

## Passages in John Which Include Peter

### John 1.35-42 (The Calling of the Disciples)

35 The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup>and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' <sup>37</sup>The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' <sup>39</sup>He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. <sup>40</sup>One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, **Simon Peter's** brother. <sup>41</sup>He first found his brother **Simon** and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed<sup>\*</sup>). <sup>42</sup>He brought Simon<sup>\*</sup> to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are **Simon** son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated **Peter**<sup>\*</sup>).

### John 6.66-71 (An Incident When Many of Jesus' Followers Abandoned Him)

66 Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. <sup>67</sup>So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' <sup>68</sup>**Simon Peter** answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup>We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'<sup>\*</sup> <sup>70</sup>Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil.' <sup>71</sup>He was speaking of Judas son of Simon Iscariot,<sup>\*</sup> for he, though one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

### John 13.6-37 (Peter is Reluctant to Have Jesus Wash His Feet)

<sup>6</sup>He came to **Simon Peter**, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' <sup>7</sup>Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'<sup>\*</sup> <sup>8</sup>**Peter** said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.'<sup>\*</sup> <sup>9</sup>**Simon Peter** said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, 'One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet,<sup>\*</sup> but is entirely clean. And you<sup>\*</sup> are clean, though not all of you.'<sup>\*</sup> <sup>11</sup>For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

John 18.10-27 (Peter's Denial during the Trial of Jesus before the High Priest)

<sup>10</sup>Then **Simon Peter**, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. <sup>11</sup>Jesus said to **Peter**, 'Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?'

<sup>15</sup>**Simon Peter** and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, <sup>16</sup>but **Peter** was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. <sup>17</sup>The woman said to **Peter**, 'You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?' He said, 'I am not.' <sup>18</sup>Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing round it and warming themselves. **Peter** also was standing with them and warming himself.

<sup>19</sup> Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. <sup>20</sup>Jesus answered, 'I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. <sup>21</sup>Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.' <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, 'Is that how you answer the high priest?' <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered, 'If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?' <sup>24</sup>Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

<sup>25</sup> Now **Simon Peter** was standing and warming himself. They asked him, 'You are not also one of his disciples, are you?' He denied it and said, 'I am not.'

John 20.1-10 (The Empty Tomb)

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. <sup>2</sup>So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' <sup>3</sup>Then **Peter** and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. <sup>4</sup>The two were running together, but the other disciple outran **Peter** and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup>He bent down to look in and saw the linen

wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup>Then **Simon Peter** came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup>and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup>Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup>for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup>Then the disciples returned to their homes.

#### John 21.1-21 (Resurrection Appearance)

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. <sup>2</sup>Gathered there together were **Simon Peter**, Thomas called the Twin,<sup>\*</sup> Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. <sup>3</sup>**Simon Peter** said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' <sup>6</sup>He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. <sup>7</sup>That disciple whom Jesus loved said to **Peter**, 'It is the Lord!' When **Simon Peter** heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. <sup>8</sup>But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards<sup>\*</sup> off.

#### (Breakfast on the Beach with the Risen Jesus)

<sup>9</sup> When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' <sup>11</sup>So **Simon Peter** went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup>Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup>This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to **Simon Peter**, '**Simon** son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.'<sup>16</sup> A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.'<sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, '**Simon** son of John, do you love me?' **Peter** felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'<sup>18</sup> Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.'<sup>19</sup> (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

20 **Peter** turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?'<sup>21</sup> When **Peter** saw him, he said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about him?'<sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!'<sup>23</sup> So the rumor spread in the community\* that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?'

## Teachers' Notes on Simon Peter in John's Gospel

*(In teaching this class, use copies of the textual material above and hand out to each student. I'll place 20 copies in each class room for your convenience. Try to start as early as possible and have students skim through the texts. Move quickly through the questions—even skipping one or two-- to the material on discipleship and the class members themselves.)*

Of all the characters in the fourth Gospel, Simon Peter displays the most contradiction and ambivalence. He is quite possibly the most developed character in the text. Unlike the first three gospels, John is not depicted initially as a fisherman nor as a married man. He is simply Andrew's brother. Found by Andrew, Peter is brought to Jesus. Jesus gives Peter his nickname Cephas, which John never again uses. Neither does John tell us why the name change. Instead, the fourth gospel identifies Simon throughout the story as Simon Peter. This compound name may serve to highlight Peter's special relationship with Jesus.

Peter emerges in the story of Jesus at several points. Following his initial appearance, Peter plays a significant role in the sixth chapter serving as a spokesman for the disciple group. After this, Peter re-emerges as a prominent character in the in the final days of Jesus' life. Peter serves as a contrast to both Judas Iscariot and the Beloved Disciple for the purpose of shedding light on discipleship and the significance of Jesus' life and death.

The presence of the Beloved Disciple in John's final scenes spotlights the contrast between him and Peter, which is prominent at the close of the Fourth Gospel. In different ways the Beloved provides an entrée for Peter. For example, the Beloved provides Peter access to the courtyard of the high priest. He also runs with Peter to the empty tomb, but allows Peter to be the first to enter. Lastly, it is the Beloved who identifies the risen Jesus as the Lord.

One might conclude that the Beloved is the ideal disciple. Peter appears to be a more earthy, accessible disciple, full of miscalculations, but always present and trying. Peter is somewhere between the tragic, Judas Iscariot and the idealized, slightly unreal Beloved disciple. He's like us. Flawed, impulsive, and slow to understand, Peter represents us and shows that success in discipleship is dependent, not on personal perfection but on the grace of God who calls and accepts his own in spite of themselves.

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## Discussion Questions:

1. Give a one sentence description of Peter based only on the Fourth Gospel's presentation of him.
2. Peter makes several mistakes in these passages. On balance, is the fourth gospel's presentation of Simon Peter positive or negative?
3. How does the character change through the course of the action in the drama? Or through contact with Jesus? If you detect change, what is it in Peter's case? (Hint: We would expect that Peter would change as a result of his "staying" with Jesus. According to John, it is the stay with Jesus that brings greater understanding.)
4. Does the name change from Simon to Peter (which means "rock") give us clues to who Peter is in John's story?
5. The gospel writer appears to compare Peter with other characters in most of these passages. What do you make of this?
6. Who do you know who is like Peter?
7. What information does the story withhold about the character?
8. Why has the author deemed it better that you not know some things?
9. Is the character representative of something—say a broad category of humanity?
10. What does Peter teach us about discipleship?
11. How do you want to change after examining Peter in the fourth gospel?
12. Tradition holds that Peter was the first Pope. Is there anything in these texts from John's gospel that anticipates Peter's papal identity or authority?