

"but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,"
1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)



Marietta church of Christ

8150 Driggers St.
Jacksonville, FL 32220

Times of Worship

Sunday:

9 am - Bible Classes / 10 am - Worship / 5 pm - Worship

Wednesday:

7 pm - Bible Study/Worship

Evangelist: Devin Barber

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Peter: Overcoming Failure

From the beginning with Adam and Eve, great men and women have strayed from God's direction and had to pick themselves up afterwards. Abraham lied, Moses murdered, David committed adultery, and Paul persecuted early Christians. The list goes on and on, but when most students of the Bible think of someone making mistakes, they think of the apostle Peter.

Peter is constantly in the gospel writers' spotlight. He's mentioned first in all lists of the apostles, likely because he was the oldest and therefore the group's leader and spokesman. Mt 10:2 even says Peter was "first," not because he was first to follow, but because he was "chief." We often see Peter putting his foot in his mouth, but he's probably vocalizing what the others were thinking and urging him to say. Because of the concentration by the gospel writers on him, we are privy to many of Peter's missteps and can learn much from their effect on him, his responses, and his later words of related wisdom.

One area we see Peter fail relates to a **Lack of Focus**. While Jesus prays in Gethsemane (Mt 26), we see Peter, James, and John unable to stay awake or remain engaged with Jesus even for one hour. Earlier was the memorable account of Peter stepping off the boat into the storm, walking on the sea towards Jesus at His command (Mt 14).

When he “saw the wind, he was afraid” (Mt 14:30) and began to sink. We too can struggle to keep our eyes on the Lord, distracted by the temptations of the world. Peter shows even as he sinks how to begin to overcome this failure, saying, “Lord, save me.” The best way to regain our concentration on God amidst the easily overwhelming environment around us is to **Look to Him** for help. As an older man he restates these ideas in 1 Pt 5:7-8: “Casting all your anxieties on him because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Another of Peter’s common failures we can easily relate to is a **Lack of Understanding**. So often he is the one demonstrating Jesus’ teachings are not being comprehended. Memorably in Mt 16, just after Peter’s great confession, he rebukes Jesus for predicting His death and resurrection. Jesus responds strongly knowing the eternal consequences of Peter’s misguided position. One chapter before Peter responds for the group after another teaching of Jesus has confused even those closest to him. In Mt 15:15, Peter wisely requests, “Explain the parable to us.” Our knowledge of God’s word is a lifelong process. There may be times we find ourselves falling short out of ignorance or immaturity. We can’t know everything God wants us to understand immediately. The best solution to a lack of understanding is to diligently seek explanations from God just as Peter did when dealing with a difficult parable. **Increase Your Knowledge** by a lifetime in the word. The same Peter contradicting the mission of Christ and confused about His teachings will eloquently explain in detail God’s plan to multitudes in Acts 2 and with beautiful simplicity in 1 Pt 1:3. Years of study informs Peter as he writes 2 Pt 1:3: “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence.”

One last failure that so many of us unfortunately share with Peter is a **Lack of Humility**. All the twelve argue about who is greatest (Mt 18). James and John try to angle for positions of prominence (Mt 20). Peter though is the one whose overconfidence leads him to make the bold claim that he will never fall away only to deny knowing Jesus three times just hours later (Mt 26). Peter’s response to this humiliating failure, however, shows the heart of one engaged in honest self-examination with all pretense removed. He “wept bitterly” (Mt 26:75). He had shown signs of this humility from his first meeting with Jesus, knowing he was a sinful man unworthy of being in Jesus’ presence (Lk 5:8). We must likewise see ourselves as undeserving and **Bow Before God**. An older, reflective Peter reminds us of the right attitude for those struggling with pride in 1 Pt 5:6: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you.”

Opportunities to fail will be more numerous for those actively engaged. Peter never let his lowly background inhibit his willingness to serve. And he never let his failures keep him down. He realized they made him stronger in preparation for a far greater future as expressed in 1 Pt 1:6-7: “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

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