

STUDY ON PETER

Unlikely

March 26, 2023

OPENING QUESTION

Who have you met who ended up being completely different from your first impression of them?

As we get to know Peter's character through the gospel narratives, we may be surprised that God would call someone like him. He's not afraid to run his mouth, often his actions seem somewhat impulsive, and some stories make him seem about as rock solid as quicksand. But Peter was also surprised by the unlikeliness of the Man he was following; the path Jesus walked and the words he spoke often surprised Peter and broke his categories for who he expected the Messiah to be.

READ John 1:40-42

The names Cephas (an Aramaic word) and Peter (a Greek word) both mean "rock" – like giving someone the nickname "Rocky." What could a name like this imply about Peter?

- From what you know of Peter through the course of this series, do you think this is a fitting nickname or not?

READ Matthew 14:22-36 (This passage starts with "immediately..." indicating that this story happens right after something that came before. Glance back and skim the previous story, so you have things in context!)

What do you see and learn about Jesus in this story – from both His actions, and His interactions?

- What do you notice about Peter in this story?
- What stories from the Old Testament (stories Peter and the disciples would have grown up with!) do you know about God showing His power over water?
 - How do these stories add to your understanding of what Peter is experiencing?
- Through the sequence in 14:28-31, what things did Peter discover about both himself, and the One he followed?
- In what ways does this story encourage you in your faith journey? How does this story comfort you in the knowledge of who Jesus is to us?

Does Peter seem very "Rock"-like in this story?

- Since Jesus knows Simon Peter inside and out, why would he give Peter a name like "rocky?" (This is an imaginative and speculative question!)

FROM THE MESSAGE

This morning we looked at Matthew 16:13-19, where Jesus asked the disciples who they say He is; Peter answers, and Jesus calls him "the rock".

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus asks who the disciples say He is – from what they've seen and what they know, who have they understood Him to be for them. What YOU say about Jesus matters, not just what parents or friends or significant others say about Him.

- In the passage, some thought He was a good teacher, a spiritual leader, a wise counselor, a healer; how is Messiah a different role?
- Who do you say Jesus is? What is He to you?

DAILY TIME

Mark 7
Mark 8
Mark 9
Mark 10
Mark 11
Mark 12

As you read each day, consider:
What is Jesus like, what's His character?
What do I see about human behavior? What reminds me of myself here?
How should I respond? (thanksgiving, confession, asking, praise, change, etc)

Eggfest!

April 9, after Worship

Join the Kids! Team!

[Encounterchurch.org/events](https://encounterchurch.org/events)

NOTES AND QUOTES

How do we respond to God when He surprises us, and breaks all our categories? Perhaps, like Paul:

14For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:14-20

- *When* have you had to decide who you believe Jesus to be? What was that journey like? (You may still be in the middle of it!)

Dirk talked about how what we believe about Jesus shapes our identity, clarifies our values and determines our destinies – it changes everything.

- How has choosing Jesus defined parts of your identity, your values or your destiny?

Jesus calls Peter the rock He will build His church on, though Peter is still a work in progress.

- Do you tend to think of Bible characters as “heroes” or maybe more equipped and gifted than you?
 - Does this change that perspective at all?
- Do you ever worry that your personality or character, or your abilities (or lack of abilities) make you less able to be used by God? How does this story help to reshape that?

EXTRA Read Galatians 2:7-9 (see context at right), and Ephesians 2:19-22, focusing on verse 20.

How do these passages describe and portray Peter? What differences do you see compared to the descriptions of him in the gospel accounts?

- What hope can you find for your own purpose and journey from seeing the later parts of Peter’s story?
- How can you cultivate more opportunity to listen to and work *with* the Holy Spirit in your life, to grow toward what the Lord is calling you to?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Spend time in prayer for one another, about the needs in your lives, asking God to be at work forming you into an unlikely follower, transformed by Christ.

PRAYER AND CARE

Reminders for the week ahead:

John 1:42-44

40One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. 41He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). 42He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).

Matthew 14: 22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. 25And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. 26But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear. 27But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”

28And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” 29He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30But when he saw the

wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” 31Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” 32And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God

Galatians 2:7On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised 8(for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), 9and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Ephesians 2: 19So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

On Galatians 2: Paul is writing to help the Galatian believers rest securely in the freedom they have in Christ; a disagreement had broken out over whether certain Jewish rituals were required for salvation. The section we’re reading references the resolution to a disagreement on this between Paul and the Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem, who were led by Peter (called Cephas here), John, and James (Jesus’ brother).

In both the Matthew and Luke passages, Jesus reveals that He knows Peter better than Peter knows himself. Do you often consider that He knows you better than you know yourself?

