

DAYS  
6-12

OF THE

40-DAY

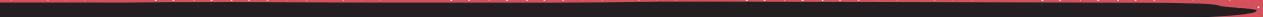
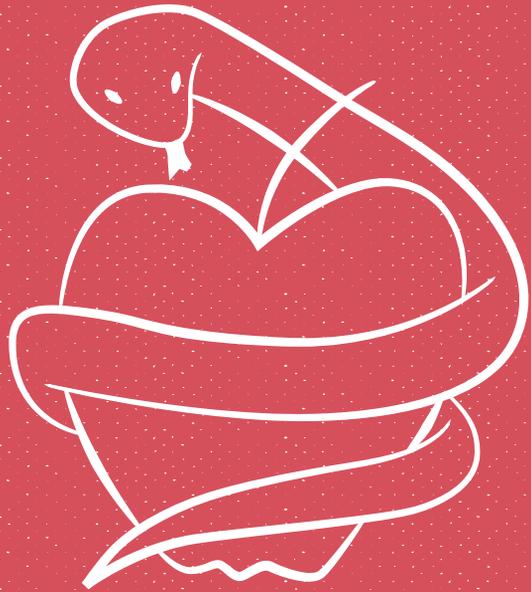


CHALLENGE

S.C.A.R.S.

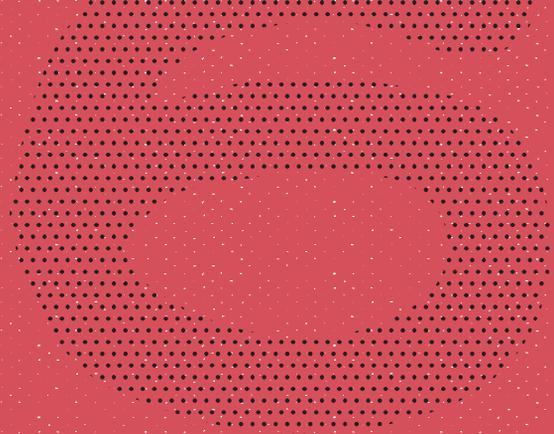
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SIN



# DAY 6

## SNUB-NOSED TO BIG BOULDER



Make no mistake about it: The Bible is all about Jesus. The story of Jesus as Savior of the World frames the entire book from Genesis to Revelation. Inside the pages of the Bible, Jesus offers not just an invitation to be saved by Him, but to walk with Him and let Him be the Lord of our lives today. One of those invitations was very clearly given to a man named Peter.

You could argue that Peter is the only other fully formed character in the Gospels besides Jesus. He is listed first chronologically in any story that mentions the disciples, and he is mentioned more than five times the number of any other disciple. "He is referred to almost 200 times in the New Testament. The disciple John is mentioned only 31 times," says Michael Card in *A Fragile Stone*.<sup>15</sup> He also plays the most vital role in the first twelve chapters of Acts.

This week, we will be introduced to the disciple Peter, and to a series of big blunders by which many define his life. I believe the story of forgiveness that Jesus will offer to Peter is the most personal and relational story of forgiveness in all of the Bible. While Jesus is the hero of the Bible, Peter serves "as a 'foil' to Jesus," says Adam Hamilton, a pastor and author: "A foil is a supporting character whose part contrasts, highlights, and even exalts the qualities of the lead character... Just as Jesus reveals and represents God, Peter represents all who seek to follow Jesus."<sup>16</sup>

My hope is that as we examine this story of forgiveness, you will begin to see yourself in the character of Peter. As you watch Jesus so amazingly give grace to him, my hope is that you too would know that Jesus offers grace to you—and that not only would you receive this grace, but, like Peter, you will learn to walk in it and be fully transformed by it.

If you ever visit New Zealand, you might choose to stop by a hill on the North Island called Taumatawhakatangihangakoauauotamateaturipukakapikimaungahoronukupokaiwhenuakitanatahu. No joke. If that's too much of a mouthful, the short form is Taumatawhakatangihangakoauauotamateapokaiwhenuakitanatahu. It is listed in the Guinness World Records as the longest official place name in the world.

The name means: "The summit where Tamatea, the man with the big knees, the climber of mountains, the land-swallower who travelled about, played his nose flute to his loved one."<sup>17</sup> As strange as this name is, it's quite biblical. A name in the Bible is often a description of the person himself or herself—or what the parents would like their child to become.<sup>18</sup>

Names are significant, and every now and then in the Bible, God changes someone's name. This is important to know because when we are first introduced to the biblical character known as Peter, he has a different name: Simon. At the time, Simon is fishing on a boat because fishing was the family business. This was his future before Jesus met him.

The very first recorded words that Jesus speaks to Peter are found in John 1:42: **"You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas' (which, when translated is Peter)."**

Peter starts as Simon, but Jesus immediately declares that he will now be Peter, even though he hasn't done anything to earn a new name. Interestingly, the name Simon is a Greek nickname that means "snub-nosed." More commonly, Simon was a derivative of Simeon, which means, "God has heard." The name that Jesus gives to Simon is Peter, which means "the rock, or big boulder."

I like that Jesus changed his name *before* Peter ever did anything to earn it. Oftentimes, we get it wrong by thinking that God will only love us, accept us, forgive us, and ultimately free us if we first prove to Him that we are worthy of His love and acceptance. Even after his name is changed to Peter, if you look into his life as portrayed in the Gospels, Peter did not live up to his new name many times. You could argue that you see a lot more "big blunder" in Peter than you do "big boulder."

In *Simon Peter: Flawed but Faithful Disciple*, Pastor Adam Hamilton says, "How could Jesus call Simon a rock? After all, this man is going to blow it consistently. He will be less like a rock and more like a reed or blade of grass, easily moved, swayed, or broken. He will miss the point again and again."<sup>19</sup>

Even after receiving grace and a new identity in Jesus, there are still times we fail to live up to the name that God places on us. And yet, He still calls us by our new name.

This is what God does. He comes into our stories and invites us into a new calling. He gives us a new identity. He declares that who you are and who you've been doesn't have to follow you into the future. When God changes someone's name, it's because He's calling him or her to live out a new mission or new identity in this world. Jesus saw some great potential in Peter. Everyone else saw Simon the

snub-nosed, but Jesus saw Peter the rock. Through this name, He gave Peter a vision of what God sees in Him.

Just as God saw something in Peter, He sees something in you too. Jesus sees in you what you can be—regardless of what you’ve done or what other people have said about you. God loves you for who you are, but His love doesn’t leave you just as you are. He desires you to step into the identity that He’s won for you by His grace.

You might think that you are not special enough for Jesus to call someone like you. Even if Peter didn’t do anything of note to receive this new identity, certainly He was chosen because of his place in this world, right? Wrong. The more you look into Peter’s story before he met Jesus, the more you see that there really wasn’t much that stood out.

In the Jewish population, there was a class of people, going back hundreds of years before the time of Jesus and Peter, called *am ha’arertz*. The phrase literally means “the people of the land.” The term has a complicated history, but according to Adam Hamilton’s *Simon Peter: Flawed but Faithful Disciple*, “by the time of Simon Peter it meant people who were poor, uneducated, lower class, and particularly people who were not careful in their observance of the Law.”<sup>20</sup>

In addition, Acts 4:13 describes Peter (and his disciple friend John) as unschooled and ordinary men. And yet, through this ordinary, unschooled man, we have a person who would become the right-hand man of Jesus.

After Jesus called Peter to be His disciple, the text says that immediately Peter followed Him. This was the sort of guy that Peter was. All in. Peter became the

outspoken leader of the disciples. He was a natural-born leader who was never afraid to speak his mind or to make a bold move. In fact, Peter was the only disciple who had the courage to jump out of the boat and walk on water toward Jesus, even with a wild wind buffeting their vessel. You could make the case that he was one of Jesus's best friends in the whole world.

In the midst of so many great actions, moments, and words, and with so much done for him and entrusted to him by Jesus, the big boulder, however, is most known for a series of three big blunders. Peter would fail Jesus miserably.

The story of Peter and Jesus is significant for you and me, because much like Peter, we've been given a new name and identity in Jesus. And yet despite all that He's done for us, we still fall woefully short of God's expectations. In *Forgiving Challenge*, we will discover that even though we continue to miss the mark, God will relentlessly pursue us, just as He pursued Peter. If Jesus can forgive someone like Peter for what he did, He can forgive you too!

So what sin did Peter commit? We'll find that out on Day 7.



# C H A L L E N G E

## WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

Do you know why your name was chosen?

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What does your given name mean?

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Do you live up to your name or fall short of your name?

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What name(s), or identity(ies), do you currently carry that are most important/significant for you? Explain.

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Is there a particular name(s) that you long to hear someone call you? Explain.

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