



# Shaped to Serve

Sunday, February 26, 2017

## Simon Peter: The Earnest Blockhead

### Some Background

The Gospels and Acts include more specific accounts of Simon Peter's experiences than any of the other disciples. Peter is famous, particularly among Catholics, as the "rock" on which the church is built. Yet, we discover that in many (if not most) of his encounters with Jesus, Peter seemed less like the rock on which to build the church and more like he had rocks in his head.

He seemed to fail at the most pivotal moments. Peter trusted Jesus enough to actually walk on water, but he lost focus at just the wrong moment and ended up in over his head. Jesus bent to wash his disciples' feet, a beautiful act of servanthood, and Peter almost ruined the moment by protesting. He became the spokesman for the apostles, even though he ended up on the wrong end of Jesus' wrath on at least one occasion, and he completely denied that he knew Jesus, not once, but three times!

Simon Peter is portrayed as a blockhead in the Gospels, but he followed Jesus with everything he had. He was passionate about everything he did, even when that passion led him to challenge Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus kept his promise to build the church on Peter, and Peter's greatest triumph may have come on Pentecost, when his street preaching resulted in the conversion of 3,000. Peter is the perfect example of the unlikely hero for those of us who feel as if God can't possibly use us in our blockhead human nature.

**Famous Quote:** "If we let Him... He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energu and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine."

—C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 174-75

**Youth Mindset:** Most students have felt like a blockhead at one point or another, whether is school, at home, or in athletics. Preteens can easily relate to Peter, with all his excitement, fear, and worry about his outward appearance and place amongst a group. Themes of betrayal are also present at the end of John’s gospel.

**Teacher Homework:** Read some key passages about Peter: Matthew 4:18-20, 14:22-33, 16:22-23, 26:31-35,69-75 / John 13:36-38, 18:15-18,25-27, 20:3-7.

### **Opening Activity**

Share with the group of middle school students about a time when you felt like a blockhead. Perhaps this is a time when you meant well, but things didn’t turn out as you had planned. Invite the group to share times when they may have felt the same way.

### **Watch the Video**

Show the video: “Peter: The Earnest Blockhead.”

### **In the Bible**

Read together, John 21:15-19. Encourage the group to consider what Jesus and Peter were thinking about in this exchange. For example, Peter must have been getting frustrated by being asked the same question over and over! Reread the lesson, this time inviting two people to play the part of Jesus and Peter and act out the scripture in pantomime as it is read aloud.

- Why did Jesus have to ask Peter three times if he loved him? Why did Peter give the same answer each time?
- Why did Jesus’ response always have to do with sheep? What was he implying that he intended for Peter to do?
- Knowing that Peter became the “rock” on which the church was built, how does the story fit into the bigger picture of Christian history?

### **They Know My Voice**

Find a simple maze printout and break into groups of two. One person must keep their eyes closed as they go through the maze with a pencil or marker. The other must guide them using only their voice. How difficult was this to accomplish? For some it may be easier, and for others a very difficult task. Is it not the same when it comes to listening to God’s voice? Read again John 10:14.

### **Church is Messy Together**

Invite the group to make a large circle and be seated. Give someone a large spool of yarn. Invite the group to hold onto a piece of yarn as it is tossed across the circle until everyone is holding a piece of the yarn. As they hold the yarn, invite the group to see how, like this circle, the church is connected and people from many different backgrounds and different times have been an integral part of the web. If one lets go, the web loses some of its structure. Sometimes, it looks messy but it is the church and God is in control.

Next, invite the group to try and unravel the mess without anyone letting go of their piece of the string. This may take some time, but it just goes to show that God's work does indeed involve us all, although at times we may not get along, or feel like earnest blockheads in the process of discerning God's work.

### **Closing Ritual**

Share in "highs and lows" from the week. Prayer together, this week highlighting various fears people in the group may have as they head into a new week. Give these fears up to God and go in peace, boldly being the church.

### **Take-Home Question**

Read Matthew 14:22-33 with a family member. Talk about a time when you both have felt your faith be so strong you felt like you could walk on water. Also, recall a time when you felt like you were sinking and in need of help. Summarize this conversation in your response this week.