



GROW. PRAY. STUDY.

The Church of the Resurrection – Weekly Guide

September 17, 2017 “From Cowardice to Courage”

Scripture: John 21:4-18, selected verses

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples didn't realize it was Jesus. Jesus called to them, “Children, have you caught anything to eat?” They answered him, “No.” He said, “Cast your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” So they did, and there were so many fish that they couldn't haul in the net. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It's the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he wrapped his coat around himself (for he was naked) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they weren't far from shore, only about one hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire there, with fish on it, and some bread... Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” When they finished eating, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” Simon replied, “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” Jesus asked a second time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Simon replied, “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Take care of my sheep.” He asked a third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was sad that Jesus asked him a third time, “Do you love me?” He replied, “Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

- Questions marked with this symbol are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

Puzzling over an empty tomb

MONDAY 9.18.17 Luke 24:1-12

The gospels forthrightly reported that none of the disciples, including Peter, were waiting eagerly for Jesus to rise from the dead. Even when “the women” reported that two men in gleaming clothing had asked, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” their report “struck the apostles as nonsense.” Peter saw the empty tomb, but only wondered what had happened.

- Author Phillip Yancey said the resurrection accounts point toward the gospels' honesty: “Accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb sound breathless and fragmentary....the early reports seem wispy, mysterious, confused. Surely conspirators could have done a neater job of depicting what they would later claim to be the hinge event of history.” * What makes the essential honesty of the gospel narratives of Jesus' resurrection so vital to your faith (cf. [1 Corinthians 15:14-19](#))?
- When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the man had “his feet bound and his hands tied, and his face covered with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Untie him’” (John 11:44). When Peter peered into Jesus' empty tomb, “he saw only the linen cloth.” Scholar Craig Keener observed that the presence of the linen grave cloth “could be a sign...that his body had risen straight out of the cloth and wrappings.” ** No one had to untie the risen Jesus. Jesus' resurrection changed everything for Peter. What effect has it had on you?

Prayer: Loving Lord, when Peter first found the tomb empty, what had happened there went stunningly beyond his imagination. Open my heart and mind to trust in the unimaginably good news of the empty tomb. Amen.

* Phillip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995, p. 212.)

** Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993, comment on John 20:6-7.)

An “engraved invitation” from Jesus

TUESDAY 9.19.17 Mark 16:1-7

It seems likely that as Jesus' enemies condemned and crucified him, Peter thought his denial of Jesus would haunt him the rest of his life. Thankfully, unlike Judas (cf. [Matthew 27:3-5](#)), he did not succumb irreversibly to despair. But Mark's story (and [John 21:3](#), which we'll read tomorrow) do strongly suggest that Peter wasn't sure that he would ever be welcome as one of Jesus' disciples after his triple denial of his master.

- In Mark 16:7, the messenger told Mary Magdalene and the other women, “Go, tell his disciples, especially Peter, that he is going ahead of you into Galilee.” Peter three times had made a point of publicly denying that he even knew Jesus. Yet Jesus made sure his name was specifically included in the invitation to his disciples. What does this tell you about Jesus' grace toward Peter? Can you trust Jesus to treat you the same way when you fail?
- The significance of another detail in this story may escape us. “The disk-shaped stone used to seal a tomb's entrance was large and heavy, normally requiring several men to move it in the groove.” * The women weren't sure how they'd move it—yet when they reached the tomb, it was open, with the stone moved out of the way. In what ways does that hint at the supernatural power behind Jesus' resurrection?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, lest Peter let shame exclude him from your company, you invited him by name.

Thank you for offering the same kind of personal, “nothing is too bad to forgive” grace to me. Amen.

* HarperCollins Christian Publishing. *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, eBook: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture* (Kindle Locations 227529-227530). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

“Peter jumped in the water”

WEDNESDAY 9.20.17 John 21:1-7

John 21 told about Peter and six other disciples back at the Sea of Galilee. (John did not explain why they chose to go fishing, but Bible students have ventured a variety of guesses.) Despite their past fishing experience, they were not successful on their own. (Perhaps they were rusty after following Jesus for three years.) Yet when Jesus guided them, they hauled in a huge catch.

- In his gospel's prologue, John wrote, “The true light that shines on all people was coming into the world.... but the world didn't recognize the light” (John 1:9-10). In verse 4 of chapter 21, he wrote, “Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples didn't realize it was Jesus.” When Peter did recognize his Lord, he couldn't wait for the boat to reach shore, but jumped into the water. What helps you recognize Jesus when his presence touches your life? Are you as eager to draw near to Jesus as Peter was?
- This story (like the one in [Luke 5:1-10](#)) told of Jesus showing experienced fishermen like Peter where to find a startlingly large catch. When have you found yourself ineffective (in your personal life or an area of ministry) because you weren't open to Jesus' wisdom? When has “practicing the presence of Jesus” made your efforts clearly more effective?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you promised to be with me “every day until the end of this present age” (Matthew 28:20). Help me keep my heart open, attuned to your comforting, guiding presence. Amen.

153 fish, 7 disciples, one Lord

THURSDAY 9.21.17 John 21:8-14

John, a master of evocative images, must have in part meant this scene of Jesus building a fire to remind readers that Peter’s faith “crashed” around a fire in Caiaphas’ court (cf. [John 18:15-18, 25-27](#)). It also showed that Jesus was no ghost—he was truly, physically alive. He built a fire and cooked breakfast! (See also [Luke 24:36-43](#).)

- The fish and bread were ready, yet Jesus said, “Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught.” Why doesn’t Jesus just do everything for us, changing us into the people he wants us to be, but instead ask us to join our effort with his spiritual power? In what ways does his call for you to work with him to grow spiritually offer the best path to character development, so that you are still “you,” but a new you?
- John 6:11 said, “Jesus took the bread. When he had given thanks, he distributed it to those who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish.” In John 21 we read, “Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish.” Imagine the memories this action must have triggered for Peter and the others. Think back on your own walk with Jesus. What remembered high points strengthen you for today’s journey?

Prayer: Loving Lord, long before you prepared this meal, the psalmist wrote, “You set a table for me” (Psalm 23:5). As I eat my meals today, remind me of the deeper ways you feed my soul as well as my body. Amen.

The triple question: “Do you love me?”

FRIDAY 9.22.17 John 21:15-19

Three times Peter denied knowing Jesus. His heart must have been aching, eager to reconnect. Jesus, a master psychologist, didn’t want that failure to haunt Peter forever. Three times, he allowed Peter to affirm his love, deeper and more solid because Jesus forgave him after he failed. Then Jesus told him that he would yet have the chance to live out his pledge in John 13:37 (“I’ll give up my life for you”). With the cost of following clearly in view, Jesus repeated the same simple, sweeping call: “Follow me.”

- Scholar N. T. Wright said, “The three questions correspond to Peter’s three denials. Three for completeness, yes, but three also for reminder. The smell of the charcoal fire lingers. Peter’s night of agony—and Jesus’ own night of agony—returns. But because of the latter, the former can be dealt with.” * What failures might haunt your relationship with Jesus? Imagine yourself on that beach with him, by that fire. Hear Jesus ask you, “_____, do you love me?” Answer, three times, and hear Jesus deal with any barriers that separate you.
- There have been (and are today) brave martyrs, but most Christ-followers through the ages have not had to die for their faith. Jesus calls us all to “die” to ways of understanding life and faith that do not fit with his life and example. How eager or reluctant are you to follow Jesus into changed thoughts and habits that show God’s glory to those around you? How can you and God make the most of each day of the rest of your life?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, “Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee.” I recite John Wesley’s words at church. Please help me to mean them. Amen.

Peter the denier, restored, preached boldly (and effectively)

SATURDAY 9.23.17 Acts 2:1-24, 37-41

Did Jesus' restoration of Peter make a difference? Oh, yes! Pentecost was the Hebrew harvest festival, and came 50 days after Passover. On this day of Pentecost, just 50 days after the Passover when Jesus died on the cross, God sent the Holy Spirit in a powerful way. Some skeptics claimed the Spirit-filled Christians must have started drinking early. Peter, who just 50 days earlier had feared to call Jesus his Lord even to a servant girl, now forcefully told them this wasn't inebriation. It was God pouring out the Spirit, as promised in [Joel 2:28](#). The Spirit used Peter's bold preaching of Jesus as Savior to touch so many hearts that it changed the disciples from a tiny, almost irrelevant group to a movement of thousands.

- Peter quoted some scary-sounding images from Joel: "wonders in the heavens," "blood and fire and smoke." He ended the quotation at the key point: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How can that message make earth's problems less scary to you? Peter said, "This Jesus, God raised up. We are all witnesses to that fact" (verse 32). The Jerusalem authorities and Roman rulers hated that message. They might have easily proved Peter and the early Christians wrong by just producing Jesus' dead body. But Peter knew they couldn't do that, because it wasn't there. How does "this Jesus, God raised up" provide hope to your outlook on life and death?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, through the Spirit's power, the same Peter who denied even knowing you at Passover boldly preached your victory 50 days later at Pentecost. Send your power into my life, stirring me to live boldly for you. Amen.

Family Activity: Jesus asked Peter to share God's love with others. How does your family work together to share God's love with others? Select a way to serve others together. Ask an older child or youth to research some volunteer opportunities in your area. He or she could explore the church website ([cor.org](#)) for mission ministries in which your family can participate. Consider brainstorming about some less-structured ways you can serve others with God's love such as helping others in your neighbor or at school. At a family gathering, ask the child or youth to present these opportunities to the rest of the family. Pray and ask God's guidance as you discuss the possibilities. Choose one or two ways your family can share God's love with others.

Prayer Requests – [cor.org/prayer](#)

Prayers for Peace & Comfort for:

- Mary Maughn and family on the death of her sister, Rita Knipstein, 9/12
- Suzanne Capps and family on the death of her husband Norman Capps, 9/10
- Steve and Tom Langhofer and families on the death of their mother Phyllis Langhofer, 9/9
- Wendell Lady and family on the death of his sister Phyllis Langhofer, 9/9
- Dan and Emma Entwistle and family on the death of their son Hunter Entwistle, 9/8
- Denise Mersmann and family on the death of her aunt Darlene Powell, 9/6
- Family and friends of Carol Morel on her death, 9/6
- Angela Green and Family on the death of her uncle Melvin F. Sayers, 9/5