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- Part: 42 [Good Hearts Live for Jesus](#)
- Part: 41 [Good Hearts Accept the Word](#)
- Part: 40 [The Good Heart Accepts the Word](#)
- Part: 39 [Four Hearts - One Soil](#)
- Part: 38 [Seven Words of Hope and Life](#)
- Part: 37 [Do You Have a Personal Relationship with Jesus?](#)
- Part: 36 [Unpardonable Sin](#)
- Part: 35 [Following Jesus](#)
- Part: 34 [Christ's Finished Work](#)
- Part: 33 [The Message of Jesus - III](#)
- Part: 32 [The Message of Jesus - II](#)
- Part: 31 [The Message of Jesus](#)
- Part: 30 [All Sins Forgiven](#)
- Part: 29 [The Gospel Explained by Peter](#)
- Part: 28 [The Experience of Peter](#)
- Part: 27 [Meeting Peter the](#)

Meeting Peter the Apostle



Part 27 (040118AM)

[Return to previous Page](#) | [Print](#)

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As we open to the Book of Mark, we open to

the words of Mark

capturing

the experiences of Peter

The Gospel by Mark is the premier book of God's Word about hope - hope for a new start, hope for complete forgiveness, hope in the God of the 2nd chance. And no one knew that better than Peter.

There was a man called Peter, who knew Jesus better than any other human on earth ever did. Next to Christ no one in the New Testament is mentioned by name[1] more than Peter!

- No one **ever was honored** like Peter. "Thou art Peter – and upon this rock..." (Matthew 16.18)
- No one **was ever rebuked** as sharply as when Jesus called Peter a tool of Satan. "Get thee behind me Satan..." (Matthew 16.23)
- No one **ever claimed greater loyalty** to Christ as did Peter "though all others may – I NEVER will!" (Mark 14.31)
- No one **ever denied Jesus** like Peter. Not once, not twice – but three times. "I know not the man" (Matthew 26.74)
- No one **ever was more totally smitten** by his or her sin in the sight of Jesus like Peter. "Then Jesus looked at him" (Luke 22.61)
- No one **ever grieved more completely** than Peter – for no one ever knew Jesus better, or loved Him more, or for that matter, wanted His approval MORE than Peter. "He wept bitterly" (Luke 22.62)
- Finally – no one was ever restored more tenderly and completely than Peter. "Feed my lambs" (John 21.15-17)

And what was the result? Perhaps the greatest life ever lived for the Glory of God.

- Peter stands tallest among all that ever walked this planet.
- Peter, the man Jesus chose, the man Jesus trained, the man Jesus saved from death
- Became Peter the man Jesus warned, the man Jesus watched deny Him, the man Jesus protected from the Devil --
- Became Peter the man Jesus restored, the man Jesus used, and the martyr who hung humbly upside down on a cross because he was unworthy to die as Jesus died.

If there is ever a person that shows the love of Jesus, the compassion of Jesus, the patience of Jesus, the forgiveness of Jesus, the restoring power of Jesus, and the empowerment for ministry that Jesus can give – it is Peter!

This morning we will examine the man behind this Gospel, a man named Peter.

In his book *Quiet Talks on Service*, S. D. Gordon gives an imaginary account of Jesus' return to heaven after His ascension. As the angel Gabriel greets Jesus he asks,

Part: 26	Apostle God As Our Father
Part: 25	How to Escape the Fires of Hell
Part: 24	Hearing Christ's Voice
Part: 23	Abiding Sanctified
Part: 22	Abiding Crucified
Part: 21	REWARDS - Run the Race, Look to Jesus
Part: 20	Christ Abiding in My Actions
Part: 19	When Life is Hard - God is Faithful
Part: 18	Christ Abiding in My Attitude
Part: 17	Christ Abiding in My Time and Treasures
Part: 16	Mike Gendron and the Roman Catholic Church
Part: 15	Luther and Peter and the RCC
Part: 14	How To Lead a Roman Catholic to Christ
Part: 13	Romanism, Relics, and Purgatory
Part: 12	Mary and the Roman Catholic Church
Part: 11	ECT Examined
Part: 10	The Pergamos Connection
Part: 9	Does Romanism Contain Paganism?
Part: 8	Sacraments and Purgatory
Part: 7	Traditions and Images
Part: 6	An Interview with Peter on the RCC
Part: 5	Where Did the Church of Today Come From?
Part: 4	MacArthur
Part: 3	Mary and the Rosary - Is There Another Way?
Part: 2	The True Bride of Christ
Part: 1	The Mass and Mary

"Master, You died for the world, did You not?" to which the Lord replies, "Yes." "You must have suffered much," the angel says; and again Jesus answers, "Yes." "Do they all know that you died for them?" Gabriel continues. "No. Only a few in Palestine know about it so far," Jesus says. "Well, then, what is Your plan for telling the rest of the world that You shed Your blood for them?" Jesus responds, "Well, I asked Peter and James and John and Andrew and a few others if they would make it the business of their lives to tell others. And then the ones that they tell could tell others, and they in turn could tell still others, and finally it would reach the farthest corner of the earth and all would know the thrill and power of the gospel." "But suppose Peter fails? And suppose after a while John just doesn't tell anyone? And what if James and Andrew are ashamed or afraid? Then what?" Gabriel asks. "I have no other plans," Jesus is said to have answered; "I am counting entirely on them[2]"

And after all that responsibility placed upon the disciples, after three years of training, after all the absolute confirmations of Christ's power – Peter, the leader of the Twelve denies that he ever even knew Jesus. He becomes a complete failure. Is Peter unique? No!

Apart[3] from the brief ministry of His own Son, the history of God's work on earth is the history of His using the unqualified. The twelve disciples who became apostles were no exception. From the human standpoint they had few characteristics or abilities that qualified them for leadership and service. Yet God used those men, just as He did Noah, Abraham, and the others, in marvelous ways to do His work.

God picks normal people and pours His grace on them. Satan wants our sins and failures to convince us to give up. But one look at the people of the Bible should defeat that temptation. The work of God is performed by weak individuals like us, surrendered to the God whose power is perfected in man's weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). God has always had only weak and sinful humans to work with. Listen to the team God has used to win the championships:

After using Noah to save humanity from extinction, Noah gets drunk and acts indecently.

After making Abraham His eternal friend, he doubts God, lies about his wife, and commits adultery with her maid.

After inviting Moses into His Presence and allowing him to be the only human that knew God face-to-face, he gets irritated, angry, and fearful, strikes the Rock and is disciplined by the Lord.

After giving David the thrill of crushing His enemies, the joy of writing His Psalms of worship, and the honor of leading Israel as His flock – he becomes an almost failure as a dad, and runs after his friend's wife in adultery.

The key to God's plan is not the person God uses; it is the Lord who can use them! We are all unqualified to do what needs to be done so the key is a willing and responsive heart. That is all God is looking for! What happens when we let Him use us? Great things!

PETER: The Three Stages of His Life

Peter, the hasty, headlong, speaking impertinently and unadvisedly, ready to repent, ever wading into waters too deep for him, and ever turning to his Master again like a little child. Peter the greatest of the apostles. Peter is our study this morning. An overview of the Life of Peter would have three parts. Each of the eras of his life speak of his love for Jesus.

1. In the Gospel of Mark we have Peter WALKING WITH JESUS.
2. In the Book of Acts 1-12 we have Peter WORKING FOR JESUS. In Acts we find Peter WORKING for Jesus. Peter opened the doorway to Christ for the world:

- Jews Acts 2
- Samaritans Acts 8
- Gentiles Acts 10

3. And in 1st and 2nd Peter we have Peter WAITING FOR JESUS to the end of his life.

WALKING WITH JESUS in the Gospels

Peter's gospel is our gospel - etched on our hearts, as are some of His most memorable words!

No disciple speaks so often as Peter. Listen to these words and think of how they so remind us of the man who just could never get enough time in Christ's Presence.

Oh how Peter longed to walk with Jesus. Can't you feel his passion as I read these words – I call them "Peter's Top 20" – the unmistakable footprints of a man who wanted Jesus with every ounce of his being!

- **Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.** (Luke 5.8)
- **Lo, we have left all and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?** (Mark 10.28; Luke 18.28)
- **Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall never be to Thee.** (Matthew 16.22)
- **Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.** (Matthew 14.28)

- *Lord, save me.* (Matthew 14.30)
- *The crowd press Thee, and how sayest Thou, Who touched me?* (Luke 8.45)
- *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* (Matthew 16.16; Mark 8.29)
- **To whom can we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life.** (John 6.68)
- *Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.* (Mark 9.5; Luke 9.33)
- *How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?* (Matthew 18.21)
- *Thou shalt never wash my feet.* (John 13.8)
- *Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.* (John 13.9)
- *Though all men deny Thee, yet will not I.* (Mark 14.31)
- *I know not the man.* (Matthew 26.74; Mark 14.71; Luke 22.60)
- *I go a fishing* (John 21.3)
- *Lord, Thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love Thee.* (John 21.15-17)
- *Silver and Gold have I none* (Acts 3.6)
- *Neither is there salvation in any other!* (Acts 4.12)
- *Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.* (Acts 10.14)
- *Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us; what was I that I could withstand God?* (Acts 11.17)

What lessons can we draw from the way Jesus trained, shaped and used Peter in the Gospels, Acts, and his two Epistles?

- ❖ Jesus **RESCUES Peter. Jesus wants to control our FUTURE.** [Matthew 14:27-30](#) But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."28 And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."29 So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"
- ❖ Jesus **REFOCUSES Peter. Jesus wants to control our AMBITIONS.** [Matthew 17:5](#) While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"
- ❖ Jesus **REBUKES Peter. Jesus wants to control our FLESH.** [Luke 22:61](#) And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."
- ❖ Jesus **RENAMES Peter. Jesus wants to control our IDENTITY.** [John 1:42](#) And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone). Peter was a crusty crass fisherman with a foul mouth. Depart from me he said, so Jesus changed him. He was a new person, he had a new identity. He wanted to please Jesus with all his strength. Has that ever happened to you? Who is shaping your identity? Paul said – either the world squeezes us into its image, or we let Christ's Word squeeze us into His Image. The choice is ours; one we make one day, one page, and one verse at a time!
- ❖ Jesus **REMINDS Peter. Jesus wants to control our MINISTRY.** [John 21:5-7](#) Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No."6 And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea.
- ❖ Jesus **RESTORES Peter. Jesus wants to control our FAILURES.** [John 21:15-17](#) So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." 16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.

❖ Jesus **REFRESHES Peter. Jesus wants to control our ETERNITY.** [1 Peter 1:3-5](#)
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Every time we open to the Gospel by Mark we remember that in one way or another, all of us too have stumbled. And for each of us, Peter's triumph by God's grace is an incredible source of encouragement.

[1] In the KJV the top name appearance reckonings are: Jesus 983 x; Christ 555 x; Peter 158 x; Paul 156 x; John 130 x; Moses 80 x; David 58 x; Elijah 30 x; Barnabas 29 x; Timothy 25 x; and Isaiah 21 x.

[2] Cited in Herbert Lockyer, *All the Apostles of the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972], p. 31

[3] Adapted from MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 10*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983

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