

**Peter: A Lesson in Leadership**

Matthew 10:2

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This morning, again, we come to the tenth chapter of Matthew. I would draw your attention to that chapter, Matthew chapter 10. We have the happy, happy privilege today of looking at the chapter which details for us the sending of the 12 apostles. We already have looked, last week, at some introductory thoughts in verse 1, and we have moved on this morning to begin to look at the names of these 12 individuals themselves. Although we will not be able to spend a message on each one, because the Bible doesn't give us that much information about them, the first name is sufficient to preach many messages, for the first on the list is none other than Simon, who is called Peter. And I'd like us to focus, if we can this morning, on that particular individual in reference to the 12.

But first, before we look specifically at Peter, some general introductory thoughts that might help us to understand the passage in its context. When I was a young boy, my grandfather gave me a copy of a book entitled "Quiet Talks on Service," written by a man named Dr. S.D. Gordon. And in that book Dr. Gordon paints a fantasy, if you will, that is most vivid. He shows Jesus walking down the golden streets of heaven. He has just returned from earth in His ascension. And heaven is eager to greet Him and welcome Him, and the first to greet Him there is Gabriel, and so He and Gabriel are arm in arm, walking along the golden street. And Gabriel engages Him in a conversation that in the fantasy goes something like this: "Master, You died for the whole world down there, did You not?" "Yes." "You must have suffered much." "Yes," the Lord said. "And do they all know what You did for them?" replied Gabriel. "Oh no. No, only a few in Palestine know about it so far." Gabriel replies, "Well, Master, what's Your plan? What have You done about telling the world that You died for them, that You shed Your blood for all of them? What's Your plan?" And the Master is supposed to have answered, "Well, I asked Peter and James and John and Andrew and a few other fellows if they'd make it the business of their lives to tell others. And then, the ones that they tell could tell others and then the ones that they tell could tell others. And finally, it would reach to the farthest corner of the earth and all would know the thrill and power of the gospel."

Gabriel is said to have replied, "But suppose Peter fails? And suppose after a while John just doesn't tell anybody? And what if James and Andrew are ashamed or afraid? Then what?" To which Jesus says, "Gabriel, I haven't made any other plans. I'm counting totally on them."

That's a fantasy, but not far from the truth. Because that is exactly the way that God designed the plan to work. He would spend His time with 12. The 12 would carry the message. The ones who heard it from them would tell others and others and others, and here we are two thousand years later telling it again. To this generation which shall tell the next generation.

But it all began with 12 men. These 12 introduced to us in the first part of chapter 10 are the foundation of the church. In Ephesians 2:20 it says that the foundation of the church were the prophets and the apostles. They are the foundation with Christ being the chief cornerstone. They

were chosen. It says in verse 1 that He called to Him 12 disciples. They were sent. It says in verse 2 that they are apostles, sent ones. They started out as learners and they became sent ones, after their training was over. They received divine revelation. They were the ones responsible for writing most of the New Testament. They were the ones who were given the mysteries of the new covenant. They were the ones to whom it was promised that God would bring through His Spirit all things to their remembrance whatever Jesus had said. They were the ones who received the revelation. They were the ones who wrote it down so that the early church, when it met together, studied according to Acts 2, the apostles' doctrine. They were not only the ones who were the foundation in terms of leadership and authority, but they were the source of revelation, and they were the framers of theology. They were given to the church, Ephesians says, "To perfect the saints for the work of the ministry that the body might be built up." They were given to build the body.

But it wasn't only what they said that was important, it was what they were. They were the first set of examples, the first patterns for people to look to, to see virtue. They are called, and this is an important title, the holy apostles. I believe that is a term which indicates the virtue of their life. And so, they received revelation. Having received it, they taught it. Having taught it they codified it, as it were. They framed it into a system of truth and theology. It then became the substance which the church taught, and from which it learned. They also set the pattern of godly, holy, virtuous life. And all of their authority was confirmed by miracle gifts. It says in 2 Corinthians 12 that they had the signs of an apostle, which were signs and wonders and mighty deeds. But God confirmed them with miraculous powers.

So, they were the foundation. And it is essential, I think, for us, to see how the Lord works with them and how He disciplines them and how He trains them, how He sends them as the pattern for this in the 20th century that we're called to do, discipling others and sending them to reach the world.

Now, you'll remember by just looking back a couple of weeks, that the Lord had been looking on the multitude at then of chapter 9, and He saw them as sheep without a Shepherd. They had been mangled, and mauled, and devastated, and beaten, and bruised, and left for dead. And He saw this mass of humanity as a harvest moving toward judgment. The inevitability of doom, the inevitability of hell, the inevitability of divine judgment, and He realized, because of the compassion of His heart, that He needed some to help Him to reach them, to warn them, to preach to them. And so, in verse 37 of chapter 9 He points out the fact that the harvest is so great that all of this mass of humanity moves toward judgment but the laborers are so few. And these people must be warned, and so he says to His disciples, "Pray that the Lord will send forth laborers into the harvest." And then, in chapter 10 He appoints the first laborers, who are the disciples themselves. And we learn throughout this chapter, how He basically instructs them in carrying out the ministry that He gives to them.

Now, keep this in mind from our last study, there were four phases in the training of the 12. First, He called them to Himself by way of conversion; you find that in John 1. By way of believing in Him as far as they could believe, as far as they understood. And after they were called to Him to be disciples, to express their faith, there was a second call, in which He called them away from their living, away from their normal concourse to follow Him every day in a permanent relationship. He called them, if you will, into full time training. And now, in chapter 10, we come to a third phase where He sends them out as interns. This is not their final sending; this is phase three. They go out to get their feet wet. They've been instructed for maybe as long as 18 months, they're going to have another period of many months of training, but before that begins He sends them out. He wants them to experience some things. He wants them to hit the wall a few times. He wants them to fail as well

as succeed. And they go out and then they come back. And they go out, and they come back. And He interacts with them in this teaching internship. And then, finally, the fourth phase comes in Acts 1 when the Spirit of God is sent after the ascension. And they then are sent into the whole world to disciple the nations.

And so, we meet them in phase three here, in chapter 10. This is their first opportunity to go out on their own, they go two by two. And He stays very close to watch and see how they fare and then to teach them off of the experience they're about to have.

But, they are essential. And I want you to get that. They are essential for the future of the Christian faith because they are the only plan. The Spirit of God, ultimately, will empower them, they will go and the ones they touch will touch others, and it will go like that. They have been already disciples; verse 1 calls them disciples. They are about to be apostles; verse 2 calls them apostles. They have been trained, now they're going to be sent. And that's the goal that God has for all of us: to be trained, to be sent. And so, we looked at that, and we called that the initiation of the 12.

Then, we also looked at the impact of the 12 in verse 1. You remember He gave them power, it says. He gave them *exousia*, which means power or authority or the right. And in that divine authority He gave them, they could do two things: they could cast out the vile, evil, wretched, unclean demons and they could heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness. That was the gift of miracles which Paul calls the gift of miracles, it's the gift of *dunamis*, or power, and if you look at the gospels, it's power against the demons. So, He gave them the gift of miracles. He gave them the gift of healing. And they went out healing and casting out demons. And this was a confirmation of their message. The main thing they did was preach. Go down to verse 6. "Go," it says, "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and as you go preach, saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Their primary task was to preach. But if they came along and preached, why would people want to believe them? On what basis would people hear their message? The impact came when they did these marvelous works of casting out demons, showing they had power over the kingdom of darkness, and then healing showing they had power over disease. And so, they went preaching. And while they were preaching they were healing and they were casting out demons as an affirmation that they were indeed representatives of God.

As Nicodemus had said when Jesus appeared, Nicodemus said, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do the things You do except God be with Him." And that was what Jesus wanted people to say when they saw these men as well: that it's obvious you must be of God because of what you are able to do.

Now, if you look at a very important verse, it might just help to summarize that thought. In Hebrews 2, listen to what it says in verse 3 and 4: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." The first preacher was the Lord. He was the first spokesman. "But then it was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him." And now, we go to the second generation. The writer of the Hebrews says, we got it from those who heard the Lord. In other words, we got it from the apostles. "And God bore the apostles witness with signs and wonders and diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit." In other words, the word of the apostles was confirmed miraculously as they laid down the foundation for the church. So, that was their impact.

Now, thirdly, and for this morning, we come to their identity. Who are these 12 who are sent, having been trained and given this tremendous authority? Let's meet them. Verse 2: "The first, Simon, who

is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother. Philip and Bartholomew.” Another name for Bartholomew is Nathanael. “Thomas and Matthew the tax collector, James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.”

Now, frankly, folks, they're just ordinary men. The only one who may have had some special wealth was Matthew and he gained it by being an extortionist and working for Rome. None of them that we know of had any particular academic background. They aren't the resident Ph.D.'s of Galilee. As far as we know, none of them have any social status. Not necessarily the highfalutin types, just common people. Some of them are still utterly unknown to us. All we know is their names. They were chosen from the common people to be the ones who would be the first line of agents of Christ to set in motion the advancement of the Kingdom throughout the history of the world. Critical. There has been never in the history of the world, a task to equal the task these 12 were given, never. The most monumental, incredible thing that any man was ever, in the history of the world, asked to do was to finish the work that Jesus began.

And that is exactly what it says in Acts 1 verse 1: “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began to do and teach.” And what He began, you'll carry on. And that's why He appeared to His disciples for 40 days until His ascension, speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom. And then, said, “Now, I've taught you, you wait until the Spirit comes, and when He comes He will empower you and you'll go into all the world and be My witnesses.” And the plan was in motion. But it all depended on these 12.

Now, as you look at the list there are some fascinating things to learn just from the list itself. Let me tell you why. It begins this way. The first, Simon who is called Peter. There are four lists of these disciples in the New Testament. One here in Matthew 10, one in Mark chapter 3, one in Luke chapter 6 and one in Acts chapter 1. Matthew 10, Mark 3, Luke 6, and Acts 1.

Now listen, there are some marvelous similarities. In all four lists Peter is always first. And when Judas is mentioned he is always what? Last. That's interesting. Peter is always first. Why was he first? Was he the first one chosen? No. John 1 makes it clear that he was not the first one chosen. But look at the word there. It says the first Simon who is called Peter. You have to understand the word there: *prōtos*. That's an interesting word. In this context it means the foremost in rank. You say, now wait a minute, I thought the 12 apostles all had equal 12 thrones in the Kingdom. I thought the 12 apostles were all equal in authority, equal in power, all told to preach, all told to heal, all told to cast out demons. You're right. They'll all sit and judge the tribes of Israel. That's right.

Well, how come Peter is the foremost? Aren't they all equal? People ask us all the time when they ask about the eldership of the church. They say, well, if you have elders, don't you just have one pastor and he calls all the shots? How can you have all elders? I mean, are they all equal? Do they all preach and teach? And they're all equal and so forth, in every area? Yes, in terms of office. Yes, in terms of authority. Yes, in terms of essence. But no, in terms of function. Peter was foremost. *Prōtos*.

Let me give you another place where that word is used. How about this? “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ came into the world to save sinners, 1 Timothy 1:15, “of whom I am,” what? “Chief.” That's the same word. Chief, you could translate it chief. The chief of the 12 was Peter. They had to have a leader, and he was their leader. So, first thing to note in the list is that they

had a leader. And there's nothing wrong with that. There are leaders among leaders. And their leader was Peter.

Let me take you to a second thought. In all four lists there are three groups. There are three groups. Group one, are you ready for group one? Peter, Andrew, James and John. Group two begins in verse 3: Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew. Then comes group three: James the son of Alphaeus, Lebbaeus called Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot. Always, now listen, each group always has the same four guys in it. They never get out of their group on all three lists, always the same four. Their names may be in different order, but they're always in the same group. And let me tell you another interesting thing. If you look at the calling of the 12, you'll find that the first four were the first ones called. The next four were the next ones called, apparently. And the last four were the last ones called. So, you have these three groups of four. The first group called, the second group called, and the third group called.

What is also interesting is we know a lot about those in group one: Peter, James, John and Andrew. Right? We know a little more about group two; Philip, and Nathanael, and Thomas, and Matthew. We don't know anything about group three, except for Judas. And what we know about him, we wouldn't care to know. There's a decreasing amount of information. There's a decreasing intimacy. The first group, in it is Peter, James and John who were the most intimate of all. So, that in these groups, I really think you get an insight, the Lord was very, very close to group one. He was somewhat close to group two. We don't know that He was close at all to group three. And that points up a very important factor in leadership. You can't be intimate with everybody. It's impossible. It's utterly impossible. Our Lord, even out of the four, drew to Him three. And out of the three He spent most of His time with whom? Peter. Frankly, He had to spend most of His time with Peter because He couldn't get Peter off His back. I've always believed that Jesus walked down the road each day and when He stopped, Peter ran into the back of Him. I think Peter just trailed Him everywhere. He was forever asking Him questions. But there's no way in spiritual leadership that you can have intimacy with everybody.

And so, the Lord had the close ones, and then the next group and then He gave what He could give to the third group, even though their function was just as important, their ministry was just as wonderful in a sense. You'll notice that the writers, however, of Scripture came out of group one and group two, mostly out of group one. So, you learn a little bit about how they functioned together.

Now, let me add another thought. Each of the three groups, the names will be mixed in the group in the different lists, but always the first name is the same. In every list it's first Peter in his group; it's second, Philip in his group; and it's third, James, the son of Alphaeus in his group. And that's always the way it is. You know what that means? That means that even in the individual groups they had what? Leaders. Now, that's how leadership functions, you see. You have Peter who is sort of chief over everything. And then, under him you have the most intimate group, and then you have another group and they have a leader and another group and they have a leader. And everybody functions, and that's the way it is among the 12. And so, we gain some insights into that group. When Jesus sent them out He sent them out the first time in their internship, two by two. So, they went out in their groups of four, only two together.

Now, there's an interesting, I think, insight to look at the fact that they were all so organized. But it was a very comfortable, a very natural kind of thing. I mean, Peter, James, John, and Andrew were sort of all interrelated; they were brothers and they knew each other, and they were the fishermen in

the group. So, they were probably very close and intimate. The next group, we only know one of them, was a tax collector and it tells us. We don't know what Philip did. We don't know what Nathanael did. We don't know what Thomas did. And the last group, we don't have any clue about what they did at all. So, it's as if that original group all knew each other, they were all the initial ones called, they were all the key ones that the Lord wanted to use and then there was a sort of a fading away in terms of intimacy, though not importance in apostolic ministry.

Now, their temperaments were also different, and I just call this to your attention. Peter, for example, was a man of action. He was impulsive, he was eager. I call him the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth. Peter was always sticking his foot in it. He was always blurting out, charging ahead in a mad hurry. And in his group was another fellow by the name of John. All John wanted to do was be quiet, and meditate, contemplate, loving heart, recline on the breast of Jesus. And it must have been interesting in that little group, for Peter and John to work together. In the first 12 chapters of Acts, you know, the Lord put John with Peter, which must have been a marvelous lesson for both of them. Peter wanting to charge all the time and saying, John, will you get up and get going? Well, I'm just meditating, Peter. I'll, boy, that's frustrating when you want to get moving.

And then, you have in group two a couple of interesting fellows. There was Nathanael, or Bartholomew. Nathanael believed everything. He accepted the fact, John 1, just wide open, just didn't seem to doubt anything, just willing to receive everything. And in his group was Thomas who didn't believe anything unless he could see it, touch it, feel it, skeptical. And then, you had Matthew, who worked for the Roman government extorting taxes. And you had Simon the zealot. And a zealot was one who was a radical revolutionary, trying to overthrow Rome. And I can promise you one thing, if Simon had gotten this close to Matthew anywhere but among the disciples he would have stuck a knife in him.

So, you had the political differences. You had the spiritual differences. You had the basic emotional differences. And all of this conglomerate of people thrown together, and the Lord was going to make something out of this hash to change the world. The wonderful story is that they didn't fail. They didn't fail.

Now, for our time this morning I just want us to look at the first one: Peter, Simon Peter. And I want us to focus on this thought: how does God build a leader? How does God build a leader? Because this guy is the key. The first 12 chapters of Acts revolve around him. He is the key. He preaches the sermon at Pentecost. He does the first great miracle at the temple. He faces the Sanhedrin. He is the key. And God is going to make a leader out of this man. Now, last week we saw how the Lord disciplines. We saw His whole pattern of training the 12, the whole process of discipleship in terms of the group. Now, we're going to pull one guy out, Peter, we're going to look at him. We're going to say: how does God build a leader? Very important. How does He do this? Because the Lord today is building leaders in His church. And how does He do that? Peter is really the key to understanding that lesson. The four gospels are literally filled with Peter. I mean, he's everywhere. After the name of Jesus, no other name is used as much in the gospels as the name of Peter. Nobody speaks as often as Peter, and nobody is spoken to as often as Peter by the Lord. No disciple is so reproved by the Lord as Peter, and no disciple reproves the Lord but Peter. No disciple ever so boldly confesses and so outspoken acknowledges the lordship of Christ, and no one denies it so boldly as Peter. He is a constant conundrum. No one is so praised and blessed as Peter, and no one else is called Satan but Peter. He had harder things to say to Peter than He ever said to anybody else. But that was part of making him the man He wanted him to be.

Now, how does God take such an ambivalent character, such a contradiction in human flesh, and make him a leader? I think there are several elements. Let me just give you three, basically. Number one, you have to have the right raw material. The Lord recognized in Peter the right raw material for leadership. I mean, I'm convinced that Peter was the leader before anybody acknowledged it. I think he just took over. That's just the way he was. He had whatever it is that is the raw material, the raw stuff of leadership. Studdert Kennedy, the great poet from Britain, wrote lines that I think really fit Peter. He wrote this, "There's nothing in man that's perfect. There's nothing that's all complete. He's not but a big beginning from his head to the soles of his feet." And Peter was a big beginning. That's what he was. I mean, there was just potential there.

Now, what is the raw material looked for in a leader? First of all, does he ask questions? Does he ask questions? People who don't ask questions don't wind up as leaders because they're not concerned about problems and solutions. If you want to find a leader, look for somebody who asks questions. In the gospel record, Peter asked more questions than everybody else combined. Always asked questions. It's Peter who asks the meaning of a difficult saying. In Matthew 15:15, "Lord? Will you explain that to me?" Some of the other guys were just standing there and absolutely didn't understand a thing, just rocked back and forth in their sandals, never even bothered to ask. But Peter can't handle that. He has to ask. Explain this to me. I've got to know. It was Peter who asked how often he had to forgive. The Lord was talking about forgiveness and he says, "How many times am I supposed to forgive? 7 times?" The Lord says, "No, 490 times."

By the way, in all of his questioning, he rarely got the answer he expected. It was Peter who asked: what is the reward of those who've left all to follow Jesus. In Matthew chapter 19, "Now, we've left all to follow, what's going to be our reward?" I'd like to know. Questions. Peter who asked about the fig tree when it withered away, would You please explain that? Mark 11. It was Peter who asked the meaning of the things that Jesus said about the approaching end in Mark 13, he wanted a full explanation. And after Peter was told he was going to die as a martyr, he said, "Well, what about John?" The Lord says it's none of your business if he lives till the second coming. And then, the rumors spread throughout the church that John was going to live till the second coming. And the Lord had to straighten that out by writing a few extra verses in John 21. He was always asking questions, but that's the raw material that leadership is made out of. See, leadership seeks solution. It asks questions. And the Lord saw that in Peter.

There's a second element of leadership that I think is important and that is it takes initiative. It takes initiative. Leadership always takes initiative. And you see that with Peter. When the Lord asks a question, who answers it? Always Peter. Who touched Me? Peter answers, it was this lady here. Or else he'll, or what do you mean asking a question like that? There's a whole bunch of people pushing You all over here. I mean, he just took the initiative. Whom do men say that I am? Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God. Will You go away? Where we going to go? Always replying, always taking the initiative. It is Peter who even asks questions of the risen Christ in John 21, wants to know all the details. That's another mark.

And I would say the third thing that you see in leadership raw material is that they're always where the action is, always right in the middle of the action. They go through life with a cloud of dust around them. That's just part and parcel of leadership. They create things. They make it, you know, I mean, of all the disciples, who jumped out of the boat and walked on the water? Peter. People always say, oh, Peter, you have no faith, you sunk. You think Peter had no faith because he sunk, there's 11

guys who never even got out of the boat. So, before you get on Peter's case, realize where he was. People say, well, Peter denied the Lord. Right, but he was in the place where he was confronted with that because he had enough courage to follow all the way to the house of the high priest. The other guys had split. I mean, he was always in the middle of the action. He was always where it was going on. And when the resurrection came, who was the first one there? Peter and John. Down there and Peter just roared past John who stood outside and went right in the place. John, you know, sort of slowed down as he got there and, you know, Peter right on, right in the middle of everything. I think the Lord saw that raw material, that inquisitiveness, that initiator's kind of spirit, and that being where the action is. It happened when Peter was there. It just took place. I mean, you see him in the book of Acts, for 12 chapters; everywhere he goes, amazing things happen all over the place.

Now, we learn a little bit about him, about that raw material, by considering his name. His name was Simon, a very, very common name. He was a son of Jonas, or Jonah, or John. He was a fisherman by trade. And he lived with his brother Andrew in a village called Bethsaida. And later they moved to Capernaum. They believe they've uncovered the place where his house was, and I've been to that digging site a couple of times, right on the water there at the Capernaum village, what's left of it. He was married, because the Lord healed his mother-in-law. You remember we studied that. And also because in 1 Corinthians 9, there's a most interesting word. Paul is saying there, he says, The apostles or the preachers have a right to lead about a sister as a wife, that is, a Christian sister as a wife, even as Cephas. He was married and it was likely from what Paul says there that he actually took his wife with him on his apostolic mission. He went wherever he went with his wife. So, it may have been that the 12 also had a sort of a family entourage that was around with them too. He was married. And he was a fisherman named Simon. Common name, common trade, common marital status. But the guy just had some raw material that the Lord saw.

But, because of his nature he tended to be so shifty. And he was vacillating. I think the Lord changed his name to try to force into his subliminal thinking what He wanted him to be and He turned his name into Peter which means what? Stone. So, at first it must have been kind of a contradiction, Stone? Stone, come over here. And every time He said that, he was thinking, I've got to be solid, I've got to be firm, I've got to be a stone. Because that, basically, was not what he was. But I think the Lord gave him that name just to begin to force his thinking down a certain path. Every time the Lord wanted to speak to him He could designate what He wanted to say by just how He addressed him. If He said, Stone, Peter got one message. If He said, Simon, he got another message. If He said, Simon Peter, Simon Stone, there was a little ambivalence.

Now, he's called Simon, he's called Simon Peter, and he's called Peter. And it's interesting, just as a general overview, it's not always consistent, but he's always called Simon in two cases. Number one, in the secular case. Like it will say in Mark 1, Simon's house; or in Luke 4, Simon's mother-in-law; or in Luke 5 verse 3, Simon's boat; or in Luke 5, I think it's verse 10, it says, Simon's fishing partners. It also says in Acts 10 that Cornelius found his way to Simon's location. In other words, when you just want to designate him in a secular way, just want to identify him with a boat, or a house, or a place, or whatever, he's just Simon. That's his earthy secular name.

Now, Simon is also used when he is being reprimanded for sin. So, he is secular Simon and he's sinful Simon. When the Lord wanted to focus on his sinfulness, for example, he was out there in the fishing boat, and he was doubting the Lord, and he was probably mumbling under his breath in Luke 5 saying, this is ridiculous. You know, this is ridiculous, and the Lord says, Cast your net on a certain side of the boat and bring the fish in, and you can just see him mumbling, oh man, that's ridiculous,

does He think we don't know what we're doing? We fish for a profession. He's going to tell us, and he pulled in so many fish and immediately he said, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a," what? "Sinful man." The Lord unmasked his sin and called him Simon.

In John 21 when he came to Him and he had acted in disobedience and it was when he had gone back to fishing after the resurrection and after he had been called to preach, he went back to fishing and the Lord confronted him three times on the shore and said: "Simon, Simon, Simon." He was being sinful. He's also called Simon in a sinful setting in Mark, I think it's chapter 14 verse 37, and they were up in the upper part of the Mount of Olives and they were praying and He came and found them asleep and He says unto Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping?" And He reprimanded him for falling asleep. So, he is Simon in his sinfulness. Simon in his secular identity. That's just who he was. But the Lord was going to make him stone, rock, firm, foundation, a living stone, he says he is in his own epistle 1 Peter. You can outline the whole life of Peter this way, Simon, Simon Peter, Peter. That's the transition. And I think John knew him so well he just called him Simon Peter because he couldn't figure out whether he was being Simon or Peter either.

Now, how do you take a guy with this kind of raw material and make him a leader? First of all, you recognize that raw material, you recognize what is there. And our Lord saw that in him. And was willing to do what had to be done to get him where he wanted him to be. And that brings us to the second point: the Lord built a leader, number one, by choosing the right raw material and number two, by bringing about the right experiences. He brought into his life the right experiences. You learn most of all from experience. And He allowed Peter to have some life-changing experiences. If He was going to transform the guy, He had to bring some things to pass in his life.

First of all, what I call his revelation, his great revelation. The Lord gave to Peter the greatest revelation. In John chapter 6, Jesus had presented the tremendous message on Himself as the bread of life up in Galilee, and some people couldn't understand it all so some of His disciples left, some of them just walked away and followed Him no more, verse 66 says. "And Jesus then asked the disciples, 'Will you go away?' And Simon Peter says, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.'" I think when he said that, he grabbed his mouth and said, "Where did that come from?" Because that was some statement. I believe that was a revelation from God. I believe he started to open His mouth and God just talked right through his mouth.

And he did that also again in the 16th chapter of Matthew. The Lord said: "And whom say ye that I am?" And immediately, Peter said, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." Tremendous statement. And Jesus said to him, "Flesh and blood didn't reveal that to you, My Father in heaven did." In other words, He said that's a revelation. He was transforming this man by letting him know that God wanted to use his mouth. That God could speak through him. He gave him the experience of revelation, because one day he was going to stand up on the day of Pentecost and he was going to preach the revelation of God. And one day he was going to take a pen and he was going to write the revelation of God. And Jesus prepared him with a revelatory experience. Gave him the sense that God was moving and God was there, this great revelation. What an experience.

And then, I call it his great reward. The Lord gave him a great reward, tremendous promise in Matthew 16. After this confession Jesus said in verse 18: "I say unto you, you're Peter, thou art stone but upon this bedrock," He used a different term there, "Upon the rock of your confession, I will build My church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Now, watch, "And I'll give unto thee

the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” Oh man, He says, Peter, I’m going to give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. What is that? You, My friend, are going to unlock the Kingdom. Really? Who preached the first great apostolic sermon? Peter, the day of Pentecost. To whom did he preach it? To the Jews. Who led the first Gentile to Christ? Peter. Who was it? Acts 10, Cornelius. He unlocked the Jews. He unlocked, as it were, the Kingdom to the Gentiles. He was the opening of the door. And the Lord also gave that same promise, by the way, to the rest of His apostles and extended it all through the ages to all those who, by the proclamation of the gospel, opened the door to the Kingdom. Every time I preach the gospel, I hold that key in my hand. But Peter was the first, a great revelation and a great honor, a great reward. But you’ve got to see his great remission, also.

Same chapter, Matthew 16 verse 21. Boy, Peter’s feeling his oats now. Man, he’s gotten revelations. When he opens his mouth he might be speaking or God might be speaking. And that’s pretty exciting. Not only that, the Lord says, you’ve got the key, you’re going to unlock it. And he is feeling like a leader. And so, from that time forth began Jesus to show His disciples that He had to go Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and raise a third day. Jesus is telling him He’s going to die, He’s going to suffer. I like this, verse 20: “Then Peter took Him.” Now, wait a minute, took Him? That’s right. “And began to rebuke Him.” Took who? The Lord, the creator of the universe. He said, “Come with me, we’ve got to get You straightened out.” Unbelievable, the guy was, I mean, he was feeling it, and I’m the leader. I’ve got the keys now I’m going to start using them. You’re first. It’s always the danger in leadership, isn’t it? It doesn’t know where its limits are. He took Him, and I don’t know whether he grabbed Him by the arm and yanked Him into the bushes or what, but he said, rebuking Him. “Be it far from Thee, Lord, this shall not be unto Thee as long as I’m in charge it isn’t going to happen, and I’ll promise You that.” He must have, you know, sort of stuck his chest into his tunic. “And the Lord said to him, ‘Get thee behind Me, Satan.’” Wow, that is a very clear lesson. “You are an offense unto Me for you savor not the things that are of God but those that are of men.” You do not know the plan of God, and you are thinking from the human viewpoint. Get behind Me, Satan. His mouth had just been used for God, and now his mouth was used for Satan. And now, he was doing exactly what Satan had done in the temptation: he was trying to derail Christ from the cross, and Peter was just as available to the Devil as he was to God, and that is a great lesson to learn for a leader. You get yourself into a position where God can use you, and the greater the potential to be used by God, the greater the potential to be used by Satan. That’s a great lesson. He taught him about the revelatory capacity. He taught him about the power in the reward of having the keys. He taught him about the potential to be used by Satan. Tremendous experiences, learning while doing.

Then, we come fourthly to what I call his great rejection, his great rejection. You know, he has so much confidence. The guy just oozed confidence. I mean, even stupid confidence, unreal, you know, way beyond normal. He had so much confidence. Verse 33 of Matthew 26: “Peter answered and said unto Him,” the Lord just told about the prophecy regarding the shepherd being smitten and the sheep scattered, and He was saying that all the disciples were going to leave Me, and they’re all going to run away. “Peter answered and said, ‘Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be.’” I’m not like all men. I’m a cut above the rest. They may all forsake You; I’ll never do that. “Verily I say unto thee, that this night before the cock crows you will deny Me three times. And Peter said unto Him, ‘Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee.’” I will not do that. Confidence.

And I like this, “Likewise, also said all the disciples.” Just like rubber ducks, if Peter said it, we agree. He was the leader. He was a leader. Peter’s right, we won’t do that. His great, great confidence, but

he rejected, he rejected and he denied Jesus, chapter 26 verse 69, he was outside the court and a maid came to him saying, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. Denied it before them all saying, I know not what thou sayest. When he was gone out into the porch another maid saw him and said unto them that were there, 'This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.' After a while came unto him, they that stood by, and said to Peter, 'Surely thou also art one of them for thy speech betrayeth thee.' And he began to curse and to swear, saying, 'I know no the man.' And immediately the cock crowed. And Peter remember the words of Jesus and he went out and wept bitterly." You think that was a lesson? Oh man, was that a lesson. What a lesson. What an experience. He had an experience of a great revelation, of a great reward, of a great remission, of a great rejection.

And then, ultimately he had an experience I call a great re-commissioning in the 21st chapter of John, just quickly. John 21, the Lord restored him. "Do you love Me," verse 15, "Yes. Do you love Me," verse 16, "Yes. Do you love Me," verse 17, "then feed My lambs, and feed My sheep, and feed My sheep." And finally at the end of verse 19 He says, "Follow Me, Peter, follow Me." And Peter did finally follow. That was his re-commissioning, and it was in a very exciting experience. Peter had gone fishing, and the Lord didn't let him catch any fish. And he came to the shore and the Lord gave him an experience he would never forget as long as he lived, as He confronted him with the lack of love that was demonstrated by his disobedience.

Now, you can add all that together: his great revelation, his great reward, remission, rejection and re-commission, all those. Those were the key experiences of his life, and they led to what I like to call his great realization. He became the man God wanted him to be. He really did become that man. And those experiences were part of making him that man.

But there was a third element. Jesus, to make a leader, needs the right raw material, the right experiences and thirdly, the right lessons. It wasn't just experiences; Peter also had to be taught certain principles. Now, what are the things a leader needs to know? Well, let's look at Peter and use him as our pattern. And what does a leader need to learn? You tend to be confident. You tend to be outward, overt. You tend to be eager, aggressive. The first lesson that a leader needs to learn is submission, and so He taught Peter that. In Matthew chapter 17 the Lord said, "Now, Peter, you go down to fishing, and you catch the fish, and the first fish you bring in you reach in his mouth and there will be a coin there, and that's so you and I can pay our taxes." Now, knowing Peter, you might have assumed that Peter wouldn't pay any attention to taxation. He wouldn't pay any attention to the Roman system. He would say, hey, we're in this Kingdom business, we're moving on a track, I don't have time to mess with my taxes. I don't have time to fool with this passing world. But Jesus taught him to be submissive to the powers that be ordained of God. And he learned his lesson. Because in 1 Peter chapter 2 he wrote this: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake, whether to the king, a supreme, or governors, unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well for so is the will of God. As free and not using your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness. Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God and honor the king. Be subject to your masters with all fear." In other words, he learned submission. He learned that there were institutions of God that you have to submit to. It's important for leaders to learn that. There are limits.

A second lesson that a man like Peter needed to learn was restraint. He needed to learn restraint. The Lord had to put a bit in his mouth and teach him restraint because he was so unrestrained. In John 18, he's in the garden and the soldiers come to take Jesus, you remember? And Peter grabs a

sword. He's looking at 500 soldiers, probably, from Fort Antonia, and all the servants of the high priests. And he just takes a sword, and the Bible says there was a fellow there named Malchus, and Peter cut off his ear. And you know as well as I do he wasn't going for his ear. I mean, he wasn't a surgeon; he wasn't going to just zip his little ear off. I mean, he was going for his head. The guy had reflexes. He ducked and lost his ear. And the Lord reached over and gave him a new ear and said, "Put that sword away. You live by the sword, you," what? "You die by the sword." You have to learn restraint. Let God's plan operate. Let God take care of these matters.

Did he learn restraint? Yes he did. In 1 Peter chapter 2 he says this: "We have been called to suffer as Christ suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. When He suffered, threatened not." In other words, I saw with Jesus. He accepted it as God's will. He restrained Himself and left His life in the care of God. I learned that lesson and I'm teaching it to you. He learned restraint.

Another thing a leader needs to learn is humility. Oh, did he learn that. "I'll never leave You. All men may forsake You, but I'll die before I forsake You." But he did. And he learned his lesson because he wrote in 1 Peter these words, "God, resist the proud but give grace," what? "To the humble." He learned. Also, leaders sometimes need to learn the lesson of sacrifice. You know, he had to be told, "Someday, Peter," John 21 verse 19, "somebody is going to come and bind you and take you where you don't want to go and I'm speaking about the death you're going to die for Me, you're going to be a martyr, Peter, you're going to be a martyr. Are you ready for that?" And that's when he said, "Well, what about John? I mean, does he get off the hook? Well, what about him?" And the Lord said, "None of your business." And then, He used the emphatic pronoun, He said, "You follow Me." And that's the last time He ever had to say that. He learned his lesson, the lesson of sacrifice. And he learned it so well that he wrote in 1 Peter: "Blessed," if you can imagine, "Happy are you who are reproached for the name of Christ. If any man suffer as a Christian," chapter 4 verse 16, "let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God. And let them that suffer commit themselves to God's care." You learn sacrifice.

I think, too, he needed to learn love. You see, leaders tend to be task-oriented rather than people-oriented and they can just plow people under. And he needed to learn love. And Jesus said to him in John 21, "Do you love Me? Do you love Me? Do you love Me?" That's what I want, Peter, I want you to love Me. And I think that's probably why Jesus hooked up John with him to teach him about that. And you remember in John 13 where the Lord was washing feet and He comes to Peter and Peter says, "You will never wash my feet." The Lord says, "I'm trying to teach you a lesson, Peter. You don't understand it now, but you will." And he says, "I'll take a bath. Go ahead." And afterwards the Lord said, "Love one another as I have loved you." He had given them a great lesson on love and Peter got the lesson. And later on in 1 Peter chapter 4 he repeats the lesson he learned: "Above all things, have fervent love among yourselves, for love shall cover a," what? "Multitude of sin." He learned.

I think he needed to learn courage, too. In John 21, Jesus said, if you're going to follow Me, it's going to cost you your life. Are you willing? By then he learned. In Acts 4, he goes in front of the Sanhedrin and he says, I don't care what you say, I'll preach because I will obey God not men. And they said, "Well, you can't preach anymore." And they went into a prayer meeting and he prayed that God would give them more boldness, and they went out and preached even greater.

He needed to learn submission. The Lord taught him. He needed to learn restraint. The Lord taught

him. He needed to learn humility. The Lord taught him that. He needed to learn grace, and sacrifice, and love, and courage; and all of those lessons, the Lord gave him. Now, how does the Lord make a leader? He takes the right raw material, puts it to the right experience with the right teaching and He came out with Peter. Oh, what a leader he was.

The first 12 chapters of Acts, he is the leader of the church. He is the one who makes the move to replace Judas with Matthias, chapter 1 of Acts. He becomes the spokesman of the church on Pentecost, Acts 2. He, with John, healed the lame man, Acts 3. He defied the Sanhedrin, Acts 4. He dealt with the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5. He dealt with the problem of Simon the magician in Samaria, Acts 8. He healed Aeneas and raised Dorcas from the dead, Acts 9. He took the gospel to the Gentiles, Acts 10 and 11. And he wrote two marvelous and glorious epistles in which he repeated all the lessons that Jesus had taught him and passed them on to us.

What a man he was. He was a man whom God had touched with His grace. Who could say with the hymn writer, "O to grace, how great a debtor daily I am constrained to be, Let thy goodness like a fetter bind my wandering heart to thee. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the Lord I love. Take my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above." He was the wandering heart that finally the grace of God captured.

How did it end for him? Tradition says that cruelty came his way in his death. And tradition tells us that he was crucified, but before he was crucified he was forced to watch the crucifixion of his wife. The traditionalist Eusebius, a historian writing in his ecclesiastical history said, "He stood at the foot of his wife's cross and kept repeating to her, 'Remember the Lord, remember the Lord.' And after she had died, he himself was crucified and pleaded to be crucified upside down because he was unworthy to die like his Lord." He was a leader. And you and I are here today because he was faithful to his calling. God wants to take the raw material of some of you, put it through the right experience, teach the right lessons, make the right leaders. I believe Peter's life can be summed up in the last words he ever said, they are recorded in the last verse of the last epistle that he wrote, 2 Peter 3:18. Here is his word to you: "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; to Him be glory both now and forever. Amen." He could tell you to grow because that's what he had to do.

Father, thank You for our time this morning, for Your Word to us. We are grateful again for how it touches our hearts and speaks to us. Thank You for the example of Peter. Thank You for what we learn from him. We ask, Lord, that You would continue to teach us as the Spirit of God applies these truths to our hearts. Raise up leaders here, leaders who would be the ones of Your own choosing. Shape and refine them. Make them into what You'd have them to be for Your own cause and for Your glory. May we grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Father, now bring those to the prayer room that You would have to come. Do Your work in every heart. Bless even the baptism class that follows. In Christ's name, amen.

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