

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Common Men, Uncommon Calling: Peter, Part 1

Scripture: Luke 6:14

Code: 42-72

We return this morning to our study of the gospel of Luke. If you will, open the Scriptures to the sixth chapter of Luke. We find ourselves in verses 12 through 16 where we are introduced to Jesus' twelve Apostles. We're going to take a little time to get to know these men. They are common men with an uncommon calling.

Verse 12 says, "And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as Apostles: Simon whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother and James and John and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas the son of James and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."

Here we are introduced to the twelve Apostles. By the time we're through with the next few weeks of getting to know these men, we're going to find that they're very much like us. I would dare say this may be the most encouraging study that we have yet done in the gospel of Luke.

To begin with, some introductory thoughts will get us into the text. We all understand the word "qualified." That's a word that's used an awful lot in the English language, particularly in our society which has set standards and qualifications for almost every enterprise. There are qualifications for jobs, qualifications for schools, for professions, for drivers' licenses, for credit cards, for loans and on and on and on it goes. We understand that people have to qualify or be qualified or manifest qualifications. The highest paying jobs, at least on the surface, demand some qualifications in the area of personality or character, skill, education, experience, self-motivation, social interaction, intelligence, stress management and many more qualifications. We have learned in society that to do certain things, to do almost anything you need somebody who is qualified, somebody who has the aptitude, the skill, the experience or whatever.

And the Bible is very clear that God's standard for those who are most responsible for His eternal work are extremely high. In fact, just take being a pastor in the church, which is sort of at the top of the list of spiritual responsibilities, and in 1 Timothy chapter 3 we learn that someone who wants to learn to do that task must be above reproach, a one-woman man, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money, must manage his own household well, keep his children under control. How he must

not be a new convert so that he would become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil, must have a good reputation with those outside the church so that he doesn't fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

In Titus chapter 1 a similar list is given, one who would be a pastor or leader in the church must be above reproach, a one-woman man, have believing children, not accused of dissipation, rebellion, above reproach, not self-willed, not quick tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of money, hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled and able to hold forth the...hold fast and forth the Word of life so as to teach people sound doctrine and refute those who rebel against the truth.

Hebrews 13:7 says they have to live exemplary lives. Their faith has to be the kind you can follow. And they have to give an account to God for how they conduct themselves. Very, very high standards.

And that's the standards for those who lead in the church only because they're to be the model of God's standard for everybody else. God doesn't lower the standard with the rest of us. He says this is the standard for the leaders because you have to manifest the standard for everybody else. Not a different standard, really, the same standard. In fact, if you want to know what the ultimate qualification is, Matthew 5:48 Jesus said, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Frankly, nobody qualifies. Humanly speaking, nobody qualifies. Nobody qualifies to be in God's Kingdom, nobody qualifies to be in God's service. Scripture is very clear that nobody on his own can meet the least of God's standards. All have sinned and come short of God's glory. There's none righteous, no not one, Romans 3 says.

And even after Paul had become an Apostle and been an Apostle and was in the middle of his ministry, it was Paul who confessed, "I know nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh," Romans 7:18, and he said in 1 Timothy 1:15, "I'm the chief of sinners." Amazing.

Well, you see, God has a problem. There are no qualified people...none. And so an amazing aspect of God's grace is that He must save sinners, He must sanctify sinners, and then He must work His ministry through the unworthy and the unqualified. Very encouraging to meet the Twelve because like all the rest of us, they are selected from the unworthy and the unqualified. They're like Elijah, that great prophet. If you were to go to the Old Testament and look across the peaks of godly men and leaders and prophets and preachers, you might say that the peak of all peaks was Elijah...great man of God, mightily used of God. And James reminds us in James 5:17, he says of Elijah he had the same kind of nature that we have, he's just like us. He didn't rise to the highest of usefulness to God because he was different than we are, neither did Paul. Paul, as I just said, recognized himself as the chief of sinners. And God doesn't really have a choice, He either uses the unworthy and the

unqualified or He does it Himself. But God has chosen to bring to sinners saving grace and sanctifying grace and then serving grace, transforming the unworthy and the unqualified into useful servants. And we're going to learn that as we look at these Apostles.

I think we are tempted generally as Christians, and it's an understandable thing, to become discouraged and to become disheartened when our spiritual life and witness suffer because of our sins and our failures and we think that we're nobodies and we're nothing. You know, we crawl up a few steps and it's kind of three steps forward, two steps back and we battle temptation and we go through all of this and we wonder how it is that God could ever use us. And I am just here to remind you and will do so for the next few weeks that that's just standard fare, we're all the same and those are the kind of people God uses because that's all He has to work with.

Satan may even attempt to convince us that our shortcomings render us useless to God and His church, but His use of the Apostles testifies to the fact that God can use the unworthy and the unqualified. He can use the nobodies. They turned the world upside-down, these Twelve, but they did not turn the world upside-down because they were extraordinarily talented, or because they were naturally gifted, or because they were supremely educated or uniquely influential, or because they had achieved heights of social status. They did not turn the world upside-down because they were massive intellects. It was rather in spite of all their human limitations, in spite of everything that they were not that God used them because it was when they recognized they were nothing, they surrendered themselves to God whose power is always perfected in weakness. There are many people who are too confident to be any use to God, too proud to be of any use to God.

So God picks the humble, the lowly, the meek and the weak so that there's never any question about the source of power when their lives change the world. It's not the man, it's the truth of God and the power of God in the man. We sure need to remind preachers today of this. It's not their cleverness, it's not their personality. Power is in the Word...power is in the truth that we preach, not in us. And apart from one person, one human, God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ, the history of God's work on earth is the story of His using the unqualified and the Twelve were no exception to that. Jesus took the unworthy, the unqualified and transformed them into mighty servants of spiritual power, turned the world upside-down, laid the foundation of the church upon which all these centuries have been built. They became great preachers, healers, expellers of demons, writers of the New Testament. They were the real foundation of the church, according to Ephesians 2:20. They were the agents of divine revelation, according to Ephesians 3:5. They were the teachers of true doctrine, according to Acts 2:42. In Ephesians 4:11 it tells us they were the builders of the church. They are called holy apostles in Ephesians 3:5 and Revelation 18:20. They were examples of godliness. And they were granted the ability to do mighty signs and wonders, according to 2 Corinthians 12:11 and 12. These Twelve, very plain, common men were elevated to a uncommon calling.

They were Galileans. They were not the elite. Galileans were the low class, rural, uneducated, as far away as you can get from the literate and the educated in Jerusalem. They were the commoners, the nobodies. They had gathered around Jesus as disciples, the word is mathetes, learners. They followed Him to learn. But here Jesus picks out twelve of those learners and says, "I'm going to train you to be Apostles, you are disciples, you will be Apostles. You have come to learn, you will go to preach." And here they begin their formal training. They begin their internship. It's very necessary. Only two years from this point Jesus will be crucified, three days later He shall rise, forty days later He will ascend to heaven and they will be on their own and the gospel will be in their hands and the Kingdom of God will depend on their preaching, and the power and conviction and truthfulness of their preaching. Only two years time is left to prepare them and so right here we begin the training of the Twelve.]

They aren't even given their supernatural gifts until we get to chapter 9 where it says the Lord gives them the power to heal and to cast out demons. They don't even really begin their primary responsibility which is preaching, proclaiming the Kingdom, as chapter 9 verse 2 says, they don't begin that yet. First they have to have some training and then will become...will come the time to receive the power and to go out and do the proclamation and they'll go out on some short-term preaching tours and they'll have an opportunity to use that great power. And finally when the Lord goes back to heaven, it will all be in their hands.

So here we meet the twelve handpicked men, the first disciples of Jesus to become Apostles, the true Apostles. Let me give you some general observations. As I said, they were all common men. All of them were from Galilee with the exception of Judas who was from a town called Kerioth in the south. They were really rural people from the part of the nation of Israel that didn't really have much prestige or nobility. The Lord had ignored the Pharisees, none of them was a Pharisee, none of them was a Sadducee, none of them was a priest, none of them was a scribe. None of them was any prominent person, they were all very common, common men. As I told you about their commonness, four of them were fishermen, one was a tax collector, one was a terrorist, and one was a traitor.

Some general observations about the list. Would you look at the list? There are four lists of the Apostles in the New Testament; Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts... Matthew 10, Mark 3, here Luke 6 and Acts chapter 1. In these lists the names are always the same, so that we know exactly who these twelve were. But the names are in identical order in the lists...with some exceptions that I'll point out to you.

The first name in all four lists is always Peter. And then you have three groups of four...group one, group two, group three. The first group is Simon called Peter, Andrew, James, John. In every list they are the first four. Peter, James and John's names get mixed around in the list, Peter's is always first but they're always in group one.

Group two is always the same, Philip, Bartholomew, or Nathanael, sometimes called Nathanael...Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, that's always group two in every list. And the names of Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas get mixed, but Philip is always the first name of group two.

Group three, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas son of James and Judas Iscariot, always the same...the names may be mixed a little bit, the two middle names, the names of Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James get mixed, but James the son of Alphaeus is always the first name in group four and Judas is always the last name of the Twelve.

What have we learned by that? Well we learn that the Twelve were divided into fours...group one, group two, group three. Four--Peter, James, John and Andrew...the second group as we identified them, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas. The other group, James, Simon, Judas and Judas. These groups had leaders. The leader of group one, obviously Peter. The leader of group two, Philip. The leader of group three, James the son of Alphaeus. And the name at the top of the list is always Peter who was the leader of everybody.

These groups of four are in decreasing intimacy with Christ. Group one always around Christ...Peter, James, John and Andrew, the most intimate group. They were the first disciples that Jesus called back in John chapter 1 verse 35 to 42, the first group He called to be disciples, here he identifies as Apostles. They've been with Him the longest and they are the most intimate with Christ. And throughout the rest of the story of the ministry and life of Christ, Peter, James and John in particular are very intimate with Christ, and Andrew is close. Group two is a little bit more distant but we do know quite a bit about Philip and Bartholomew and Thomas, as I mentioned they are group two...and also Matthew. Group three seems at a distance. We don't know much about them at all. The only thing we know is about Judas because he betrayed Jesus. So Jesus had twelve, but He could only have very intimately three and sometimes four and they kind of move away in terms of intimacy. But as Mark 3:14 says they were appointed that they would be with Him, so they were all there, all twelve, but with certain degrees of intimacy with Christ.

It does tell us that even a group of twelve is too much for one person to handle at an equal level of intimacy. Jesus had very close to Him three, next came Andrew and then the next and the next. So we learn that there have to be some decisions made about who one spends intimate time with because you can't be everything to everybody.

We also learn that there are leaders within the group. There's a leader in group one, Peter; leader of group two, Philip; leader of group three, James the son of Alphaeus. There are leaders among leaders and a leader over all of them, namely Peter. These are the Master's men and it will become apparent because we're going to get to meet each one of them. We're going to learn all there is to

know about them to help us to see and understand who they were. But we're going to see that the Lord does use the weak and He uses the common for uncommon duty. He does that in order that He might disdain the wise and receive all the glory for what is done. They were diverse. They were common. But they were shaped by the Lord into world changers.

They had varied backgrounds, as I said, in terms of their employment, or their career...tax collector, fishermen, etc. They also had varied temperaments. Peter...you know Peter, we call him the Apostle with the foot-shaped mouth...eager, bold, aggressive, impulsive, very verbal. John on the other hand spoke very little. The first twelve chapters of Acts he and Peter are companions...John never says a thing.

There is Nathanael/Bartholomew, a true believer, openly confessing his faith in Christ. And he's sort of matched up with Thomas who is a skeptic and a doubter and has to have proof for everything.

Their politics were different. There was Matthew called also Levi. Matthew was the most despicable person in Israel. He was a tax collector who had taken a job with Rome to exhort taxes from his own people to pay an oppressive invader, the Roman Empire, pagans who didn't believe in the true and living God. They were despicable, those tax collectors were, and here was Matthew/Levi, one of the Apostles, a betrayer of his own people for money.

And another of the Apostles was a man named Simon called the Zealot. The Zealots...the Zealots were those who hated Rome. That was the name of a group of people in Israel who wanted to throw off the Roman yoke. They were...many of them were terrorists. They didn't have an army that declared war on Rome, they did terrorist acts. Some of them were called Sicarii because they carried around a Sicarii, which is a sword and they went around stabbing Romans in the back. Terrorist acts. And here was the most hated Jew, one who had betrayed his nation and become a tax collector for Rome in the same little group of four with Simon who was a terrorist. And apart from the presence of Christ, Simon may have well stuck a spear in the back of Matthew.

But let's meet at least group one and the first person in group one, Simon. Let me just give you another thought here. Peter, James, John and Andrew, that's group one, they were the first disciples Jesus called to Himself. Others followed on their own, these were the first He called. You find that in John 1:35 to 42. The second group that He called is that second group of Philip, Nathanael/Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew...Nathanael/Bartholomew the same one. So this is the first and second group that Jesus called. John 1:35 to 42 He calls group one. Starting in verse 43 to 51, very soon after He calls group two. So these first eight were intimate with Jesus, to some degree, for a long time. We also have the initial calling of the first four in Matthew 4:18 to 22.

Now the first one in the first group and the one who is the leader overall, verse 14, Simon. Simon, by the way, is a very common name. You have, as I noted, another Simon down at the end of verse 15

who was the Zealot...very, very common Jewish name at that time. Simon whom He, Jesus, also named Peter. Now this is always the first name at the head of every list, and I'll tell you why. Not only because we assume he was the leader but because Jesus said he is the leader. Matthew 10:2 it says that Simon Peter was the first, the protos. It doesn't mean the first in a list, it means the chief, the leader. So the Scripture in Matthew 10:2 says he was the leader. There's no question about it. He was a fisherman by trade. He lived with his brother Andrew, also a fisherman. They had a family fishing business. They caught fish on the Sea of Galilee, a certain kind of fish that exists only in the Sea of Galilee which you might know today is called St. Peter's fish. And if you ever go to the Sea of Galilee, you can have it for lunch. If it's cooked right it's very good, if they get the bones out.

That's what Simon and Andrew did. They were fishermen and they were originally from a small village called Bethsaida, but later moved to Capernaum. Capernaum was the major town on the north tip of the Sea of Galilee. I visited that place many times, it's only ruins today. The Lord said it would be destroyed and never rebuilt, and that's exactly the case. They have found ruins of a synagogue there. They have found digging down ruins of a church. They go down, down further they find the sign of the fish carved in foundation stones way down. And the tradition was they built the first church there on the foundation of the home of Peter. So when you see that early church, the ruins of that early church which you can see if you visit there, that may well be the very place Peter lived. And it's a short walk from there to the edge of the lake. So they grew up in that area, Bethsaida. Moved to Capernaum to run their fishing business on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee.

We also know about Simon that he had a wife. He was married. We know that because in Luke 4:38 Jesus healed his mother-in-law. We also know it because the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:5 says that Peter on his apostolic mission took his wife, which is a nice thing to do. It may indicate that they didn't have any children. Don't ask me how many children Peter had, the Bible doesn't tell us. We have absolutely no idea whether he had any children or whether he had some, whether they're...they were grown by the time he took his wife along. Don't ask me those questions because I don't have any information. But anyway, Paul does say in 1 Corinthians 9:5 that Peter took his wife on an apostolic mission. So he was married. That's really all we know about his domestic life.

We also know that his name was Simon Bar-jona. That is indicated to us in Matthew 16 by Jesus. Jesus calls him Simon Bar-Jona and in John 21 Jesus calls him Simon, son of Jonah, or Jonas, or John...it can be any of those when transliterated. His father's name then was John, or Jonas, or Jonah, any one of those would transliterate the original language. So his original name was Simon, as typically, Bar--meaning "son of." When someone gets a Barmitzvah they become a son of the law. "Bar" means son of. So his father's name was John or Jonas or Jonah. That's really all we know.

His father probably starting in the fishing business when he was young and that's the way it was for life for him, he thought till he met the Lord. And you remember in Luke 5 the Lord said, "You been fishing for fish, but now I'm going to make you...what?...fishers of men." You're going to come after

Me, you're going to follow Me, you're going to catch men for My Kingdom.

The Lord, it says here, gave him another name. I think this is important to note the language, "Whom He also named Peter." Now listen to this. He didn't say you have a new name to replace the old one. No. He also called him Peter. He was Simon and he was also Peter. And you find that in the Scripture.

I was curious some years back about why sometimes he's called Simon and sometimes he's called Peter. Why sometimes it refers to Simon in terms of his boat or his house or his fishing enterprise, and other times it refers to Peter. And so when you do a careful study of that, you find that there are some very, very specific things going on with regard to that. And I'll try to give you an understanding of that.

When Jesus first met Peter, John 1:42, He said, "You used to be called Cephas...that's the Aramaic...used to be called Simon, from now on you'll be called Cephas...that's the Aramaic word for Peter. The Greek word is Petros, both words mean rock. His new name was rock...Rock Bar-Jona. That was his name. That's exactly what Petros means, Cephas means.

Now why does He do this to him? Well the Lord has a purpose in mind. I mean, by nature he was...he was brash, he was vacillating, he made great promises of what he would do and didn't do it. He was one of those kinds of guys that goes whole-hearted into something and then bails back out of it. First one in, first one out, vacillating. The Lord changed his name, I think, because He wanted to work on him and He wanted to work on him in an immediate way. And it was very easy to do once He gave him the name Rock because by what Jesus called him He sent him a message. If He said to him, "Simon," then he was acting like his old self. If He said to him, "Rock," he was acting the way the Lord wanted him to act.

I remember...well, I remember a number of conversations through the years that I've had with former Dodger manager Tommy Lasorda. Tommy was quite a unique individual. Had a tremendous influence on a lot of young baseball players and has an incredible stories. One of my favorites that Tommy loves to tell, and all of his stories are very long, all the detail is really interesting, was about a young skinny pitcher who came up in the minor leagues...thin, really thin, somewhat timid but with a tremendous live arm and a potential to be one of the greatest. Tommy could see that he needed to be more competitive. He needed to get rid of some of his timidity and some of his fear so early in his career Tommy nicknamed Orel Hirschiser(?)--Bulldog which was absolutely the opposite of his personality. And over the years that's what he became, one of the most tenacious competitors that ever took the mound in the major leagues, just that reinforcing.

Simon was Simon, vacillating, impulsive, eager but he needed to be rock. And by the way the Lord addressed him, the Lord was teaching him lessons. If he called him Simon, he got one

message...Simon, Simon, thou art rock and on this I will build my church. Big difference, big difference. And just by the name He called him, immediately had access into his spiritual thinking.

Now even after his name was changed you can see a consistency in how these names are used. Whenever he is called Simon, it is in one of two contexts...a secular context, first of all. It refers, for example, in Mark 1:29, Luke 4:38, I think it's Acts 10:17, to Simon's house. That's just a secular context...Simon's house, nothing to do with spirituality, the Kingdom ministry... Simon's wife's mother, Simon's mother-in-law, Mark 1:30, Luke 4:38...Simon's boat, Simon's fishing partners, Luke 5:10. So when referring to Simon in purely the secular element, he is Simon.

The second category in which he's called Simon, first secular, second sinful. Whenever there was sin there he was dubbed Simon. You find that even back in Luke 5, "Simon answered...in verse 5...we worked all night, caught nothing, at Your bidding I'll let down the nets." This is old Simon the fisherman. But finally he starts to make some spiritual responses and in verse 8 he becomes Simon Peter. So we see him there in transition. "Simon Peter fell down at Jesus' feet, Depart from me, I'm a sinful man, O Lord." Simon who was saying..."Oh Lord, I've been fishing all night, what kind of a ridiculous thing is this? You tell me to throw the nets on that side of the boat, do You think the fish know the difference. I mean, we know what we're doing out here." That Simon. "But, Lord, I'm a sinful man," that's Peter...that's the man who sees himself the way God wants him to see himself.

So when you see "Peter," it's a good environment, it's a good experience. John 21 Jesus says, "Okay, you go to Galilee," He's risen from the dead now, He says, "You go to Galilee and I'll appear to you there," post-resurrection, "stay there, wait for Me." They go there. Peter says, "I'm not going to wait any longer, this is getting ridiculous. I don't know if I can do this. I'm going to go back and take up my fishing business." He goes down, gets in his boat, gets his nets, all his ropes, the whole paraphernalia and they all said like a bunch of rubber ducks, "We're going with you." And they all waddled down to the shore, got on the boats and went back to fishing. And Jesus showed up and rerouted all the fish so they couldn't catch any. And they came into shore and Jesus made breakfast...you know how Jesus makes breakfast..."Breakfast." So He made breakfast, the disciples come to the shore, Jesus looks at Peter and He says this, "Simon, Simon, do you love Me?"

"Yes, I love You."

Second time, "Simon, Simon, do you love Me?"

"Yes, I love You."

"Simon, Simon, do you love Me? Then do what I told you." That's Simon.

Luke 22:31, "O Simon, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you like wheat." So when you see "Simon," you're seeing elements of the sin, or elements of the secular. So when you go through, look for Peter, those are the good times.

In Mark, I think it's chapter 14 verse 37, Jesus in the garden, you remember, and He asked His disciples to pray with Him, remember that. And He comes back and He found them...what? Sleeping and He says to him, "Simon, are you asleep?" It must have gotten to the point where whenever the Lord said "Simon," Peter just cringed. "Please call me rock." To which the Lord could have replied, "I'll call you rock when you act like a rock."

John knew him well, really well. So seventeen times in the gospel of John, John calls him Simon Peter. I love that. John couldn't make up his mind because he saw both sides all the time. So he just decided "Simon Peter." Sometimes Simon, Sometimes Rock.

Peter was like all of us, wasn't he? Carnal and spiritual, functioning in the flesh sometimes, functioning in the Spirit sometimes. Sinful sometimes, righteous sometimes. So manifestly so that the Lord even gave him a name to try to reinforce what He wanted him to be, He wanted him to be a rock.

Now this guy, this vacillating sometime Simon, sometime Peter guy, this is the leader of the Twelve. Boy, how the Lord disdained self-righteous people. Nothing about Peter is self-righteous. This is the greatest and most prominent preacher of the Twelve. This is the man really who more than any other Apostle laid the foundation of the church, followed up by that late coming Apostle Paul. Peter is the hero in the first twelve chapters of the book of Acts. And this man, this man was as much Simon as he was Peter. And I say again to you what I'm going to say through the whole series, if God couldn't use the unworthy and the unqualified, He wouldn't use anybody.

One of my favorite poets through the years has been Studdard Kennedy(??). He wrote some lines that I think fit Peter and me, and probably you. This is what he wrote. "There's nothing in a 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." Peter was a big beginning, but oh was he ever a big ending by the power of Christ.

Now, for this morning I want to take you through to know Peter but it's going to take me next week to finish. But this morning I want you to grab something that I think is really fascinating.

Peter was the leader, no question. The Lord chose him to be the leader. The Lord equipped him to be the leader. The Lord shaped him to be the leader, trained him to be the leader. And so, when you look at Peter you can see how God builds a leader. This is a classic, biblical illustration of how God builds a leader. If you want to know how the Lord shapes a leader, study Peter. He's the key to understanding that issue. The gospels are literally filled with his name. His name is mentioned in the

gospels more than any name but Jesus. Nobody speaks as often as Peter and nobody is spoken to by the Lord as often as Peter. No disciple is so reproved by the Lord as Peter, and no disciple reproved the Lord but Peter. No disciple ever so boldly confessed and outspokenly acknowledged the Lordship of Christ as Peter, and no one denied it as boldly as Peter. No one is so praised and blessed as Peter, and no one else is called Satan but Peter. The Lord had harder things to say to Peter than He ever said to anybody else and that was part of making him the man He wanted him to be, the leader Christ desired. God took a common man with an ambivalent, vacillating, impulsive, unsubmitive personality and shaped him into the leader of the Twelve, the greatest preacher out of the Apostles and in every sense the real power of the first twelve chapters of Acts, the birth of the church.

Now there has to be three elements for the Lord to make a leader. I'm going to give you the first one this morning. Three elements...the first one is the right raw material. There's always this age-old question, are leaders born or made? I want to fall on the side of the fact that they are born...and then shaped.

Peter had that God-given fabric woven into his personality to make him a leader. He was the right raw material. And the Lord wove that in his mother's womb, to borrow the words of the psalmist. The Lord put together the right stuff to make him the man that could be shaped into a leader. There are just sort of personal features of his personality that are critical to leaders. They cannot be developed, they are inborn.

The first one is inquisitiveness...inquisitiveness. When you're looking for a leader, find somebody who asks a lot of questions...it's really important. People who don't ask questions don't wind up as leaders.

You say, "I'm not sure I understand that." Very simple, curiosity is critical to leadership. People who are content with what they don't know and content with what they don't understand and content with what they haven't analyzed and content with problems they haven't solved can't lead. Leaders have to have an almost insatiable curiosity to know what they don't know, to understand what they don't understand. They understand that knowledge is power. Whoever has the information has the lead. If you want to find a leader, look for somebody who asks a lot of questions.

Some of you have kids like that. You have maybe one kid out of your little batch and this little kid just asks question after question after question after question. And you get weary answering these questions. That's the fabric of leadership. This tremendous internal drive to know what they don't know and understand what they don't understand is all about solving problems. And you've probably got another kid who sits in the corner quietly and never asks anything. He'll probably grow up and be a computer guy who will work for your other son. Leaders have tremendous curiosity.

In the gospels, Peter asks more questions than all the other Apostles combined. I mean,...and we only probably have a part of it, it was probably all day every day for Jesus. "Yeah, Peter, just a minute, I'll answer you just as soon as I'm done with this person." I love people who ask questions. We're always trying to understand what's going on, sort it out. We say there are three kinds of people...there are people who make things happen, there are people who watch things happen, there are people who say, "Hey, what's happening." I don't need those kinds of people.

That takes me to the second point, initiative. If a man is to be wired for leadership, he has to have initiative. He has to be the kind of person that makes things happen. Peter not only asked all the questions, he was always the first one to answer any question posed by Christ. And he would just dive in where angels fear to tread. Jesus said, "Who do people say that I am?" "Oh, they say You're Jeremiah, one of the prophets..." No, no, no. "Who do you say?" "You're Christ the Son of the living God." The other guys are still processing the information. Peter was very fast. That's a part of leadership, fast on the trigger. And sometimes he had to reel back, undo, unsay, be rebuked, but it's part of leadership to grab initiative by the throat.

During the Garden of Gethsemane, John 18, here comes the Roman soldiers from Port Antonia, 500 of them, let's say, including the high priest and all the retinue from the temple, they've come to take Jesus. Peter's there. Peter immediately, the crowd comes...swish...pulls out his sword, takes a swing at the head of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, the high priest is out in front because he was the dignitary of dignitaries, so he's in the front, beside him is his servant. Peter tried to cut his head off, he ducked, lost his ear. The Lord says, "Put your sword away, Peter. You live by the sword, you die by the sword." He was essentially saying if you take a life, you're going to give a life, thus affirming capital punishment as a divine law. But I mean, just think about it. There's a whole Roman army there, what does he think he's going to do? Go through the whole group? One at a time...shick, shick, shick. I mean...sometimes this initiative doesn't take the long view, or the broad view. It's just...boom. But that's the stuff of leadership.

I'd rather reel back somebody like that. I'd rather recover somebody like that than try to motivate somebody to take initiative. There are some people you just have to drag kicking and screaming in any forward direction. Not Peter. He always wanted to know what he didn't know. He always wanted to understand what he didn't understand. He was the first one to ask a question and he was the first one to answer the question, take the initiative, charge ahead and that's the stuff of leadership. But it's got to be shaped. What I'm talking about here is raw material. It's going to be very critical for Peter, he's going to have to have some kind of moxie, some kind of chutzpah, as the Jews would say, some kind of courage to stand up in Jerusalem on Pentecost and preach the gospel in the face of the population that had just executed their Messiah. That's going to take tremendous courage but that's the kind of guy He is. By the time the Lord has shaped that initiative, it's been transformed into boldness.

There's a third element of raw material that leaders have and that's involvement. A true leader, a true leader is in the middle of the action. A true leader is not sitting in the background telling everybody what to do while he lives a life of comfort away from the fray. A true leader goes through life with a cloud of dust around him. And that's why people follow him. People don't follow somebody somewhere else, they follow somebody in the fray. Jesus comes one night, He's walking on the water. And who out of all the disciples jumps out of the boat? Peter. There's the Lord, I'm here, I've got to get where the action is...bang, out of the boat. And he's walking on the water. And the rest of the disciples are just looking over, just kind of adjusting, trying to make sure they don't fall overboard in the storm. And he's out on the water. This is involvement, serious involvement. Jesus was there, he was here, he had to close the gap.

You say, "Yeah, people look at this incident, they criticize Peter's lack of faith, he got out there, he looked around...oh, what am I doing...he started to sink. Yeah, he had weak faith." Let me tell you something about his faith. Where were the other eleven? They never got out of the boat. Talk about weak faith. Before you criticize Peter, remember where he was when he began to sink. People look at Peter's life and they say...Well, he's around the fire, you know, and he denies Jesus and he denies Jesus and the cock crows," you remember the story. But before you condemn Peter too quickly, he was alone in a position where such a temptation could hit him because he was doing his best to stay as close to Christ as he could. That's a leader. Everybody else may bail out, he stays as close to the action as he can get. I'm not interested in leaders who want to send down messages from afar, I want to see people who have a passion for the involvement.

That was the raw material that was in Peter, that kind of inquisitiveness, that kind of initiative, that kind of involvement. He asked all the questions. He was the first guy who tried to charge ahead for whatever responsibility needed to be done and he wanted to be in the middle of everything. That's the stuff that leaders are made of. And so the Lord knew that and He wove it all in the fabric of who he was in his mother's womb. And now when he reaches adulthood, it's time for the Lord to shape it. Frankly, if it's not shaped by the Lord, it could be disastrous. So, two other things have to happen...the right raw material, point two, the Lord has to drag him through the right experiences to shape that raw material...three, the Lord has to give him the right virtues so that that great leadership potential is controlled by virtue. And next time we're going to see those experiences, how the Lord took him through the experiences that shaped him and developed the virtues that made him the man he became. Let's pray.

Our Father, we certainly see ourselves in Peter, uneducated and without influencing the world, a common man and yet woven into the fabric of his very nature was the potential, the raw material that You needed and You gave him the faith to believe, You saved him, You sanctified him and then You shaped him with the right experiences, the right virtues to make him the great preacher of the gospel

that he became. He preached not only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles and who lived to the very end a faithful life. Thank You, Lord, for the confidence we have that You're still using common people for uncommon callings. We are the unworthy and the unqualified who want to be shaped and molded by the Lord Jesus to be used...some of us as Peter was used, some of us as James, or John, or Andrew, or Philip, or Bartholomew, Thomas or Matthew, James, Simon, Judas...none of us certainly want to be like Judas of Iscariot. But, Lord, we thank You that You called to Yourself all different kinds of people to advance Your Kingdom and You're so profoundly proficient in using mightily the unworthy and the unqualified and demonstrating Your glory in salvation, sanctification and service. To that end we pray that You would use us and continue to instruct us as we learn more about these wonderful men who are for us examples to follow. We thank You for what we've heard today and what is ahead, in Christ's name. Amen.

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