

## Defining Moments in the Lives of Disciples

**I. One of the themes** that we have covered this year has been that of striving to become better disciples of Jesus:

A. These past couple of weeks we have been transitioning from the study of being better disciples ourselves, and into going out and making disciples of others:

B. This year for our Summer Bible School series, we are extending that theme under the banner of “I Want to be a Disciple”. Starting tomorrow we plan on covering selected stories from the lives of four men who followed Jesus:

C. Tonight’s lesson is meant to be a lead in to those studies, and as I was thinking about it over the past few weeks, there was one particular angle that kept coming to mind: What were some of the defining moments in the lives of these men that turned them into the men that we remember them as today?

1. While there are any number of stories or experiences about these men that helped shape them into the characters we think of, it would make for an interesting study to try and identify a particular moment that changed the course of their lives as disciples of the Lord:

## II. Peter’s Chance at Redemption: *John 21:15-17*

A. There are a number of instances in Peter’s past that would it would benefit us to recall in brief: Before we arrive at this text, how would you define Peter?

1. Rash? Impulsive? Quick to act and slow to think? All of these and more!

a) Peter was a prime example of a broken clock being right twice a day: In his abundance of words, he would drift from a great spiritual insight, to planting his foot firmly in his mouth!

(1) *From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” - Matt: 16: 21-23*

- (a) He Just as easily repeated this mistake after the transfiguration: an event that, as at least one purpose, was to show the supremacy of Christ: Peter proposes to build three tabernacles, one for Elijah and one for Moses! *The text even points out that he didn't realize what he was saying* Luke 9:32-33
- b) Of course we have to mention Peter's firm assurance, that even though all of those other disciples might betray the Lord, Peter himself would never do such a thing! *But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.* Matthew 26:33,35
- c) This was something that he was determined to convince the Lord of, in the Garden we are told in John 18:10-11 that it was Peter who drew out his sword to attack the servant of the high priest, and had to be reigned in by Jesus!
- (i) All of this: the spiritual and physical recklessness, the conceit, and especially the pride culminate to the point of Peter's betrayal in Matt. 26:69-75: Where Peter is not shown to have any of the bravado and courage: just an emotionally spent man who betrays what he stood for:
2. Peter was crushed: He had done what he said he would never do! He went out and wept bitterly (v75). What was Peter to do now?
- a) Following the death and resurrection of Jesus, I imagine that it was a great weight being carried on the shoulders of Peter, of how he could possibly repay this great debt to the Lord: How he must have agonized over when they would finally talk about what had happened!
- (i) Would the Lord forgive him? Would he be allowed to go on as a disciple? Was there any sort of special punishment?
3. Make no mistake: when they finally had that conversation, it was not an easy one to have!
- a) Jesus begins in v 15: Do you love Me more than these?
- (i) I think that this is most likely Jesus gently reminding Peter of the time when he thought that out of all of the followers, it was he alone that was capable of being faithful to the Lord:

(a) For Peter, the time for comparisons is gone: He simply answers Yes Lord, You know that I love you:

b) But it was not over yet for Peter! Jesus would go on to ask him not once, but two more times to affirm his love and devotion; something that brought Peter once again to great emotional distress; v 17 states that he was grieved, stating Lord you know all things, you know I love you!

(i) It is a fair application to make that the Lord is giving Peter the opportunity to make of for his three previous denials: And with each affirmation of Peter's love for the Lord, it is as though those final pieces of the old Peter are being chipped off one by one: As he is thoroughly humbled by this exchange for the Lord, the Prideful Peter, the reckless Peter, is slowly fading away:

4. Certainly there would be more growth for Peter: But the Peter that we see after this, is a far different man than the one we see before:

a) When the time comes to get on board or jump ship: It is Peter who will stand up in the midst of the crowd:

**III. I think that there** are moments like this to be found in the lives of all of the men we are studying this week, as well as the rest of the followers of Jesus:

**A.** It is certainly an amazing thing to see the Apostle John, a man who was constantly trying to barter for a better position in the Kingdom and who was ready to call down fire from heaven, later on writing letters almost exclusively dedicated to "loving your brother"!

**i.** For John I imagine he defining moment was having all thoughts of pride washed away as His Lord got down on His knees and scrubbed the filth away from his feet

**B.** For Paul, I cannot think of any other event more powerful than when he was faced with his guilt and rebellion against the Lord in Acts 9!

**C.** Even Judas had moments that defined his life: In Matthew 27 when presented with the choice of repentance, he couldn't own up to his guilt

**a)** We don't all live lives that are as filled with excitement and as eventful as these men: I don't know that we can say that there are particular moments that will stand out above all others in the lives of every Christian:

**b)** But there may come a time: a choice that we have to make, a spiritual battle we have to fight, a stand that has to be taken that very well may define our lives as followers of Jesus:

**(1)** How will we react when that time comes?