

TEXT Matthew 26:30-35,69-75; Acts 2:14-24,41

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES John 21:15-17; 1 Peter 1:3-9

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to trace the tremendous transformation in the life of Peter between the time he denied his Savior, and the time he preached on the Day of Pentecost when three thousand were saved. They will recognize that they have the opportunity to achieve greater depths of Christian experience, even as Peter did.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. — Philipians 4:13

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. — 1 Peter 3:15

**ANSWER
TITLE: The Right Choice**

**SEARCH
TITLE: Peter**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Simon Peter, of Bethsaida by the Sea of Galilee, was married and was a fisherman. He was brought to Jesus by his brother, Andrew, also a fisherman. They were called to be “fishers of men.” Jesus called Peter *Cephas*, meaning “a rock.” In parts of the New Testament he is a spokesman among Christ’s followers. It is Peter, too, who is recorded

as having performed the first miracle of healing known in the Christian church. He was also the one God used to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles at Cornelius’ house, showing that Jesus would receive the Gentiles as well as the Jews. He wrote two epistles and according to tradition suffered martyrdom in Rome.

YOUR OPENER

Peter

TEXT: Matthew 26:30-35,69-75; Acts 2:14-24,41

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: John 21:15-17; 1 Peter 1:3-9

KEY VERSE: Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. — 1 Peter 3:15

RESPONSES

1. Allow time for your students to discuss their thoughts. They should note the firmness and all-encompassing nature of Peter’s declaration. They will probably comment on Peter’s apparent self-confidence at this point. Ask your students why this might have been one of the reasons for Peter’s inability to stand up for his Lord. They should observe that he was seemingly trusting in himself instead of realizing his weakness and need for Christ’s power. Can this be a danger to Christians today? Why?

2. First, he simply denied that he knew Jesus. Next, he denied his acquaintanceship with an oath. Finally, he accompanied his denial with swearing and cursing. This question is designed to provoke discussion regarding the progressive nature of sin in one’s failure to follow the Lord.

3. Your students’ answers should bring out that unless they “watch and pray” daily, they are an easy target for Satan’s darts. Loving communion with Christ, through reading the Bible and prayer, is essential for Christian victory.

4. Begin your discussion by looking again at Matthew 26:41, mentioned in the previous question. Note the understanding comment of the Lord “. . . the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Point out that Christ is aware of our spiritual weaknesses and needs, and if we will listen, He will be faithful in revealing to us what we

Simon Peter had left his fishing nets by the Sea of Galilee to follow Jesus. He had witnessed the feeding of the five thousand, the raising of Jairus’ daughter, and had walked to Jesus on the water. He had been taught love, forgiveness, resolve, allegiance, faith, and obedience, by the Messiah himself. In this lesson, we contrast Peter’s failure to stand up for his Lord, with the triumph over Satan he experienced after Pentecost when three thousand souls were converted to Christ. Our objective is to find the reasons for his failure and subsequent successes, and apply those lessons to achieve greater effectiveness in our service to the Lord.

1. Reading the first portion of our text in Matthew, what can we see in Peter’s expressed determination to follow Christ?

2. In spite of Peter’s earlier stand, when the testing time came, he failed his Lord. On the three occasions when he was accused of being a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, how did Peter’s behavior become increasingly vehement and reproachful?

3. Looking at Matthew 26:40,41, note one reason why Peter’s resolve to stand by his Lord failed.

4. Is it possible to discover our weakness in time to avert failure?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. Why was the cock's crowing of concern to Peter? How did Peter react and what does this signify?

6. Compare Matthew 26:75 with John 21:15-17. What connection does one have with the other?

7. In the Acts portion of our text, we see a completely different Peter from the man who denied his Lord. What enabled him to boldly preach Jesus Christ to this multitude of people when he had previously failed Christ so miserably? See Acts 1:8.

8. The Bible tells us of both the strengths and weaknesses of many of God's men through the ages. Can you cite a reason why God chose to include their weaknesses and failures? See 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 3:17,18.

9. If one is not completely satisfied with some aspect of his spiritual life, note here what actions can be taken in order to improve.

must do.

5. Jesus had said that before the cock crowed Peter would have denied Him three times. When he heard the crowing, Peter realized that what Jesus had foretold had come to pass; and his heart must have felt deep sorrow, for he went out and wept bitterly. More often than not, tears accompany repentance for sin. So it seems at that moment Peter deeply repented of his denials of Christ. Ask the students to enumerate examples of other people from the Bible who have come back to a position of usefulness after having failed in God's service.

6. There were three denials of Christ and three affirmations of Peter's love for Christ. We read that Peter was grieved "because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?" No doubt Peter remembered his three-time denial of his Lord as Jesus spoke. But his repeated affirmation indicates that Peter had learned well the lesson of dependence on his Master. Discuss with your class why the lesson Peter learned is absolutely essential for Christian victory over sin.

7. Peter, forgiven and restored, had also received the Holy Ghost. Retrace briefly with your class some of the events which strengthened the faith of the disciples, including Peter's, after Christ rose from the dead. These would include Christ's appearance to Mary and then to the disciples, the miraculous draught of fishes and the miracle of the unbroken net, and the renewed commission to the disciples. But these events were not responsible for the change in Peter. The real dramatic difference was made when Peter, being in one accord with the others in the Upper Room, received the Holy Spirit. Discuss the things the Holy Ghost does for us and why it is a vital experience for the one who desires to be a truly effective worker for Christ.

8. Your class should realize that these men were not superhuman, but men and women made of the same clay of which we are made. They were humanly weak, suffered temptation and trial, and at times, some failed God. Their stories, along with those who succeeded, are recorded that we might learn from their experiences. Your students should see the importance of turning to the only source of real strength and refuge—the power of God.

9. Allow time for your students to offer their answers. The point of this question is to help your students see the necessity of regularly checking up on their spiritual power and the effectiveness of their Christian witness. If the Lord reveals an area where they are lacking, they should endeavor to improve through God's help. Your students should conclude that each of them has the opportunity to achieve greater depths of Christian experience, even as Peter did.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

If a person is determined to wholly follow the Lord, does that mean he won't have any hard things to experience? Explain.

Name one trait in Peter you admire, and tell why.

How do Peter's denial of Jesus, his repentance, and his being able to go out and preach to such a large crowd, prove God's love?

In what ways do you think God could use you if you give Him your life as Peter did?

What difference do you see in Peter between the accounts of him given in Matthew and Acts?

What do you think made the difference in Peter from the time he denied Jesus and the time he preached after Pentecost?

In our ANSWER story, how did Peter come up with the slogan that was used for his campaign?

THINGS TO DO

Tell your students that you are going to pretend that you are Peter, and let them ask you questions about your life.

Make a tape-recording of the words of Peter when he boasted of staying true to Christ (Matthew 26:33,35) and when he denied Him three times (Matthew 26:69-74). Also tape a hypothetical dialogue between a weak Christian testifying to his Christian friends at church and his denial or reluctance to testify of Christ to his peers outside of church. Compare the two recordings.

Arrange lighting so your body makes a shadow. Point out that it represents our influence on others. Each of us has a shadow that influences those around us. Sometimes we are not aware of how we influence others. Ask your students to name something that makes a strong shadow.

Take one of their answers, such as "being out in the bright sun," and compare that with how we present Christ to others by being close to the presence of the Son of God. We must have Jesus in our hearts, as Peter did, in order to win others to Christ.

Give each of the students paper and pencil. Request that they note areas in their own lives where they feel they are somewhat spiritually weak. Ask them to keep the paper private but take it home with them and pray specifically each day for strength in those areas.

Answers for ANSWER

A Real Change!

There was a real change in Peter when he repented and began his new life for Christ. The verse below is advice that Peter gave for all who follow Jesus. Fill in the missing words. Then write those words where they fit on the grid below.

Be ready always to give an
answer to every man that
asketh you a reason of the
hope that is in you with
meekness and fear.

1 Peter 3:15