

PETER: FROM FISHERMAN TO FISHER OF MEN

Fearlessly Following Your Calling

by Donna Pyle

Leader's Guide

A Bible study on the life and
ministry of the Apostle Peter

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Introduction

One of the most effective, life-changing, ways of growing as disciples of Jesus Christ is to gather around the Word of God. There are many excellent Bible studies, so it is an honor that you have chosen this study, *Peter: From Fisherman to Fisher of Men, Fearlessly Following Your Calling*.

Although this is an eight-session study, you may choose to expand it to sixteen weeks, or even longer, if your group desires.

While Scripture is the centerpiece of our study time together, *Peter: From Fisherman to Fisher of Men* provides the structure. To absorb the maximum benefit, every participant should have their own Workbook in which to record answers and write personal notes and prayers. Each lesson is accompanied by a DVD teaching session which lends further insights into each week's study.

Besides Christ Himself, who better than the Apostle Peter (who was instrumental in establishing and greatly influencing the first century church) to teach us how to live as effective followers of Christ?

This study is not meant to simply provide a history of one man's life. Rather, I hope that this study dramatically impacts your spiritual walk as we learn how God used Peter's brokenness, failures, struggles, and triumphs.

This study covers Peter's calling and walking with Jesus in the Gospels, to his great accomplishments found in Acts, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter. My hope is to provide a clear, meaningful picture of Peter's life from his early years before knowing Christ through his death in Rome around AD 68.

PREPARATION

First, determine the dates, time, and place to hold this Bible study. If it will be held in a church, remember to secure permission and request that your gatherings be added to the church calendar. This will allow even more women to know about the study.

These studies tend to draw women of all ages, so strive to offer childcare options and consider handicap accessibility needs. Pre-registration is beneficial to ensure that your meeting place will be big enough and childcare is adequately covered. Also, consider buying the Workbooks in bulk to save postage for individuals, and perhaps a few extra copies for any who did not pre-register.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

Without a doubt, women are busy. Consequently, start promoting the study four to six weeks before the start date. You can use the short DVD trailer video to promote the study, as well as social media promotional materials at www.lwml.org/bible-studies. Be sure to utilize social media! Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are all helpful in getting the word out.

Check with local newspapers and radio stations since many offer free public service announcements. Include location, date/time, and study information, along with childcare, cost, and a contact number.

If you are hosting this Bible study in your home (well done!), a handwritten note, quick text, or telephone call personalizes the invitation. If your home will accommodate it, encourage them to bring a friend to the study who may find a church environment intimidating.

LEADING THE STUDY

This Bible study is designed to lead your group on a path toward a more intimate relationship with God. You can walk through this study in a variety of ways: individually, in a small group, and during family discussions. Consider encouraging your church's small group to undertake this study together or asking your pastor to offer it as a Sunday morning Bible class.

Each lesson provides valuable tools for exploring important aspects of your faith walk with other believers who also desire spiritual growth. During this process, you will get to know one another, your stories, struggles, and victories. Some will be similar, others will differ greatly from your own, but my hope is that they will provide you with a fresh perspective.

As you and your group exchange insights, pray for God to expand your understanding of Scripture and deepen the bonds of faith, friendship, and Christ-centered purpose among your group.

If you are walking through this study individually, take your time. Work through each lesson carefully, allowing time for God to move you along at your own pace. But, keep moving!

One person should be designated as the group facilitator. She does not need to have prior training in leading a Bible study or discussion group. The facilitator simply ensures that the discussion stays on track using this Leader's Guide. She can also speed up or slow down the group time by choosing to skip some questions or concentrate longer on others to fit your allotted study time, ensuring that no one gets left out of the faith-building, friendship-solidifying process.

Each group's dynamics and study pace will vary. You may complete an entire lesson each time you meet. Other groups may take their time to get as far in a lesson as time allows, then pick up where they left off during their next gathering. This study may take you eight weeks, sixteen weeks, or a year, but the most important focus is learning God's Word and growing in faith together.

The DVD portions of each lesson run between forty to sixty minutes, and each lesson in the Study Guide takes forty-five to sixty minutes to walk through (depending on discussion generated). Those are important numbers to know when you are organizing your group. You may want to meet for two hours to watch the DVD and then work through the corresponding lesson together. However, many groups do not meet for two hours.

This Leader's Guide contains detailed instructions on how to lead the eight-week, sixteen-week, and study-at-your-own-pace plans.

Keep in Mind

As a facilitator, be aware that such in-depth Bible study may be an entirely new experience for some people. At first they may feel a tad overwhelmed – I certainly was when I did my first one! I wanted to give the right answers, but over time realized that sometimes arriving at those together was a more rewarding process. It was comforting to discover that I was rarely the only new person to this kind of a class. Yes, I felt silly when I did not know the right answers or understand where the writer was coming from. However, that lessened over time as God worked in my heart through His Word and the encouragement of fellow class members.

Just remember to be sensitive about calling on someone to answer a question directly, because they may or may not feel prepared to do so.

Around midway through the study or sooner, some people might stop attending class for various reasons. Be sure you have a list of your class members' phone numbers and emails so that you can reach out to them and provide a prayerful nudge for them to finish strong. It also provides an opportunity to discover if something has happened in their lives that the class can pray them through or help in a tangible way. Then be sure to follow up with that person to let them know that the class specifically prayed for them. Such level of care and concern bonds the class more closely

together. My deepest desire is that no one is left behind. Being part of a vibrant, growing, spiritual community makes a big difference in our faith walks.

Tips for Facilitating the Class

Many leaders believe that the study questions flow easily by themselves. As women begin to share what the Lord has revealed to them through the Word during their study time, conversation is lively as they learn from each other. Sometimes, however, the conversation needs simple guidance.

You will likely face those study times when the conversation does not flow easily because only a few women have done their homework. This is where you, as the facilitator, need to be prepared. Look through the lesson beforehand and mark which ones are likely to provide the best conversation according to the interests of your study group. Be willing every now and then to offer one of your answers first, to break the ice and stimulate discussion.

There are two things powerful steps that a leader can take to best guide your study group: (1) ask God to stir in you a genuine love for each woman in the class; and (2) pray for each of them faithfully that God will grow and enlighten them through the study and for the tenacity to complete each lesson.

If you have led a class before, you know that sometimes one or two people may monopolize the conversation. Sometimes that person is the leader! Guide the conversation in order to take back the helm, keep the class on track, and draw each woman into the discussion.

Making eye contact with quieter class members encourages their involvement in the discussion. If she appears hesitant or unwilling to talk, steer the conversation easily to the next question to avoid awkwardness.

When the conversation is flowing well, sometimes the class can get sidetracked on a parallel issue. Gently bring it back to the study's topic by reading a Scripture passages provided in that lesson or re-asking the question. Those not involved in the sidetracked conversation will be grateful.

You may run into a situation where the opinions or answers shared do not line up with Scripture, or where the conversation has turned toward a gripe or gossip session. Offer a silent, quick prayer for wisdom, and gently steer the conversation back on track. Sometimes it is unnecessary to correct the issue during that class time, but keep your eyes open for opportunities to bring the light of Truth to those people – even if it happens in the following lesson. It is important to avoid arguments or make anyone look foolish. Speak gentle truth and let the Holy Spirit do the rest. Remember to ask your pastor to provide his wisdom and direction, as well.

Encouragement and Prayer

It is difficult for some people to simply get through each day, much less each lesson, so when they show up to class be sure to encourage them. Thank them for coming and for faithfully remaining in the group. Though it may not seem important, make sure that the study group's space is clean, ready for class, even providing extra Bibles, pens and pencils (if available). These little touches go a long way in removing any stress or barriers to women participating in the study. Snacks and coffee or tea are always welcome! If your class is large, consider offering a sign-up to bring snacks. Involving the class members helps encourage faithful attendance.

Prayer is a vital part of this study. Be sure to take time to allow women to share the challenges and victories they are experiencing through the study with the group. This goes a long way in encouraging transparency and participation.

Take Heart, Leader

I want to encourage you not to be disheartened if the class starts shrinking over time. That's a normal occurrence with in-depth Bible study. Many reasons exist for it that we cannot change, such as family situations and change of schedules. However, some reasons like interpersonal conflicts, or frustration with lack of structure, can be addressed by you. Be sure to follow up with the people who miss each class to find out if they are okay and how you can pray for them. Personal contact goes a long way in bringing back wayward members.

Finally, YOU are in my prayers, dear Leader. Thank you for stepping forward – keep doing so! Don't shrink back because God is using you in His strength as a tool to open His Word to others. And, dear friend, God will grow and bless you in extraordinary, unexpected ways – simply because you said, "Here am I, send me!"

USING THIS LEADER'S GUIDE

Even though many of you will not need this detailed Leader's Guide, it may be helpful to skim through the week's checklist to ensure you are hitting the important points.

The Eight-Week Study Plan is designed for an approximately one-hour class over eight weeks. Unfortunately, with time constraints you will miss out on uninterrupted, in-depth conversation together as a group. You'll have time to watch the video, discuss a few questions, and then dismiss the class to do the homework on their own.

The Sixteen-Week Study Plan is also designed for a one-hour class over sixteen weeks. This plan alternates one week of video and discussion with one week of working through the Study Guide lesson together. There may be some lessons when the discussion gets so rich that you will not be able to work through the whole lesson. Encourage them to finish the lesson at home and call you if they have any questions during their private study time.

The Study-At-Your-Own-Pace Plan is designed to walk through all of the DVD lessons and entire Study Guide lessons as a group. You will watch the DVD one week, then meet as many weeks afterward as necessary to walk through the companion lesson in the Study Guide. Some groups have taken the better part of a year using this method, but their resulting relationships with the Lord and with each other are deep and rich.

The general layout of each of these plans is included below. **NOTE: The questions for each plan are located at the back of the Leader's Guide in one place to save repetition. They are also included in the back of each workbook.**

WHAT THIS STUDY INCLUDES:

- DVD Teaching Videos – eight live teaching lessons from forty-five to sixty minutes each.
- One Workbook – You can order each member a workbook in bulk or ask them to obtain one on their own.
- Memory Verses – eight Bible verses that correlate to each lesson. Although this is optional, memorizing Scripture is powerful. Please consider asking the group to memorize at least two of the eight, if not all eight.

GETTING READY FOR CLASS

Preparation:

- Arrive early for a quiet moment to pray for each student and the upcoming lesson.
- Test video equipment to ensure all is working properly with the lesson's DVD.
- Set up the meeting room, brew coffee, and set out refreshments for a warm welcome.
- Ensure you have nametags handy so that women get to know one another.
- Greet class members as they arrive and ensure they have a workbook.

EIGHT Week Plan

- The first time you meet, provide the following overview so that class members are comfortable with what to expect each week. Each week the class will:
 - start with prayer, discuss a couple of questions, and watch video;
 - end with discussing a couple of questions and close with prayer; and
 - complete homework on their own.

SIXTEEN Week Plan

- The first time you meet, provide the following overview so that class members are comfortable with what to expect each week.
- *The first week:*
 - begin with prayer, discuss a couple of questions, and watch video;
 - end with discussing a couple of questions; and
 - receive the homework assignment from the workbook for discussion next week, and close with prayer.
- *The second week:*
 - begin with prayer and walk together through that week's lesson, getting as far as class time allows;
 - discuss questions and talk through insights; and
 - close with prayer.
- Alternate first and second week formats until the study is completed.

STUDY-AT-YOUR-OWN-PACE Plan

- There is no set number of weeks to this plan.
- Watch the DVD lesson and then take your time walking through the workbook.

EIGHT-WEEK PLAN

- Welcome the class warmly.
- Open with prayer, then ask the pre-DVD questions, allowing time for answers.
- Watch DVD.
- After watching the lesson, ask the post-DVD questions, allowing time for answers.
- End class at the appointed time, asking members to complete the current lesson in their workbook during the upcoming week. You will move to the next DVD lesson when you gather again.
- Ask if anyone has any prayer requests for the group. Close with prayer.

SIXTEEN-WEEK PLAN

(Each of the eight lessons will cover two meeting dates.)

MEETING 1 OF 2

- Welcome the class warmly.
- Open with prayer, then ask the pre-DVD questions, allowing time for answers.
- Watch DVD.
- After watching the lesson, ask the post-DVD questions, allowing time for answers.
- End class at the appointed time, asking members to complete the current lesson in their workbook during the upcoming week. You will discuss the homework together next week.
- Ask if anyone has any prayer requests for the group. Close with prayer.

MEETING 2 OF 2

- Welcome the class warmly.
- Open with prayer. If you have a large study group, consider breaking into smaller groups of ten or less so that each person will have a chance to participate in the discussions.
- Walk through the lesson in the workbook together, looking up Scripture passages and discussing the questions together in your group.
- At ten minutes before the end of class, bring the groups back together (if applicable). Ask if anyone has a prayer request that the group can pray for over the coming week.
- Next week, you will begin the DVD for the next lesson.
- Close in prayer.

STUDY-AT-YOUR-OWN-PACE PLAN

DVD Portion

- Welcome the class warmly.
- Open with prayer, then ask the pre-DVD questions, allowing time for answers.
- Watch DVD.
- After watching the lesson, ask the post-DVD questions, allowing time for answers.
- End class at the appointed time, asking members to keep the group in prayer and look over their notes from the DVD session. Next week, you will begin walking through the homework together as a group.
- Ask if anyone has any prayer requests for the group. Close with prayer.

Study Guide Portion

- Welcome the class warmly.
- Open with prayer. Remain as one large study group since you have opted to allow time for people to answer and discuss as the Lord leads. There is no rush to complete any lesson on a specific timeframe other than your own group's agreement.
- Walk through the lesson together, looking up Scripture passages and discussing the questions together. Get as far as class time allows within the lesson.
- End class at the appointed time, asking members to keep praying through what the Lord has taught them from the lesson during the upcoming week. You will pick up together exactly where you left off in the workbook next week. If you finished, you will move on to the next lesson.
- Ask if anyone has any prayer requests for the group. Close with prayer.

MY PRAYER FOR YOU

My prayer for you, dear Leader, is that God has used your time facilitating this study to grow and stretch your faith. As you studied His Word, I pray that He drew you closer to Him and created lasting bonds of friendship among your study group. I pray that God has strengthened your leadership skills and increased your love and compassion for those you have led. But most of all, I pray that our Lord continues to ignite a fire in your soul to follow Him more closely and know Him more intimately. Thank you for being brave!

INDIVIDUAL LESSON QUESTIONS

LESSON 1

PRE-DVD QUESTIONS

- As we begin this study of Peter's early years, we learn that Jesus called Peter away from his family business to follow Him. Peter was not a full-time church worker. What does this mean to you as you serve the Lord where He's placed you?
- Jesus chose Peter and the disciples from their ordinary careers, not from among Jewish scholars. How does that give you confidence to follow Jesus in your chosen profession, whether inside or outside the home?

POST-DVD QUESTIONS

- What did you find most surprising about Peter's early years?
- Peter was brought to Christ (literally) by his brother, Andrew. Would you feel comfortable doing so with a family member? Why or why not?

LESSON 2

PRE-DVD QUESTIONS

- When Jesus called Peter to follow Him, Peter was simply going about his ordinary life as a fisherman. Yet Jesus had bigger fish for Peter to catch through the power of the Holy Spirit: souls for God's kingdom. Jesus was about to interrupt Peter's plans for the rest of Peter's life. How open are you to receiving Jesus' interruptions in your life?
- What is the biggest change of course that God orchestrated in your life?

POST-DVD QUESTIONS

- Six key words uttered by Peter were instrumental in his openness to follow Jesus: "***But at Your word, I will ...***" Do you struggle with being open to follow Christ when you can't see the purpose of the journey or where it will end?
- What did you learn about the meaning of being a disciple and discipleship that you found new or impactful?

LESSON 3

PRE-DVD QUESTIONS

- God created a Sabbath day of rest and called it holy. Yet many of us work seven days a week to simply keep up with our chaotic pace of life. We have turned Sunday into a day of catching up, instead of resting and allowing the Lord to recharge our spiritual batteries and draw us closer to Him. Whether Sunday, or another day of the week, have you intentionally set aside one day to rest, relax, and build relationships with others and God? If so, what do you do? If not, why?

POST-DVD QUESTIONS

- What struck you most personally in today's lesson?
- Jesus loved all people and never turned away anyone who sought Him for help. As His followers, how can we learn to consistently reflect such compassion personally and corporately?

LESSON 4

PRE-DVD QUESTION

- This lesson will focus on the events of the last days that Peter walked with Jesus on earth. We walk through Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the Crucifixion, and Jesus' glorious Resurrection. As you experience that Holy Week in your faith walk today, what impacts you most deeply?

POST-DVD QUESTIONS

- After Peter followed Jesus and witnessed all that Jesus did, what strikes you most profoundly about Peter's denial of Jesus?
- Sometimes when the going gets tough, we fall back to what we know instead of stepping forward in faith. How does Jesus' restoration of Peter encourage you today?

LESSON 5

PRE-DVD QUESTIONS

- This lesson we move into the book of Acts to look at the first century church. Jesus' disciples and His followers faced persecution from both the religious leaders and secular government. What kind of persecution do we face as 21st century Christians?
- Do you believe it is easier to tell people about Jesus today than it was in the first century? Why or why not?

POST-DVD QUESTIONS

- We learned many things about Pentecost in this lesson. How has this affected your understanding of the importance and divine intervention that happened on that significant day?
- Peter preached his first Gospel sermon on Pentecost. Peter kept reminding those gathered that *they* had been the ones who killed Jesus. The Holy Spirit convicted them and thousands were baptized that day. Afterward, we see a beautiful portrait of the believers. How do you see such fellowship in our churches today?

LESSON 6

PRE-DVD QUESTION

- As this lesson continues walking through Acts, we will see how Peter boldly proclaimed Christ, even in the face of cruel treatment. When you talk to people about Jesus, do you tend to be bold or timid? Does it depend on the circumstances?

POST-DVD QUESTIONS

- We walked through Peter's visit to Cornelius' home. God had to dispel some long-held beliefs that Peter had about food and then orchestrated circumstances for Peter to visit a home he would have never visited before. What are you doing today in the name of Christ, and for His sake, that you did not do earlier in your faith walk? How has that matured your faith?
- The story of Cornelius is such a beautiful display of God's love for all people. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter proclaimed the Gospel to Cornelius and his whole family, and they were saved that very day. The Holy Spirit makes us bold! How have you experienced that boldness in your life?

LESSON 7

PRE-DVD QUESTIONS

- In this lesson, we move out of the book of Acts into the epistle of 1 Peter. One thing Peter teaches is that we are called to be holy. Without looking up a definition, what does being holy mean to you personally?
- Why do you believe God calls us to be holy?

POST-DVD QUESTIONS

- In 1 Peter 2, Peter calls believers *living stones*--rock hard hearts of sin softened by the grace of God. How have you noticed God molding your softened heart?
- Peter emphasizes the importance that we are to be God's witnesses about Christ. There are many ways to fulfill that calling. In what ways do you witness about Christ?

LESSON 8

PRE-DVD QUESTION

- We have reached our last lesson! Here, we will turn to the epistle of 2 Peter. Peter reminds Christians again that all who receive Jesus by faith stand on equal footing. What does that mean to you?

POST-DVD QUESTIONS

- Peter once again references the transfiguration of Christ that he was privileged to witness – one of only three human beings to ever see the glory of God emanating from Christ

Himself. How has Christ so impacted you with His light that you can't stop talking about it?

- As we have studied Peter's life from his calling to his death, how has it impacted you personally? How has it affected your relationship and walk with Christ?



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Mission: Assist each woman of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in affirming her relationship with the Triune God so that she is enabled to use her gifts in ministry to the people of the world.

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