

Call and Growth

Devotional Reading: Colossians 2:1–7

Background Scripture: John 1:40–42; Ephesians 4:11–16;

Philippians 3:12–16; Colossians 1:9–11; Hebrews 6:1–3

Today's Scripture: Matthew 4:18–20; 16:16–18;

John 21:15–18; 2 Peter 3:14–15, 18

I. Peter's Call

Matthew 4:18–20

¹⁸ As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.

18. The *Sea of Galilee* is a large fresh-water lake in the northern region of Palestine. It was the location of a significant fishing industry. *Jesus* is living in Capernaum at this time (Matthew 4:13). That town is located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, so his *walking by the Sea* is unsurprising.

19–20. Jesus' call seems abrupt. Why would these fishermen drop *their nets* immediately for *Jesus*? During Andrew's time as a disciple of John the Baptist, Andrew encountered Jesus; after that, Andrew told Simon, “We have found the Messiah” (John 1:41).

Jesus' command to *follow me* is not simply an invitation to join his walk along the shore. Instead, it is a summons to become his student and disciple. This relationship is not initiated by the application of the would-be disciple but by the invitation of the master, as we see here.

As disciples of Jesus, the brothers will take on a new task: they will no longer be fishermen on the lake. Instead, they will *fish for people*, seeking others to become disciples of Jesus. Accepting Jesus' call, therefore, requires a significant cost. Peter later says that he had “left everything” to follow Jesus (Matthew 19:27). The lives of these fishermen will never be the same again.

II. Peter's Proclamation

Matthew 16:16–18

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷ Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

16a. Jesus and the disciples have traveled to a remote area. There they experience a retreat-like atmosphere. While there, Jesus asks the disciples, “Who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15).

The title *Messiah* is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek title “Christ.” Both designations mean “the anointed one.” Many first-century Jews expect the Messiah to

be a political figure chosen by God to save their nation, sit on the throne of David, and rule over an earthly empire. But Jesus will be a leader on God's unique terms.

16b. The second part of Peter's confession reveals why he believes that Jesus is fulfilling messianic expectations. Inherent in the two parts is a recognition of both Jesus' power (the ability to do something) and authority (the right to do something) as God the Father confirms.

17. Peter is *blessed* for having recognized and acknowledged the identity and mission of *Jesus*, although Peter still misunderstands the nature of that mission (Matthew 16:21–22). The phrase *flesh and blood* contrasts created human beings with Jesus' uncreated *Father in heaven* as the source of Peter's awareness.

18a. The interpretation of this verse has been the subject of much discussion throughout church history. The main issue is to determine to whom or what *this rock* refers.

Theory 1: The rock is Jesus. Supporting this proposal is the fact that Jesus refers to himself as the chief cornerstone (Matthew 21:42).

Theory 2: Peter is the rock. The word *Peter* is Greek for "rock" or "stone." In this regard, Peter's leadership is the "rock" on which the growth and expansion of the church was based.

Theory 3: Peter's confession is the rock. The Bible tells us that confessing Jesus as Savior and Lord is vital (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9; 1 John 4:15; etc.).

18b. The phrase *the gates of Hades* refers to the domain and power of death. Even death itself cannot permanently hold back the community of God's people.

III. Peter's Ministry John 21:15–18

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. ¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

15a. This section of Scripture takes place following Jesus' resurrection. Jesus appears to seven disciples at the Sea of Galilee (John 21:2), directing them to a large catch of fish before inviting them to breakfast (21:12).

After breakfast, *Jesus* turns the meeting into an opportunity to teach. *Simon Peter* previously boasted of his commitment and devotion to Jesus. But his pledge of devotion proved to be bluster. Jesus' question probes Peter's heart and loyalties.

What does the word *these* refer to? A definitive answer is impossible to glean from the text as written.

15b. Peter assures Jesus of his love, even reminding the Lord that you know. However, Jesus had correctly predicted Peter's previous declarations of commitment would prove false (John 13:37–38).

15c. As the Good Shepherd, *Jesus* laid down his life (John 10:15). 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. A third time, Jesus questions Peter's love. For Peter to feel *hurt* at this repetition is understandable.

Peter's response includes an acknowledgment that not only does Jesus know Peter's inner thoughts, but Jesus also knows *all things*—a recognition of Jesus' deity.

18a. The underlying Greek phrase translated *very truly* emphasizes the absolute certainty of what is about to be said.

18b. Jesus prophesies that the freedom of movement Peter enjoyed while young would someday be lost. One interpretation of the phrase *you will stretch out your hands* is that it refers to the practice of crucifixion. The phrase thus might allude to how Peter would meet his death. Tradition is unclear regarding how Peter actually died. Regardless of the method, however, Jesus promised that the apostle would glorify God because of it (John 21:19).

IV. Peter's Teaching

2 Peter 3:14–15, 18

¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. ¹⁵ Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

14. We must back up a few verses to determine the antecedent of *this*. The answer is found in 2 Peter 3:12, where

the word translated *looking forward to* in verse 14 occurs again as "looking for," the object being "the day of God." While believers look *forward to this*, we must remain diligent in all aspects of our faith.

What Peter is saying is nothing new. The challenge to live *at peace* is also found in 1 Corinthians 7:15 and James 3:18. *Spotless* of impurity and *blameless* from sin are echoed together in 1 Timothy 6:14. Although nothing new, these imperatives bear repeating!

15. The *Lord's patience* refers to the delay of the bodily return of Jesus to bring judgment. The Lord is patient, "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Peter calls on the authority of dear brother Paul to emphasize the harmony of their teachings. We do not know the specific teaching by Paul that Peter has in mind. But we know that Paul wrote to believers in Rome regarding God's patience for salvation. He also wrote regarding the need for righteous living in light of spiritual freedom. Peter directs his readers to accept Paul's teachings since the *wisdom* they contain has been given unto him by revelation from God.

18. The letter ends with words of exhortation and praise. The promise of Christ's return impels us to use that certainty as a touchstone for how we are to live. *We grow in grace* as we react to God's unmerited favor given through our faith in *our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*.

An increase in the *knowledge* of him implies more than knowing facts. A relationship with him is necessary, as characterized by following his commands. To be saved is a state of being justified; after that happens, what comes next is the lifelong process of sanctification.

Peter concludes with a doxology—a praise of, and attribution of *glory* to, Christ Jesus.

Involvement Learning

Call and Growth

Into the Lesson

Write down your favorite food, favorite hobby, and ambition at each of the following life stages.

Child: _____

Teenager: _____

Adult: _____

What conclusions can you draw about how people change as they grow into adulthood?

There are many examples of how people or things change as they grow. In today's study, let the example of Peter's spiritual journey cause you to reflect on your journey of discipleship.

Into the Word

Based on Matthew 16:16–18, how would you answer the following questions:

Who is Jesus? _____

Who is Simon? _____

Read 2 Peter 3:14–15, 18. List all of the instructions Peter gives in these verses.

Why did Peter think it was important for believers to practice these things?

What would it look like to follow these instructions today?

Key Text

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."

—John 21:17

Into Life

Think of another believer who wants to grow in faith. Write a short note to that person. The note should include at least one positive aspect of that person's faith journey and a word of encouragement.

Thought to Remember

Discipleship is a journey of growth.