



***Becoming Fully Devoted Followers
by Studying the Followers Before Us***

WEEK 45

PETER

NOVEMBER 5-9, 2007

DAY	<i>THROUGH THE BIBLE</i>	ABBREVIATED STUDY
Monday	Acts 1-3, Psalm 71	1 Peter 1:1-25, Psalm 71
Tuesday	Acts 4-6, Psalm 72	1 Peter 3:1-7, 4:1-10, Psalm 72
Wednesday	Acts 7-9, Psalm 73	1 Peter 5:1-13, Psalm 73
Thursday	Acts 10-12, Psalm 74	2 Peter 2:1-22, Psalm 74
Friday	Acts 13-14, Psalm 75	2 Peter 3:1-18, Psalm 75

READ

1 Peter 1:1-25

Psalms 71

REFLECT

The Books of 1 Peter and 2 Peter were written from Rome and three years apart. Peter wrote these two books for entirely different purposes. We can certainly identify with 1 Peter as his purpose was to offer encouragement to suffering Christians. A careful reading will serve as an encouragement to us when we face difficult and challenging times. Peter writes to his readers as one who has experienced the paw prints and claw marks of the hungry lion. He has suffered because of his poor choices or prideful ambition. But Peter encourages his readers by reminding them that this kind of suffering (as well as being persecuted for one's faith) is part of what it means to live as a Christian in a fallen world. It is to be expected.

Peter made it a special point to use several images that were very special to him because Jesus had used them when he revealed certain truths to Peter. Peter's name (which means "rock") had been given to him by Jesus. Peter's conception of the church – a spiritual house composed of living stones built upon Christ as the foundation – came from Christ.

RESPOND

Think back on the times (and perhaps you are there now) when you have been discouraged and perhaps even felt persecuted. The early Christians were tortured and killed for their faith, and the church in

Jerusalem was being scattered throughout the Mediterranean world. The key verse in 1 Peter is "These have come so that your faith...may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1:7). Reading Peter can lift us up and cause us to feel the reassurance and the comfort of truly being held in the palm of God's hands.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of this perfect day. Thank You for giving us the gift of Your precious Son and the promise of eternal life. When times get confusing and we experience a heaviness of heart You are always there. You are the rock and the source of our comfort and understanding. Please guide us as we seek to draw closer to You.

- D.M.

READ

1 Peter 3:1-7, 4:1-10

Psalm 72

REFLECT

Peter gives a powerful clarion call to women in 3: 1-6 when he says that “wives should...be submissive to [their] husbands...” He described the best approach would be one of loving service: they should show their husbands the kind of self-giving love that Christ showed the church. Undoubtedly a changed life speaks loudly and clearly, and it is often the most effective way to influence a family member. Peter instructs Christian wives to develop inner beauty rather than being overly concerned about their outward appearance. Focusing on our inner being is certainly good advice for us today too.

Peter goes on to address husbands similarly when he wrote “Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (3: 7). When he refers to women as the weaker partner he is referring not to intellectual or moral inferiority, but rather recognizing the reality of physical limitations.

Reflect on the powerful words (4:8) when Peter says “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.” Does this speak to you about how the love of significant others in your life can mitigate the sins that you commit? Love means to forgive others for their sins and to be thankful for their doing the same.

Paul tells us (4:10) that that each of us should use whatever gifts that we have received to serve others. Sometimes we might mistakenly

believe that we have the exclusive right to utilize our abilities as we please. Others might feel that they have no special talents at all. Peter addresses both groups in these verses. Everyone has some unique gifts; find yours and use them. Our abilities and gifts should be used in serving others; none are for our own exclusive enjoyment.

RESPOND

Are you considerate and loving to your spouse and do you willingly submit? Do you lift up your significant other and help her or him to become all that they can be? Do you understand and recognize how you are uniquely wired and gifted and do you live the majority of your time in your areas of strength? Do you truly believe that your strengths are a result of your hard work and intelligence or that they are from God? How can you give back to others as Christ has given so much to you?

PRAY

Dear Lord, please teach me daily how to become less self-centered and more focused on giving to others. Use me as a compassionate and willing servant to utilize my skills and talents that come from You to the benefit of others. Help me to submit and help me to be more compassionate and more considerate of others. I need You to guide me in an inner focus rather than being seduced by the pulls of the world. You are an awesome God.

- D.M.

READ

1 Peter 5:1-13

Psalm 73

REFLECT

In 1 Peter (5:8-10), Peter preaches from the pulpit of personal experience. His reference to “sufferings” is not simply for the sake of acknowledging the hardships, temptations, and failure he’s faced. What is Peter saying about suffering that has a universal ring to it?

Peter, one of Jesus’ 12 disciples, was one of the three who saw Christ’s glory at the transfiguration. Often the spokesman for the apostles, Peter witnessed Jesus’ death and resurrection, preached at Pentecost, and became a pillar of the Jerusalem church. Peter describes (5:2-5) several characteristics of good leaders in the church: (1) they realize they are caring for God’s flock, not their own; (2) they lead out of eagerness to serve, not out of obligation; (3) they are concerned for what they can give, not for what they can get; (4) they lead by example, not force. All of us lead others in some way. Whatever our role, our leadership should be in line with these characteristics. Are your motivations to serve and to do Kingdom work in line with the above four characteristics?

And when Peter writes, “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away” do you know and believe that he is referring to Jesus Christ and His second coming, when He will judge all people? Does the power of those simple words comfort or frighten you?

RESPOND

Go back a bit to 1 Peter 2:21-23. These are the words written by the same person who attempted to decapitate a man who was with the party that ambushed Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane to arrest Him. How does that knowledge affect your perspective on his sincerity? And what was Jesus’ response to the man with the damaged ear? Can we learn to follow Jesus’ lead and His exemplary life? It is difficult to do what is right in such a challenging time as we live in. But Peter’s life and example illustrate how difficult it was following Jesus’ commands even in His presence. But even with all of his failings Jesus never gave up on Peter and He will never give up on us either.

PRAY

Loving and caring Father, we need You in our lives. And we need You to show us the way and to show us Your way. Just as Jesus loved the imperfect and flawed disciple He called Peter the Rock, we know that You love us just the same. Please show us the way You would have us go. Help guide our steps. Lead us to become more like Your precious Son every day. Enable me to accept Your love so that I may be able to share it with others who come into my life.

- D.M.

READ

2 Peter 2:1-22

Psalms 74

REFLECT

Peter wrote this second book three years after the first. He was probably still in Rome and he knew that his time on earth was limited. So he wrote what was on his heart, warning believers of what would happen when he was gone – especially about the presence of false teachers. Second Peter could just have easily have been written directly to us. Our world is filled with false prophets and teachers who claim to have the truth and who clamor for attention and allegiance. His admonition to us today is to grow in our knowledge of Christ and to reject all those who preach anything inconsistent with God’s word.

The most significant verse tells us “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” Do we believe that we have been given everything that we need? What is the difference between what we need and what we may want? How do we respond to God when He doesn’t answer our prayers and give us what we want? Do we trust that He knows what is good for us and that His timing is always perfect?

RESPOND

How do we respond to false teachers? They are often subtly deceitful. Believers today must still be vigilant against falling into false doctrine, heresy, and cult activity. Do we believe too much of what we read in the

paper, see on TV, see on the internet? Have we succumbed to the message of the day telling us to take care of ourselves and that it isn’t our responsibility to take care of our brothers and sisters? Do we believe that we are just one person and that we really can’t make a difference in the world today? You are a precious child of God and He has created you for a special purpose.

PRAY

Father God, help us recognize our need for discernment to be able to resist false teachers. We know You can rescue us from their lies if we stay true to Your word, the Bible, and reject those who distort the truth. We know that our Christian growth is essential and that it begins with faith and culminates in love for others. Thank you for being our Teacher.

- D.M.

READ

2 Peter 3:1-18

Psalms 75

REFLECT

Peter denied that he knew Jesus three times (just as Jesus predicted he would). Graciously, Jesus allowed Peter the opportunity to affirm his love three times as a way of helping Peter make peace with himself. There are several points to ponder when learning from Peter. Why do you think that John referred to His friend 15 times as Simon Peter instead of Simon or Peter? What is the significance of this? And what was motivational about giving Peter a nickname that called to mind a “Rock”?

Most of us are like Peter because we are both spiritual and carnal. Which of your behaviors fit in each category? What problems might Peter have had (and of course that we might have) in learning to demonstrate a love that is not based on feelings and is reserved for people who are not naturally loveable?

Peter concludes his letter as he began, by urging his readers to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and to get to know Him better. That is the message for us to remember. If every day we find some way to draw closer to Jesus, we will be prepared to stand for truth in any and all circumstances.

RESPOND

When the weight of the world is bearing down on us and we feel incapable of warding off the temptations of false teachers or prophets

who would lead us astray, we need to follow the admonition of Peter. We need to call on God to show us the way. We need to constantly remember that our salvation does not depend on good deeds, but it results in good deeds. A person who claims to be saved while remaining unchanged does not understand faith or what God has done for him or her. Believing in the perfect life of the Son of God and striving to be more like Him every day is our quest.

PRAY

Father, help us to put aside our sinful ways and to strive to be more like Jesus every day. We know that we are truly our brother’s keeper – that we have the opportunity and responsibility of being Christ to those we come into contact with. Help us to love others as Christ loved us. Help us to live in humility and with a heartfelt commitment to give You the honor and the glory. Amen and amen.

- Dave McIntire