

January 25, 2026

“Call and Growth”
Lesson 4

Matt. 4:18-20, Matt. 16:16-18
John 21:15-18,
2 Pet. 3:14-15, 18

Intro

Today’s lesson is the last of Unit 2 dealing with Grace and Reconciliation. It will look at four passages that deal with Simon Peter, one of the more well-known disciples. This disciple is referred to by three different names: Simon (a form of Simeon), Peter (his most common name, coming from the Greek for rock or stone), and Cephas (the Aramaic word for stone). Peter’s discipleship to Jesus had many ups and downs, but God used him to ensure the growth and spread of the Gospel.

Read Matthew 4:18-20

1. vs. 18: Jesus sees Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew casting nets into the lake
The water is the Sea of Galilee, also called the Lake of Gennesaret or the Sea of Tiberias
It is in northern Palestine, many miles north of Jerusalem
Jesus is living in Capernaum at this time, a town on the northwest shore of the sea
Peter and Andrew also live in Capernaum, where fishing is a major industry
Jesus walking on the shore near His home would be a common thing
2. vs. 19-20: Jesus calls on the brothers to “follow Me”
He isn’t asking them to join Him on a walk
He is calling them to become his students and disciples
The teacher calls the disciples; the disciples don’t apply to the teacher
This might seem abrupt, but Jesus is already known to these two
In John 1, Andrew meets Jesus when he is a disciple of John the Baptist
Andrew tells Simon “We have found the Messiah” (John 1:41)
Jesus puts His call to them in terms they will readily understand
They used to fish for fish; now they will fish for people
They go “at once” to join Jesus

Read Matthew 16:16-18

In the passage, Jesus and the disciples are having a break from the crowds, some “alone time”. While they are together, Jesus asks them, “Who do you say I am?” This is Peter’s response

3. vs. 16: Peter says Jesus is two things: The Messiah, and the Son of the Living God
Messiah is the Hebrew equivalent of Christ in Greek
There are large numbers of OT references to the coming of the Messiah and His reign
Some think He will come as a political figure, ruling over an earthly empire
Jesus is the Messiah, but He will lead in a unique Godly way
Saying Jesus is the Son of God reveals why Peter believes Jesus is the Messiah
Jesus has both the power to do things (miracles) and the authority to do them

4. vs. 17: Several things are important here

First, Jesus blesses Peter for recognizing Jesus' true identity, and therefore His purpose

Second, Jesus calls him "Simon, son of Jonah"

This sounds formal, indicating this is an important moment, and is treated as such

Third, Jesus brings out the difference between humans and God

Human understanding would not have led Peter to this declaration

There were many in Jesus' day who didn't see Him as the Messiah

Only God working in Peter allowed him to understand who Jesus truly was

5. vs. 18: The meaning of the first half of this verse has been widely discussed throughout church history

Some think the rock refers to Jesus

He does call Himself the "cornerstone" in Matt. 21:42

But that gets complicated when He says "I will build My church"

How can He be both the cornerstone and the builder?

Some think the rock refers to Peter

The word Peter is Greek for rock or stone

Jesus is possibly using a play on words here

Peter is the leader, the rock, of the early church

The best explanation is that Jesus says he will build His church on Peter's confession

Everyone who comes to Christ must confess Him as Savior and Lord

Everyone who does this becomes a member of Christ's church

This confession is central to what it means to be a Christian

"The gates of Hades" refers to death

The word Hades is similar to the Hebrew *Sheol*, a location of the dead in the OT

This indicates that death will have no power over the church, God's people

They will have an eternal life with Him; death will not be able to separate them

Read John 21:15-18

This account is of Jesus' interaction with Peter after His resurrection, and Peter and six others have gone fishing.

6. vs. 15: Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me more than these?"

It's not clear what the "these" is referring to

It could be the fishing boats and equipment; it could be the other disciples

The essence is Jesus is asking Peter, "Do you love Me more than anything else?"

Peter replies, "You know that I love you."

He loves Jesus, but Jesus also knows Peter has previously said things he didn't carry out

Jesus tells Peter to "feed my lambs"—give the new Christians the solid teaching you know

7. vs. 16: Jesus asks the same question of Peter, with the same reply

This time Jesus tells Peter to "Take care of my sheep"

The question, the answer, and the instruction are all basically the same

Peter is likely thinking, "Why is he asking this of me again?"

8. vs. 17: The question was asked by Jesus a third time
Here it says that Peter “was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time”
Is he hurt because Jesus asked again?
Is he hurt because of the similarity to Peter denying Jesus three times?
Peter’s answer is slightly different here
He begins by acknowledging “Lord you know all things”
Jesus knows everything, and Peter knows that Jesus knows everything
So Jesus knows whether or not Peter really loves Him
Peter finishes by saying, “you know that I love you”
And Jesus again says, “Feed my sheep”
9. vs. 18: Jesus finishes this exchange with “Very truly I tell you...”
This phrase occurs over 20 times in John’s gospel, and never in the other gospels
It emphasizes that there is certainty to what is about to be said
Jesus tells Peter what will happen to him in the future
Peter was free to move when he was younger
That will not be the case when he is older

Read 2 Peter 3:14-15, 18

Peter’s second letter is believed to have been written from Rome shortly before his death. This is his final word to believers, carrying important reminders about living the faith.

10. vs. 14: The “looking forward to this” Peter refers to is “the Day of God” from vs. 12
While we look forward to seeing God, we are reminded to stay diligent in our faith
The goal is “to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him”
If we live our faith as Scripture instructs, we will be spotless and blameless of sin
This will result in our being at peace with God
11. vs. 15: God’s patience with us is significant to our salvation
Because He is long-suffering, Jesus does not come back as soon as He might
This allows us to “come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9)
Peter refers to Paul’s writings, showing they agreed on this point
For Paul’s teachings, see Rom. 2:4, 3:25, and 9:22, as well as others
All show the need for righteous living in light of spiritual freedom
Peter encourages readers to accept Paul’s wisdom as it came to him from God
12. vs. 18: Peter exhorts growth in two areas: grace and knowledge of Jesus
Growing in grace means that we grow in our spiritual lives because of God’s grace
Knowing how gracious He has been to us leads us to live righteously
Growing in knowledge is more than knowing more—it includes a relationship with Him
Righteous living is understood as actions that come from knowing Him more
Peter concludes with a praise to Jesus, often called a doxology

Application: Peter's life of discipleship took him from being a fisherman to a leader of the first-century church. He grew in wisdom and knowledge his whole life, resulting in him writing two letters that are part of the New Testament, telling future generations how to live the Christian life. But his growth process wasn't a straight line that always went up—neither will ours be.

Despite that truth, Jesus calls all who claim to be His disciples to grow in His grace and knowledge—there are no exceptions. That makes Peter's life story encouraging to us as we grow.

Prayer: Father God, give us a heart for transforming growth. Forgive us for times when we fail You. Help us recognize opportunities to invite others to become disciples of Jesus with us. In Jesus' name, Amen.