

**October 8 – John 1:35-44.** Enter Simon (his given name) Peter, perhaps the most colorful, outspoken, and brashly human of all Jesus' first disciples. Spoiler alert: no other follower of Jesus except the apostle Paul (who at this point was either a boy in Tarsus or a rabbinical student with Gamaliel in Jerusalem) played as large a role in carrying on Jesus' mission in the world as this man Simon. And we will spend this week looking at the adventure of following Jesus through the life and calling of Peter. So why do we most commonly know him as "Peter"? Read on. Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus, with big news: "We have found the Messiah." "John translates "Messiah" into Greek; probably most hearers in the Mediterranean Diaspora, including some Jewish ones, did not know the Hebrew title.... For a people who actively looked for the appearance of the Messiah, this was a joyful and serious message." Who first introduced you to Jesus as the Messiah, God's anointed savior? John said Jesus promptly called Simon, not Peter, but Cephas. Cephas "means 'rock' in Aramaic, as 'Peter' does in Greek. Many people had nicknames, which usually communicated something about the person." Jesus gave Simon a serious nickname, the main name by which we know him today, that meant "Rock," promising stability and strength. In what ways have you grown stronger or more stable since you started to follow Jesus? What growth do you look forward to in the future?

**October 9 – Read Matthew 4:18-20.** Matthew's account may suggest that for a time Jesus intrigued Andrew and Peter, but they hadn't yet decided to follow him all the time. Jesus' call, couched in language that related to their everyday work, pointed to a larger, more demanding call. Fish may be difficult to catch, but often nowhere near as challenging to understand and draw in as people. "In the ancient world, fisherfolk were peasants." Why might Jesus have walked along the shores of Galilee as he sought followers, instead of seeking out the day's most eminent religious experts? One outcome: by going beyond "the system" of his day, Jesus found people who were more open to his radical ideas about what it meant to be the Messiah. In what ways has Jesus called you beyond "the system(s)" in which you grew up and studied? Jesus' disciples changed their lives a lot to follow him. In addition to leaving their nets, going to "fish for people" was a big change. "From the very beginning the calling of disciples suggests missionary activity." In what way(s) is Jesus calling you now? What spiritual practices help you keep your heart and life open to hear and answer Jesus' call?

**October 10 – Read Luke 5:1-11.** Luke made it clear that Jesus and Simon knew each other before this story (cf. Luke 4:38-39). Jesus did much of his ministry around the Sea of Galilee's shoreline, and most of his first followers came from that area. But his vision always reached farther than any one location. He asked the first disciples to "push into the deep water," hinting at the ultimate task he had for them. "Fishing for people" would push them into the deep waters of a whole world filled with suffering and spiritual hunger. Jesus was a rabbi, a teacher. Peter and his partners caught fish for a living. Why should "pros" like them listen when Jesus said, "Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch" (verse 4)? They agreed "because you say so." Have you ever had a sense that Jesus was calling you to something that was more than "usual" or "logical"? Were you open to saying, "Because you say so, Lord"? Are you open to that today? "When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Leave me, Lord, for I'm a sinner!" (verse 8) When did you most vividly realize, "God is god—and I'm not"? Did you feel any fear, as Peter seems to have in this passage? Did you take in Jesus' reassurance: "Don't be afraid" (verse 10)? How has realizing who God is, who you are, and who God wants to be in your life changed things for you?

**October 11 – Read Mark 3:13-19.** We learn a lot about Peter from the fact that in Mark’s list of the twelve, and also in the lists in Matthew 10:2, Luke 6:13-16 and Acts 1:13-14, Peter’s name was always first. That no doubt reflected his vivid, outspoken personality, but also (here’s another spoiler alert) the words Jesus spoke to Peter in Matthew 16:15-18. Peter was an important leader and spokesperson during Jesus’ time on earth and after. Scholar William Barclay wrote, “It is significant that Christianity began with a group. The Christian faith is something which from the beginning had to be discovered and lived out in a fellowship. The whole essence of the way of the Pharisees...separated; the very name Pharisee means ‘the separated one;’ the essence of Christianity was that it ...presented [people] with the task of living with each other and for each other.” Why is this reality essential for Christians in an age of division? How, if at all, have you experienced this? We also see key strength of Peter’s. Strong leader that he was, when God later called Paul to a key responsibility, he recognized and supported Paul’s calling, rather than opposing or minimizing it (cf. Galatians 2:7-10). What enables leaders whose character God has shaped to be confident in their calling while accepting others with important leadership gifts and responsibilities? Have you ever seen a competitive spirit become corrosive to the mission of Jesus' kingdom?

**October 12 – Read 1 Peter 2:3-9.** Peter saturated his description of what it meant to belong to God’s people, the church, with quotations and allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures. Peter, like Paul, saw the Jesus movement as an extension and fulfilment of the call God first gave to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. Peter’s reflection on belonging to Christ expressed what scholar N. T. Wright wrote about the story in John 1: “What Andrew and Simon Peter thought they were doing was looking for the Messiah. What they didn’t realize was that the Messiah was looking for them.” Pastor Paul Cedar wrote, “A spiritual temple requires a very specific kind of building material. It is to be built of living stones—the very lives of those who have become spiritually alive through faith in Jesus Christ. And such building must begin with Jesus Christ.” How did you come “spiritually alive,” to become a “living stone”? How has that shaped your life? What connects you with other members of this “temple” God is building? In what ways do you resonate with the idea that you have been “called out of darkness” into God’s amazing light? What type(s) of darkness has God had to dispel in your life? Have you ever stopped to ponder the idea that, in Christ, you are a member of “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God’s own possession”? How can that reshape your sense of mission and purpose in life?