

Peter wasn't perfect

Lesson 04 of the series, "Imperfect ≠ Unusable"

1. Peter was just a fisherman when Jesus called him.

One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish." "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm too much of a sinner to be around you." For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people! "And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus." Luke 5:1-11 (NLT)

Life Application: God loves to use ordinary people to carry out his work.

"Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful."

1 Corinthians 1:26-27 (NLT)

Life Application: God loves to use redeemed sinners to carry out his work.

But the Pharisees and their teachers of religious law complained bitterly to Jesus' disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with such scum?" Jesus answered them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent."

Luke 5:30-32 (NLT)

Life Application: God will use me if I am willing to follow wherever He leads.

"If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it."

Luke 9:23-24 (NLT)

2. At a critical time in his ministry Peter failed.

- a. Peter thought he was strong enough to bravely follow Jesus no matter what the cost.

Jesus told them, "Tonight all of you will desert me. For the Scriptures say, 'God will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have been raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there." Peter declared, "Even if everyone else deserts you, I will never desert you." Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, Peter—this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you even know me." "No!" Peter insisted. "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!" And all the other disciples vowed the same. Matthew 26:31-35 (NLT)

- b. Under pressure Peter gave in to fear and denied Jesus.

Meanwhile, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl came over and said to him, "You were one of those with Jesus the Galilean." But Peter denied it in front of everyone. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said. Later, out by the gate, another servant girl noticed him and said to those standing around, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." Again Peter denied it, this time with an oath. "I don't even know the man," he said. A little later some of the other bystanders came over to Peter and said, "You must be one of them; we can tell by your Galilean accent." Peter swore, "A curse on me if I'm lying—I don't know the man!" And immediately the rooster crowed. Suddenly, Jesus' words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you even know me." And he went away, weeping bitterly. Matthew 26:69-75 (NLT)

Life Application: We must NEVER attempt to follow Jesus in our own strength.

"Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matthew 26:41 (NASB77)

3. Jesus restored Peter and used him mightily.

Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing." "We'll come, too," they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night. At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach... He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?" "No," they replied. Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it. Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore... When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them... After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you." "Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him. Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you." "Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said. A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep." John 21:3-17 (NLT)

Note: Peter became a bold champion for Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere..." Acts 1:8 (NLT)

"Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them... 'There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.' The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus." Acts 4:9-13 (NLT)

Life Application: We can become bold champions for Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

"You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves." 2 Corinthians 4:5-7 (NLT)

"For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him." Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions.

1. Describe a time in your life when you felt unworthy, unqualified, or simply in over your head. What did you do?
2. Read Luke 5:1-11. How would you have responded if you had been in the boat with Jesus? Can you identify with Peter's reaction? Why? Why not?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 & 2 Corinthians 4:5-7. Why does God like to use imperfect people?
4. Compare and contrast Peter in the following passages:
 - Matthew 26:69-75
 - Acts 4:1-13

How did Peter respond to adversity in these situations? What had changed?

5. Discuss the following statement, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." (see Matthew 26:41) What do you think this means?
6. Discuss the following quotations:

"When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow Him, or it may be a death like Martin Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call." Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation." Peter in 1 Peter 5:10