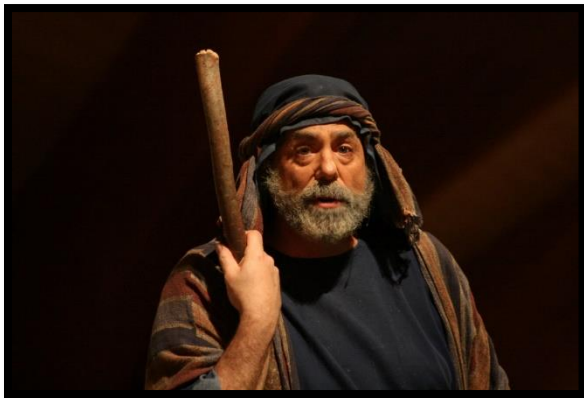


Twelve Ordinary Men

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567

Do you feel like you are giving God your very best effort to serve in His kingdom? While there are many excuses to not serve in the body of Christ such as “I don’t feel needed,” “the staff are paid to be the ministers,” “I don’t have time,” “I fear commitment” or “its too difficult to get involved;” the number one thing that keeps most people from serving is the perception that their sin has disqualified them. While there are times when we desire nothing but God (Psalms 73:26) and are on the mountaintop feeling the inexpressible and glorious joy of being in His presence (1 Peter 1:8-9), there are other times when we bask in the evil desires of our hearts (James 1:14-15) and are in the valley with our souls imprisoned, starving and thirsty because we have cherished the unrighteous paths of life. Those who have spent time in the valleys of sin often feel like they are unworthy to serve because they continually break God’s command to be holy (1 Peter 1:16). While God certainly does not want us to cherish sin in our hearts (Palms 66:18), sinlessness is not a requirement to serve in the body of Christ. Today we are going to review how the leader of the disciples got his two names “Simon” and “Peter” to give us hope that like him we too can serve despite our sinful nature.

Background on Peter



Peter’s family lived in the city of Bethsaida on the northern shore of the sea of Galilee (John 1:44) but later moved to Capernaum¹ where he and his brother Andrew had a fishing business (Mark 1:21, 29), with James and John as likely partners (Luke 5:10).² Peter’s father’s name was Jonah (Matthew 16:17) or John (John 1:42, 21:15-17). Peter was married (Luke 4:38) and often took his wife on his apostolic missions (1 Corinthians 9:5).³ Even though Scripture does not mention

it, Clement of Alexandria and Stromateis both mention Peter as having had children.⁴ After

¹ Taken from the following website: <https://bible.org/seriespage/peter-man>

² Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, [“Peter, The Apostle,”](#) *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1659.

³ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You](#) (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 38.

⁴ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, [“Peter, The Apostle,”](#) *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1660.

having heard John the Baptist's testimony that Jesus was the "Lamb of God" (John 1:35-40), both Andrew and Peter became apostles of Christ. Since Peter is always the first name mentioned in the list of the twelve apostles (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13) and due to Peter being called "first" or "protos" in Matthew 10:22 which means "chief," is proof he was most likely the earthly leader⁵ of the twelve Apostles.⁶

Two Names

Peter's name given at birth was Simon Bar-Jonah (Matthew 16:17) which meant Simon, son of Jonah (John 21:15-17).⁷ When Jesus first met Simon He gave him another name Peter which in Aramaic was Cephas (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22) or "rock." Which name Jesus used to



refer to this apostle depended on which nature he allowed control of his life. When he allowed his brash, impetuous, impulsive and overeager actions to take control of his life then Jesus usually called him "Simon." For example, he was called Simon when he did not believe Jesus would help him catch fish (Luke 5:5), when Jesus predicted he would betray him three times (Luke 22:31-32), in the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:37-38) and when Jesus reinstated him to service (John 21:15-19). When he allowed his faith in

Christ to be in control he was usually called Peter to describe the person he trying to become: the rock and future leader of the early church (Matthew 16:17-20). Even though Peter vacillated between sin and righteousness he was still called and became the leader of the church.⁸

⁵ Christ was the ultimate leader of the 12 Apostles of course.

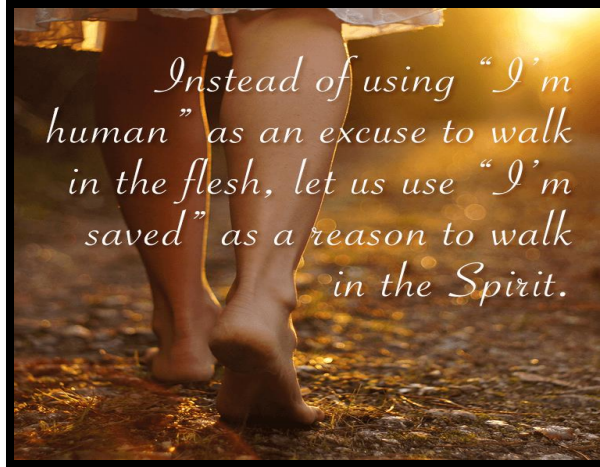
⁶ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You*](#) (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 38.

⁷ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You*](#) (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 33.

⁸ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You*](#) (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 37.

Leaving the Old Simon to Embrace the New Peter

Like Peter we as Christians wrestle with putting off the old self that is a slave to sin (Romans 6:6) to embrace new self that is born of God (John 1:13). While we are fully aware that those who love God follow His commands (John 14:21), our thoughts, words and deeds often



reflect more our love of this world than that of God! Like Paul, there is a war going on inside of us for our allegiance and without Christ's help (Romans 7) we will forever obey the evil desires of our hearts (James 1:14) far quicker than those of our Creator. When we fall short of God's glory by sinning we often believe this disqualifies us from serving in God's kingdom. This of course is an excuse for if sinlessness were a criterion to serve then no human being would ever serve, for we all sinned and will do so again (1 John 1:10). Like Peter we are not to use our sin as

an excuse to not serve but as an area of our lives that needs repentance so that we can fulfill the divine role God has assigned to us (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). The following paragraphs are going to look at five areas in which we as Christians need transformation to go from being a "Simon" to be a "Peter" in our service to God.

Area #1: Submission. To effectively serve in Christ's kingdom "Simon" had to learn how to submit to the Lord and those in authority over him. The old-self, "Simon," questioned whether it was right for Jesus to pay the temple tax. Jesus then taught him the value of



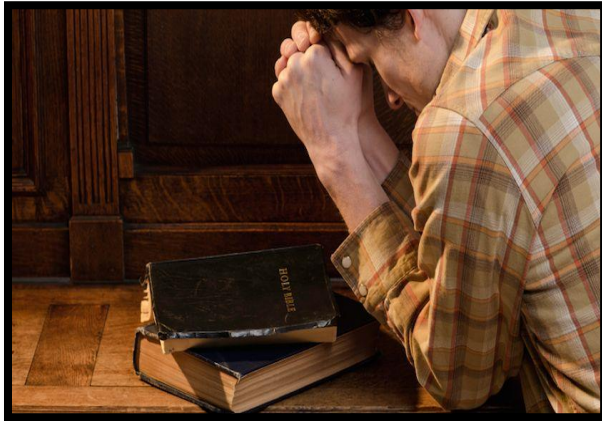
submission. For example, when asked about the temple tax Jesus responded that while He as the Son of God was not morally obligated to pay He chose to submit willingly.⁹ So impressed by Jesus' teaching "Peter" wrote to those in Asia Minor that as bondservants of the Lord they should willingly submit to every ordinance of man so that they will put to silence the ignorance of ungodly men (1 Peter 2:13-18). If their laws do not break God's laws, then obey so that one does not spend all of one's time fighting against their rules. Like Peter, we as Christians must also submit first to Christ

and then the authorities of this world that have been granted their positions by Christ (Romans

⁹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You*](#) (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 49.

13:1-2)! We are to put off the old-self's desire to be the "ruler" of everything and submit to He who bought you at a price (1 Corinthians 1:20)!

Area #2: Restraint. "Self-control, discipline, moderation and reserve"¹⁰ did not come naturally to "Simon." For example, surrounded by hundreds of Roman soldiers armed to the teeth, "Simon" takes out his sword and cuts off the ear of the high priest (Luke 22:47-53)! In front of all his enemies Jesus rebukes "Simon," "put your sword away, shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me" (John 18:11)? This rebuke had a lasting impression for later "Peter" would write that Christ who had committed no sin and no deceit found in His mouth left us an



example of how important it is to willingly suffer when it is the will of God to do so (1 Peter 2:21-23). While most of us will not be asked to die for the sake of His kingdom, Christ promised that the same hatred from the world that He received we would as well (John 15:18). Christ is not saying that suffering has value in and of itself. Suffering inside of the kingdom of God only has value when it is done in accordance to God's will. Like Peter we are to show self-constraint by bathing all our decisions in prayer so that we might know His good and proper will

(Romans 12:2).

Area #3: Humility. One of the most difficult sins to overcome is that of pride. When



people are praising you for your service it is easy to feel that one's effort is the reason for such praise. "Simon" was so sure of his position that he told Christ that even when the Shepherd was struck (Matthew 26:31) he alone would stay, even if it meant imprisonment or death (Luke 22:33). "Simon" was also with the apostles when they argued over whom would be the greatest of them when Christ returned to heaven (Luke 22:24-30). Peter learned humility as demonstrated in his writing: "clothe yourselves with humility towards

¹⁰ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You*](#) (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 50.

one another because God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). Like “Peter” we are to remember that success in service is dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit who works in and through us. Even though we are the Ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) and Royal Priest (1 Peter 2:9) of Christ does not mean we “our” own power to do miracles! Those who want to be first in the kingdom of God must learn to be a servant to everyone (Mark 9:35), valuing others above ourselves (Philippians 2:3-4).

Area #4: Love. The command to love God and one another is not an easy one to obey! Sometimes we get so caught up in accomplishing our goals that we see people as a “means to an end” rather than recipients of our love!¹¹ When Jesus came to “Simon Peter” at the Last Supper



and went to wash his feet he brashly told Jesus “you shall never wash my feet” (John 13:8). Since foot washing was considered the lowest and least desirable of all jobs, he could not accept Christ taking on that position.¹² “Simon Peter” failed to understand this foot washing ceremony was symbolic of his need to be cleansed and forgiven. Later Peter would write that we are to “love each other deeply because love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). If we are to serve others in God’s kingdom then we

need to be like Peter and love people despite their shortcomings and failures. It is so easy to see in others our sin and condemn them rather than show them the mercy we have already received!



Area #5: Compassion. Peter came to understand how important it was to show compassion. Jesus told “Simon” that once Satan had sifted them all as wheat, he was to strengthen his fellow apostles (Luke 22:31-32). Sometimes we get so engulfed in meeting our service goals that we can lose sight of our duty to stop and show compassion when others are hurting because of the sins they have committed. After having felt the utter sham of having denied Jesus Christ three times, “Peter” learned how important it is to help others who

¹¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You*](#) (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 52–53.

¹² John F. MacArthur Jr., 53.

are lacerated by sin and personal failures.¹³ “Peter” wrote “be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9). Like Peter with the same comfort we have received from Christ we are to comfort others (1 Corinthians 1:4) by helping them to see that those who seek forgiveness will receive it!

Conclusion

One can have an abundance of submission, restraint, humility, love and compassion; but without courage service to God rarely happens. We have many excuses as to why we do not serve inside of God’s kingdom, but nothing keeps us from service more than our fear that we are simply not worthy! Since we all sin and fall short of God’s glory this is merely an excuse for the real reason we do not serve: in the face of opposition it is so much easier to go along with the crowd and be like “Simon” and say, “I don’t know Him.” Once Peter had the power of the Holy Spirit inside of him, he had the courage to preach the Gospel message and to be crucified for doing so (John 21:18). Do you have the courage to go where your old-self does not want to go? Are you willing to die for Christ if He asks you to do so? Let me leave you with this parting thought: are you ready and willing to fulfill the divine role assigned to when you were born again or are you still too in love with yourself to love God and other people?

¹³ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You*](#) (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 57.