north.

Without the constant distraction of crowds or opposition, Jesus prepares *his disciples* for the next phase of his ministry. They visit the *villages* in Caesarea Philippi, an area nearly 30 miles north-

east of the Sea of Galilee, overlooking the northern end of the Jordan River valley.

During this period, several towns are named “Caesarea” in honor of the Roman emperor. The town where Jesus and his disciples gather is *Caesarea Philippi*, named in honor of Philip II, the son of Herod the Great and brother of Herod Antipas.

27b. Answering the question “Who is Jesus?” is a fundamental issue that everyone, especially the disciples, must face. Where does Jesus come from? What is his purpose? The answer to these questions shapes how we respond to him.

28. The disciples report the various opinions and rumors circulating about Jesus. Some believe that he is *John the Baptist*, who had already been killed by Herod. Others think that Jesus might be *Elijah*, the Old Testament prophet known for speaking out against a king. The Old Testament prophesied that a person like Elijah would someday return (Malachi 4:5–6), a prophecy that was fulfilled through the ministry of John the Baptist.

29a. Now the question becomes pointed and personal: *Who do you say I am?* Have the disciples come to a conclusion about Jesus' identity?

29b. The title *Messiah* is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek title “Christ” (John 1:41; 4:25). Both designations mean “the anointed one.”

## II. Failing of a Follower

### Luke 22:31–34

<sup>31</sup> “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

<sup>33</sup> But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.”

31. It is Thursday night of Jesus’ final week. Jesus’ arrest, trial, and crucifixion looms. He shares one final meal with his disciples, using the opportunity to teach them about their role in service to him.

Jesus singles out *Simon* Peter and makes him a representative of the trials the other disciples will encounter. His representative role is communicated by the phrase *all of you*.

The role of *Satan* is similar to that in the opening chapters of the book of Job: a heavenly official who accuses and tests God’s people. (Job 1:6–12; 2:1–6) The warning that Satan *has asked to sift . . . you as wheat* evokes the image of separating valuable wheat kernels from the useless chaff. The text does not specify what the “wheat” represents. Instead, Jesus’ point is that Peter will undergo a season of trial as Satan tempts him away from faithfulness to Christ.

32. Jesus has *prayed* to strengthen Peter’s faith and devotion. Even today, the risen Christ is our “advocate” with the Father (1 John 2:1).

The term translated *faith* encompasses more than simply “doctrinal belief.” It can also convey meanings such as “loyalty,” “fidelity,” and “faithfulness.” Although Jesus knows that Peter will soon deny him he prays for Peter to experience only a temporary failure of faith rather than disavowal.

The Greek term translated *turned back* often has the sense of turning away from a wrong course, which aligns with the concept of repentance. Jesus assures Peter that he will be restored. Peter’s experience will ultimately *strengthen* the faith of others.

33. Peter has been with Jesus since the beginning of his public ministry. He is the most outspoken of the disciples, and he tends to speak with the most conviction. Peter’s association with Jesus leads him to boldly assert his devotion to the *Lord*, even unto *death*.

34. A *rooster* is a bird known for its tendency to crow during the early morning. This reference to a rooster’s crowing also highlights the illegality of Jesus’ trial. According to Jewish legal tradition, a trial for a capital offense cannot be conducted at night. Such clandestine judicial meetings are often seen as corrupt and unjust.

The verb *deny*, having the sense of “renounce,” also appears in Luke 9:23, where Jesus says, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” When we consider this verse alongside the current passage, two choices become clear: either (1) deny oneself and affirm Christ, or (2) affirm oneself and deny Christ. It is impossible to affirm both oneself and Christ simultaneously.

## III. Prediction Realized

### John 18:25–27

<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, “You aren’t one of his disciples too, are you?”

He denied it, saying, “I am not.”

<sup>26</sup> One of the high priest’s servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, “Didn’t I see you with him in the garden?” <sup>27</sup> Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

25. After Jesus is arrested and taken by the soldiers and Jewish officials, Peter and another disciple, likely John, follow the crowd into the high priest's courtyard (John 18:15–16). As Peter enters, a servant girl accuses, “You aren’t one of this man’s disciples too, are you?” (18:17a). Peter denies this and joins the others who are warming themselves by the fire.

A second accusation against *Simon Peter* arises, essentially the same as the first.

26. The third accusation comes from one of the *servants* who was in Gethsemane earlier that night during Jesus’ arrest. This servant is related to Malchus, a servant of the high priest, whose right ear Peter cut off. Fortunately, due to Jesus’ mercy, the injury was not fatal. Thus, this servant has good reason to believe that Peter was *with Jesus in the garden!*

27. Jesus’ prediction has come true, and Peter responds to this realization with shame, anguish, and remorse. At this point, there is nothing he can do to change what has happened.

#### IV. Reinstating a Leader

##### John 21:15–17

**15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”**

**“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”**

**Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”**

**16 Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”**

**He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”**

**Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”**

**17 The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”**

**Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”**

**Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”**

15a. The next section of Scripture takes place following Jesus’ resurrection. By this time, the risen Jesus has appeared to many disciples and followers (John 20:11–29). He appears again to seven disciples at the Sea of Galilee (21:2), directing them to a large catch of fish before inviting them to breakfast (21:12).

After breakfast, *Jesus* turns the meeting into a teaching moment. *Simon Peter* had previously boasted of his commitment and devotion to Jesus (Luke 22:33, above). But his pledge of devotion proved to be bluster. Jesus’ question probes Peter’s heart and loyalties.

What does the word *these* refer to? Is it the boats and fishing equipment? Is it the other disciples? Or does it mean, “Do you love me more than these other disciples love me?” We may conclude that Jesus means *these* as a general reference point: “Do you love me supremely, more than anything or anyone else?”

15b. Peter assures Jesus of his *love*, even reminding the *Lord* that he knows this fact.

15c. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus laid down his life. If Peter loves Jesus, he will lead in the same way, protecting and providing for the *lambs* who are God’s people.

16. With only slight variation, the exchange is repeated.

17. Jesus questions Peter’s love a third time. For Peter to feel *hurt* at this repetition is understandable. Does Jesus doubt his answer? Or is Peter’s distress the result of seeing a connection between these three questions and his three denials? Just as Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus allows Peter to affirm his love three times. Peter responds by being as absolute in his affirmation of love as he was in his denial.

Peter’s response acknowledges that not only does Jesus know Peter’s thoughts, but he also knows *all things*—a recognition of his deity (John 2:25).

# Involvement Learning

## Simon Peter, the Restored Disciple

### Into the Lesson

What defines “good times” and “bad times”?

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Which has taught you more: defeat or success?

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Why does failure sometimes lead to greater success?

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Today’s study will investigate one of the most successful Christ-followers in history. As we will see, his successes came after experiencing deep failure.

### Into the Word

Read today’s lesson Scripture text. In what ways was Peter’s life a success? In what ways was it a failure?

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How would you predict Peter’s story would end if the biblical account concluded with his denial of Christ?

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In what ways does Peter’s life surprise you?

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Can you think of other individuals from the Bible who turned their lives around after a dramatic encounter with God?

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What does this tell you about how God has worked in the past and continues to work today?

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### Key Text

The third time [Jesus] said to [Peter], “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”  
—John 21:17

### Into Life

Write down potential shortcomings a believer might experience.

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List ways that shortcoming can become opportunities for you to depend on Christ.

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### Thought to Remember

Never underestimate what God can do with our weaknesses.