

Yesterday. Today. Forever.

Module: Living Out Your Faith: The Life of Peter

Lesson 1: The Call

Objectives:

- Students will understand that God calls the ordinary to be extraordinary.
- Students will be able to see themselves in Peter's place.
- Students will start to understand God's call in their lives.

Materials Needed

- 1 Bible per student
- Random objects (tables, chairs, etc) to make an obstacle course
- 1 copy of Appendix A per student or projected onto a screen
- Flipchart and markers
- 1 copy of Appendix B divided into group questions (**Leader's note:** If your group is larger than 12, you may have multiple groups answering the same questions.)
- Paper and pen/pencil per student

Minds On

Set up an obstacle course using tables, chairs, sports equipment, the layout of your meeting place etc. Just make use of whatever you have available. Pass out blind folds to a few students. Those students need to work their way through the obstacle course blindfolded. Pair up a blindfolded student with one who doesn't have a blindfold and have that person direct them through the course using only their voice. No physical contact is allowed. After one group makes it through, switch blindfolds and try again. If the course is too easy try it backwards, or assign a few students or leaders the role of "deceivers" their job is to make sure the people don't make it through (also no touching).

Leader's note: You may need to be prepared to deal with people who have mobility issues. Perhaps you could make a separate course that is wheel chair accessible, or make them one of the deceivers instead of one of the blindfolded.

Action

Prompt: Often it feels like we are going through life blindfolded. God tells us the way he wants us to go, but sometimes we don't listen, or we have a hard time hearing him over the other voices around us. The reality is that God has equipped and called each of us to serve him and he has a direction for our lives. God often calls people just like us to do great things for His Kingdom.

Ask students to list any information they know about Peter (the Apostle) and write them down on the flipchart (e.g. an apostle, walked on water, denied Jesus 3 times).

Leader's note: If your students have no idea who Peter is, you can introduce him to your group (using a "CV" e.g. <http://christianity.about.com/od/newtestamentpeople/a/JZ-Peter-The-Apostle.htm>).

Ask: Knowing all this stuff about Peter makes it sound like he was a pretty important guy. Does anyone know what he did before he was a disciple? (answer: fisherman. If this fact was also given, you may want to prompt: “So, hold on, wasn't he a fisherman? How did he become so important?”)

Have a student read Matthew 4:18-22.

Ask: Would you have found Peter’s reaction odd? If you were him, would you have done the same thing?

Prompt: What is the longest thing you've ever memorized? A song? A part in a play? A chapter of a book? How about the Old Testament? Imagine that you had to memorize the entire Old Testament in order to graduate from elementary school.

Distribute Appendix A or project it on a screen for students to read.

Leader’s note: The purpose of this is to help students gain a deeper understanding of why Peter responded as he did. As a Rabbi, there was a lot of significance behind Jesus’ invitation. Peter was being asked to be a part of something that was WAY beyond his current situation.

Have students think of their favourite celebrity (e.g. musician, actor, writer, artist, athlete, etc.)

Prompt: If that person came up to you while you were at work and asked you to follow them around the country, would you?

(Chances are, they would be more willing to follow this person than a stranger.)

Ask: Why is it important that Jesus called a regular guy like Peter? (answer: While rabbis would have typically chosen the best of the best to be his disciples, Jesus chose those society considered lesser to be his disciples.)

Divide students into groups of 3-4. Assign each group one of the group questions (Appendix B). Each group will have one spokesperson to share their answers with the larger group. You may want to assign roles for the group (e.g. one passage reader, one question reader, one recorder, one spokesperson).

Consolidate/Debrief

Prompt: Jesus calls the ordinary and ordains them to be extraordinary. What does this mean for your past? What does it mean for right now? How is he calling you today? What do you think he might be calling you to do? What does it mean in terms of God's story? In terms of Eternity?

Give each student a paper and pen/pencil. Ask students to write down their thoughts to those questions. They will keep the paper to themselves if they wish.

Appendix A

The 3 Levels of School for Kids who Lived at the Time of Jesus

Level 1: The Torah

By Age 6 or 7 kids would have the first 5 books of the bible memorized!

Level 2: The whole book

By age 10 they would have the entire Old Testament Memorized

Level 3: The Understanding

By Age 14 they would know how to Interpret and Understand the scriptures

Level 4: The Rabbi

After Level 3 they would seek out a Rabbi and ask to be his disciple. If he wanted them he would say "Follow Me"

Most People flunked out before level 3. If you flunked out you would go learn the family business. This made Rabbis sort of like rock stars or celebrities.

Jesus was a Rabbi.

Appendix B

Group 1

Philippians 1:3-6

When are we ready to serve God?

Often we don't feel ready, what does this verse promise God is doing in us?

What can we do to serve God today? Individually and as a group?

Group 2

Romans 12:5-8

What is this verse talking about?

What are we supposed to do with our gifts?

How can we use our gifts to serve God? How can we use them to serve each other?

Group 3

1 Peter 2:9

What does it mean to be a Royal Priesthood?

(Think about what it means to be a priest. A priest is a worshipper of God, a servant of God, and a minister to their community)

How can we declare the praises of God?

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Lesson 2: Stepping Out of the Boat

Objectives:

- Students will identify how feelings of doubt and unworthiness can interfere with God's work in our lives.
- Students will learn the value of encouragement.
- Students will become aware that they have extreme worth in God's eyes.

Materials Needed

- 1 Bible per student
- 1 self-adhesive name tag per student
- 1 pen per student
- optional: small prizes for “Minds On”

Minds On

Play two truths and a lie. Have each student come up with two truths and one lie about themselves to tell to each other. They should tell them all as if they were all true and it is up to the group to determine which one is a lie (For instance: I (author Jeff Baker) usually say something like “I was almost eaten by a lion at age 2, I have two spleens, and my middle name is Matthew” The first two sound ridiculous but are true, my middle name is Michael). You may choose to award a small prize to those who’s lie fooled everyone. (In bigger groups you may have to break up into smaller groups to play this game).

Action

Present the following questions (either verbally or projected onto a screen). Have students think of their answer. Then students will pair up with another person and share their answers. Each person should be prepared to share their partner’s answer to the larger group.

What's the coolest thing you've ever done?

What’s the coolest thing you've ever tried to do (or: what WOULD have been the coolest thing you've ever done IF you had succeeded?)

Why do you think you did or didn't succeed?

Prompt: Some of us have done some pretty cool things. In two truths and a lie we got to hear some of them. But what happens when we try something cool and then doubt ourselves?

Choose between 3 to 16 people and assign them a role (in order of priority: narrator, actor for Jesus, actor for Peter, voice of Jesus, voice of Peter, actors for the other 10 disciples) to re-enact Matthew 14:22-33. The actors will perform the actions of the narrator (and voices if applicable).

After the re-enactment, ask (in rapid succession):

What happened in this story?

What are the significant or important parts?

Why does Peter doubt?

Who does Peter doubt?

Do you think he's doubting Jesus or himself more? Why?

Put yourself in Peter's shoes, how would you feel at different moments during the experience?

When you first see Jesus?

When you think about stepping out?

When you first touch the water?

When you put your weight on it and start walking?

When you start sinking?

When Jesus pulls you back up?

What do you think YOU can learn from this story?

What could WE learn as a group or church?

Prompt: In the verse directly before this story Jesus feeds 5000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish and they had food left over; Jesus is currently walking on the water, and Peter calls out to Jesus to save him. In light of this, who do you think Peter is actually doubting? Why? (answer: He's doubting himself because he doesn't believe he can be like Jesus his rabbi.)

Prompt: Have you ever felt like you were unworthy? Either to be near God or be like God? Unworthy of friendship? Unworthy of your parents love? (Give students a moment to think about those questions.) We are going to do an exercise to counteract some of the feelings of unworthiness the world has put on us and to help us see that we have value to God and to other people.

Hand out name tags to the students and ask them to write a label for themselves about something they feel about themselves or something they doubt about themselves.

Leader's note: Due to the potentially sensitive nature of this exercise, students do not have to reveal their answer to anyone else. This is not a time to make jokes about themselves or each other, and the insecurities or things that are written down are not to be used against each other in any way.

Once they have their labels written, invite them to come up to the front and stick them to a wall. It is not important for people to see who has written what, but rather for the students to see the doubts and fears that are present within the group. Invite students to read the posted answers silently for one minute.

Afterwards, ask students to brainstorm ways of counteracting each written answer (e.g. with Bible passages or practical strategies they may have done themselves). When a doubt has been addressed, rip down and throw away. Continue till all the doubts have been addressed.

Leader's note: If you think your group is not emotionally ready for this level of vulnerability, or that it is not emotionally safe for them to share on this level, simply form a circle and ask each person to say or write down one encouragement to the person on their right-hand side.

Consolidate and Debrief

Ask: When Peter starts sinking what does Jesus say to him?

Prompt: Peter doubts himself and starts sinking, Jesus grabs him and says “Why did you doubt?” Jesus is saying, “I made you and trained you to be like me! You can do this! Why do you doubt?”

Ask students to write down the one suggested strategy to counteract the doubt they posted earlier. Encourage them to keep that either as a pic on their phone or written on a paper to keep in their wallet.

Prompt: Whatever you doubt, whether it's yourself or God, the bible says that we can ask God for things like faith and wisdom and confidence. Know that your value and your worth aren't determined by the things that you can or can't do, it's determined by what Jesus did for you! Jesus died and rose again to free you from the guilt of sin and he has chosen you, gifted you, and ordained you. Even if you don't have confidence in yourself or in God, Jesus has confidence in you.

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Lesson 3: The Denial

Objectives:

- Students will identify the problem of sin and the importance of acknowledging Christ.
- Students will understand that sin has no hold over us because of what Christ did.

Materials Needed

- 1 Bible for passage read out loud (bookmark those passages)
- 1 copy of Appendix A (separating the two passages) per 2 students
- 1 pen per student

Minds On

This is a little game called “Back of the line!”

Have students line up in a semi-circle. Assign each person a number (starting at 1 to however many people you have). The person who is number one calls out their own number and then the number of any other person in the group (e.g. “1 and 5”). When the person’s number is called, they must also call out their number and someone else but not the preceding number (e.g. “5 and 2”). This would continue (e.g. “2 and 10”). A person is sent to the back of the line and loses their number if:

- the person calls back the preceding number (e.g. 5)
- a person speaks out of turn (i.e. speaks when their number isn’t called)
- their number is called and the person hesitates

When a person loses their number, everyone else who was behind them moves up one number (e.g. if they were a 10, they are now a 9). The person sent back has the last number. When someone goes to the back of the line the whole group shouts “GO TO THE BACK OF THE LINE!” (Leader’s note: If you have a larger youth group you may want to be brave and attempt one big game, otherwise you might want to break up into smaller groups. This game works best with groups of 10-15, but is workable with both larger and smaller groups.) The goal of the game is to work your way up through the ranks and finish the game in the number 1 spot!

Action

Prompt: In the game we just played we all had a number, and we all knew our number, and we all knew the goal of the game was to be number one! But in the craziness and confusion of the game often we said the wrong number, or said numbers we knew we shouldn't say. Sometimes in life, we end up doing or saying the wrong thing because of our circumstances or the confusion that is going on around us. We have been following the story of Peter, and he did this sort of thing quite a bit. The clearest example is what

happened after Jesus was arrested. Things were pretty confusing, and in the midst of the craziness Peter said some things he probably knew he shouldn't say.

Think / pair / share: Present the following questions to the group (you can write them down if appropriate): If you've been betrayed by someone you trusted, how did you feel? After a minute of thought, each student partners with someone else to share their answer. Each person should be prepared to share their partner's answer with the larger group.

Have a student read Luke 22:28-34 out loud for the group (remember to tell your students that Simon is Peter's real name. Peter is a nickname.)

Ask: What is Jesus telling his disciples?

What does he say to Peter?

What does Peter say back to him?

Prompt: So it's pretty clear that Peter and Jesus are really good friends if Peter is willing to die or go to prison for Jesus, right?

Have a second student read Luke 22:54-62. Ask students to rate how big of a mess up Peter did by rating from 1-10 (1 = no big deal, 10 = a very big mess), indicating their answer with their hands.

Ask: How do you think Peter felt? How would you feel in this situation? Do you think you would have done anything different in this situation? (Leader's note: Allow some students to answer on their own time. It's ok if there's a short period of silence to allow them to process. You may have a leader ready to share their answer after 1-2 minutes of silence.)

Prompt: Jesus knew that Peter would deny him. Do you think it changed the way Jesus felt about Peter? (Invite answers) We mess up pretty often, and Jesus knows we're going to do it before hand. Do you think it changes the way that Jesus feels about us? (Invite answers)

Have students regroup with their partner. Distribute a copy of Appendix A to each pair.

Prompt: We are going to sin at some point in our lives, probably soon. But Jesus died to rid us from the guilt of sin. The Bible tells us to encourage one another as long as it is called today, so each person is going to read the scripture on their card to their partner. Read it with authority as one chosen, gifted, and ordained by Christ! Read it with love, compassion, and encouragement.

After they have done this, invite them to write something they have been struggling with, feel guilty about, or something they feel has been separating them from God on the back of their card. Afterwards, if they choose, invite them to pray for forgiveness of sins. (Leader's note: Ensure you have leaders available in case some students are not sure how to do so or could like to talk to someone about it.) After, they can crumple up the cards and throw them in the garbage. (Leader's note: Make sure to empty the garbage following the time together.)

Consolidate and Debrief

Prompt: Peter was one of Jesus' best friends, and he swore he was willing to go to jail or even die for Jesus if necessary. But when Jesus was arrested Peter got scared and denied him. A lot of times we get scared of what people might say or think, or even of what we think of ourselves. Or maybe we feel we've messed up in other ways. Luckily we serve a God of grace and forgiveness. No matter how many times we mess up he is always right there with us waiting for us to turn back to him. Look for opportunities to stand for Jesus this week...and don't let your fears or doubts get in the way!

Leader's note: You may have students in your group who do not consider themselves Christians or who have yet to make that commitment. Encourage them by saying this is a good way to live regardless of belief. This could also be a good starting point to begin a

discussion with them about faith and salvation if you haven't been having those conversations already.

Appendix A

Ephesians 2:8-10

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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Lesson 4: Swimming Back to Shore

Objectives:

- Students will gain a better understanding of the breadth of God's grace.
- Students will understand that God doesn't want us to avoid him when we sin, but wants us to come back right away.
- Students will develop a more complete idea of how to respond to God's call.
- Students will see the importance of fellowship.

Materials Needed

- 1 Bible per student (or at least per 4 students)
- 2 coats
- optional: 5-6 small prizes
- 1 copy of Appendix A (divided into 2) per 4 students

Minds On

Prompt: We're going to play "Race to the Shore". In a moment, I will divide you into two teams. Each team will select a "Peter". Everyone else on the team will form two lines facing each other. They will cross their arms and hold hands with the person across from them. "Peter" will be at the start of the line sitting. When the race begins, "Peter" will put on their assigned coat and then lie backwards on the crossed arms. "Peter" will do "back strokes" along the people's arms (you can help him down the line but you cannot let go of your partner's hand). The first "Peter" to reach the end of the line wins.

Ask students to collectively repeat your instructions.

Divide the group into two even teams. Allow each team to select their "Peter". Set up the teams for the race.

Leader's note: A few things to consider:

- It is preferred that "Peter" be a male.
- It is recommended to have adult leaders be "spotters" for each Peter.
- If your group is not big enough to have two long lines of people you can have the people at the beginning of the line run to the end of the line after Peter has swam past them to extend the line.
- If your group is too small to accomplish this you can simply have piggy back races. In that case you may want to add obstacles or designate people as sharks who send Peter back to the beginning.

Action

Ask: Based on the previous weeks, what's been going on in Peter's life so far?

Who is he? What's he done? What makes him so special?

(You will be looking for answers like: "He was a fisherman. He was a disciple.

He's walked on water. He's performed Miracles. He denied Jesus 3 times. He was just ordinary and God wanted him to be extraordinary.)

optional: You may want to award a small prize for each correct answer.

Prompt: Some of you may be familiar with the story that continues after the passage we read last week. Ultimately, Jesus was condemned by the religious leaders and had the Roman soldiers crucify (i.e. execute) him on a cross. However, the Bible tells us that on the third day, God raised him from the dead, demonstrating that Jesus has the ultimate power, even power over death. After Jesus was resurrected, he visited many people, including his own disciples. The passage we're looking at today is one of those encounter.

Ask: When Jesus first appeared to Peter, what do you think was going through Peter's head?

Divide all the students into four groups. (**Leader's note:** If each group has more than four people, you can further divide them into six or more groups.) Assign each group a number from 1-4. Distribute the "John 21:1-9" part of Appendix A to the odd-numbered groups, "John 21:15-19" to the even-numbered groups. Give them five minutes to complete the questions. Each person must be ready to report their group's answers.

Afterwards, students must gather in groups where each number is represented (i.e. each group must have at least 1, 2, 3, 4 but no more than 7 people). Have each person share their previous group's answers. In addition, have each group discuss the following two questions: "What do you think this tells us about our relationship with God? What does this tell us about how we are supposed to approach God after we mess up?" Have each group select one spokesperson reporting their group's answer to the larger group.

Prompt: Often we assume that when we mess up God doesn't want anything to do with us. But he isn't avoiding us, he's waiting on the beach cooking us breakfast, wanting us to continue partnering with him in his purpose to restore creation to his original intent!

Ask students to identify an area of their life that they think they could turn into ministry (it might help if the leaders go first). This could be an area they are gifted in (arts, sports, music, academics, etc.), a cause they are passionate about, or a call they feel God has placed in their lives. Then encourage students to share what they might be; students can pass if they wish. After one student shares, suggest another person in the group either pray for them in that ministry and/or encourage them in what they shared (ie: “You are so loving and compassionate, I know if you follow through on this that God will do great things, just trust in him”). Afterwards, another person can share if they wish.

Leader’s note: Be attentive and provide as much as time as you feel appropriate. When ready, re-gather the large group together.

Consolidate and Debrief

Prompt: We have focused on Peter over the past few lessons because he is a great example of your average person. He wasn't anything special when he was called, he doubted God and himself, but he was chosen to do extraordinary things. That doesn't mean he was always right or did things perfectly, he messed up just the same as we do, but God had amazing plans for his life. Jesus even told him that he was the rock he wanted to build his church on.

Close in prayer, asking God to help your students realize that they are called to extraordinary things and that they have incredible value in the eyes of God, and that he has invited each of them to be a part of HIS story!

Appendix A

Read John 21:1-9

Ask: What's happening in this verse?

What's going through Peter's mind when he goes out to fish?

Why do you think he puts his coat on before jumping in the water?

(It could be because he expected to be sent out right away)

Read John 21:15-19

Ask: What do you think of the conversation Peter and Jesus have in this passage?

What about it stands out to you?

Why do you think Jesus asks Peter if he loves him three times?

(it could tie back to the denial, or it could be for emphasis).

Why does Jesus tell him to feed his lambs each time?

Living The Story

What does it mean to be a Christian? What does it mean to be a follower of God? Too often we treat it like some kind of certification: read this passage, say this creed, get baptized, take communion and *poof!* you're a Christian! And while doing those things is very important, it is far from what makes someone a Christian. Christianity is about having a relationship with the living God, and living in a way that demonstrates your faith in him. So, how do we do that? What does that look like?

This unit is designed to illustrate Peter as the archetype of the average Christian. He was an ordinary person who God used to do extraordinary things. God took him as he was, all his strengths and weaknesses, and weaved him into His story: yesterday, today, and forever. Students should come out of this unit being able to identify with Peter at various points of his recorded story, as well as with a better understanding of the concepts of call, trust, community, encouragement, grace, and mission. Because this is a unit on living out your faith, it might be a good idea to think up a community project you can do along with the study (e.g. 30 hour famine or a food drive). Whatever it is, get the church congregation involved as sponsors or support and make sure it is something the youth are passionate about.

Lesson 1, **The Call**, is meant to show students that regardless of their past, their skills, or who they think they are, God has a call for their lives. God wants all of us to actively follow him and serve him in some type of ministry.

Lesson 2, **Stepping Out of the Boat**, deals with the amount of courage it takes to follow God, and what a powerful enemy doubt can be, whether we are doubting God or ourselves.

In lesson 3 we talk about something we've all done at one point, **The Denial**. Peter sinned when he denied Christ...we all sin every day. But the point of the cross is that He has

overcome sin for us and it has no hold on us. That truth is incredibly freeing when it is firmly grasped.

In Lesson 4, **Swimming Back to Shore**, we see that Jesus doesn't abandon us when we've sinned against him. He waits for us with arms open. And more than that, he is ready to send us out to be his servants in the world. This lesson has a large emphasis on fellowship and realizing our place in God's ministry.