



## Week 1: The Call to Follow

### Day 1 – John 1:38-42

*<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>42</sup> He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).*

### Understanding the Reading:

I don’t know about you, but sometimes, when I study Scripture, I struggle to relate to the characters. I miss a connection to their humanness, a sense of shared struggles in life, or a faith that seems to come too easily. But when I get to these passages about Simon Peter, I find someone so relatable. I wince at his brashness at times and admire his boldness at others. It feels so familiar when he makes a statement without fully understanding it, when he epically fails, and when he experiences an “aha” moment. As we dig into this time of Scripture+Shared together, let’s see if we can find ourselves nodding in recognition of our own struggles of life and faith, and experience a new willingness to be even more honest, bold, and open to Jesus’ invitation to move into the deeper waters of our faith.

In today’s reading, we see how Peter meets Jesus for the first time. His brother Andrew tells him, “We have found the Messiah,” and then he brings him to Jesus. Peter meets Jesus because he is invited by someone he loves and trusts. I wonder how Peter feels as Jesus “looks at him.” (v. 42) The original language of the text tells us what the English translation misses: this isn’t just a normal look—this is an intense, discerning gaze. Jesus sees Peter at the core, and then He offers Peter a new understanding of his name—the Rock.

Throughout the Old Testament, God is the one described the Rock. God is steady, strong, dependable. But for those of us who know ahead of time how this story will unfold, we may wonder why Jesus would call Peter a rock. Peter is going to blow it again and again. He will act less like a rock and more like a blade of grass that is easily moved, swayed, or broken. And yet, Jesus can see past this unsteadiness in Peter. He can see what Simon will one day become: immovably faithful,

steady, and strong. Jesus gives him a vision of what he will become—a rock of faith for others, a leader of the church.

### Questions for Reflection:

1. How were you introduced to Jesus? Were you invited by someone you loved or trusted?
2. Who is one person you are close to that you could invite to meet Jesus?
3. Imagine Jesus looking at you right now the same way He looked at Peter. What name or vision of your future self might Jesus be trying to offer you?

### Day 2 – Luke 5:1-11

*Once while Jesus was standing beside the Lake of Gennesaret and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, <sup>2</sup> he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.<sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”<sup>5</sup> Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.”<sup>6</sup> When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to burst. <sup>7</sup> So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup> But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’s knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”<sup>9</sup> For he and all who were with him were astounded at the catch of fish that they had taken, <sup>10</sup> and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”<sup>11</sup> When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.*

### Understanding the Reading:

Today, we learn that not only is Simon Peter a fisherman by trade, but he also owns his own boat. That turns out to be convenient when Jesus needs a natural amphitheater for the crowds to be able to hear His message. But what if Jesus asks Peter for the use of his boat not just for convenience but because he wants Peter’s help? I don’t know about you, but I am much better at helping others than I am in receiving help! But if Jesus wanted Peter’s help, maybe there’s a challenge in there for me to be more open to asking for help more often!

In verse 4, Jesus invites Peter to “go out where it is deeper.” Peter responds honestly about how tired and discouraged he is: “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing.” But he continues, pushing past his exhaustion and skepticism: “Yet if you say so, I will let down my nets.” “If you say so”—not exactly the most spiritually mature response! Still, if I’m honest, that’s how I feel in my relationship with Jesus sometimes, especially when I don’t understand how He’s working or why He’s inviting me to do something. Peter’s words here serve as a reminder to us of where Peter is in his relationship with Jesus at this point—he has a basic respect for Jesus at this point but not yet a true understanding of who Jesus is. He’s engaging in a kind of reluctant obedience.

### Questions for Reflection:

1. What is one situation you are facing where you could use some help? Who can you ask for help?
2. In what area of your spiritual life is Jesus challenging you to go deeper? Spending more time in prayer? In silence? Becoming more consistent in worship participation? Something else?
3. How do you discern when you need to push past tiredness or hesitation to embrace a challenge and when you need to step back and rest?

### **Day 3 – Matthew 8:14-27**

*14 When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; 15 he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him. 16 That evening they brought to him many who were possessed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and cured all who were sick. 17 This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.*

*18 Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. 19 A scribe then approached and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." 20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." 21 Another of his disciples said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."*

*23 And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. 24 A windstorm suddenly arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves, but he was asleep. 25 And they went and woke him up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" 26 And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a dead calm. 27 They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"*

#### **Understanding the Reading:**

Today's reading begins with Jesus' healing of "all who were sick." (v. 16) As Peter watches person after person suddenly become well at Jesus' touch, he must think, "This will never get old!" When Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law, though, we can imagine he develops a more profound level of gratitude for and awe of Jesus' power and His heart for wielding that power not to make Himself look good but to make the lives of those around Him better.

It seems easy to follow this Jesus. And yet, in verses 20-22, the tone shifts. Jesus wants Peter, the rest of the disciples, and all who want to follow the level of sacrifice and focus it will require.

Of course, this is going to take a while to sink in! Peter and the rest of the disciples are still in the very early days of their relationships with Jesus. We see the newness of this relationship highlighted as the disciples experience a massive storm out at sea. They wake a peacefully napping Jesus, and he calms the storm instantly. But Peter and the rest of the disciples don't worship Him in response or excitedly exclaim, "That's exactly what I expected Jesus to do!" Instead, they wonder, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and sea obey Him?" Even seeing this amazing miracle play out right before their eyes, theirs is not an instant faith. It will develop over time.

#### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. What do you think Jesus means when He says, "the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head"? (v. 20)
2. What do you think of the disciples' reaction to Jesus' calming of the storm? If you had been on the boat that day, how do you think you would have reacted?
3. Is there a time in your life when something has convinced you of the power of God?

#### **Day 4 – Luke 24:1-12**

*But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. <sup>2</sup> They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they went in they did not find the body. <sup>4</sup> While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. <sup>5</sup> The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen. <sup>6</sup> Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be handed over to the hands of sinners and be crucified and on the third day rise again.” <sup>8</sup> Then they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup> and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup> Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. <sup>11</sup> But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup> But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.*

#### **Understanding the Reading:**

In today’s reading, the familiar words of the resurrection story wash over us, and we hear in them the hinge point of our faith, the grounding of our hope, the assurance of victory over sin and death. But if we put ourselves in the mindset of Peter and the rest of the disciples that day, overwhelmed by their grief over the sudden and (mostly) unexpected loss of Jesus and their fears of whether they would be crucified next, we can understand their hesitation.

Peter is the only male disciple who takes the women’s message—the first resurrection sermon ever preached—seriously. He gets up and runs to the tomb, looking inside. When he sees that the tomb is empty, though, he just goes back home, wondering what had happened. I’ll be honest: I want to shake Peter and say, “Come on, dude! Weren’t you paying attention to the women’s sermon?! Didn’t you hear the part about how the angels said that Jesus’ tomb was empty because God had raised Him from the dead?!” Then again, maybe I shouldn’t be too hard on Peter. How many times do I half-listen to what someone else is saying over the course of a normal day?

#### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. Why do you think the rest of the disciples did not believe what the women were telling them on that Easter morning?
2. Why do you think Peter went away “wondering what had happened” instead of recalling Jesus’ earlier prophecies or believing what the women had told him just moments before?
3. How do you feel about your own listening skills? What’s one way you might improve those skills with family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, or even with God?

#### **Day 5 – John 6:60-69**

*<sup>60</sup> When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” <sup>61</sup> But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, “Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup> Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? <sup>63</sup> It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. <sup>64</sup> But among you there are some who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who were the ones who did not believe and who was the one who would betray him. <sup>65</sup> And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.”*

*<sup>66</sup> 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. 69 We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."*

### **Understanding the Reading:**

Today's reading marks a significant shift in the tone and intensity of Jesus' teaching. Jesus can never be accused of false advertising, can He?! Surprisingly, when many of the disciples tell Jesus that his teaching is "difficult" and complain about it, He doesn't respond by watering it down or making it easier on them. Instead, He explains that while His teachings are hard, they are worth digesting because "the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life." (v. 63) Instead of seeing the value there, though, some of the disciples decide they don't want to follow Jesus anymore. It's just too hard. So Jesus then turns to the twelve disciples who are closest to Him and asks them, "Do you also wish to go away?"

Of course, it's Simon Peter who pipes up with the first response of the group. In a beautiful statement of faith, he answers with this kind of affirmation of faith: "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." (v. 68) Already, a huge shift has happened in the level of Peter's spiritual maturity. He has clarity now about who Jesus is and about why being in relationship with Him is unique and essential. Maybe he will live into his nickname after all!

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. What are some of the aspects of Jesus' teaching that people find hard to digest?
2. What would be your response to those who say that following Jesus is too difficult?
3. What do you think has caused Peter to experience such a deepening of his faith and to express it so clearly?

### **Video Discussion Questions:**

1. Tom mentions that Peter is referenced more than 120 times in the New Testament, far more than any other disciple! Why do you think that is?
2. Tom and Amy discuss how naturally Andrew invites Simon to meet Jesus. Have you ever tried to invite someone to church before? If so, how did it go?
3. How is inviting someone to church the same as or different from inviting a friend to join you for a football game or concert?
4. Tom shares the story about Tony Campolo and his son Bart washing the car together on Saturday mornings and how at first Bart resisted it until he finally realized that his dad didn't *need* his help—he *wanted* his help. Tom concludes, "The best way to be with Jesus is to help him in his work." What do you think?
5. What are the things you have – like Peter's boat – that you can use to help in God's work?
6. The video ends with Tom and Amy discussing what Jesus means when He asks Peter to go out into deeper water in Luke chapter 5. Amy admits she is not a confident swimmer, so the idea of deeper water physically (as well as spiritually) is a challenge for her! In what times or ways do you think you have gone into deeper waters in your journey of life and faith?
7. Who in your life could become a spiritual accountability partner or mentor to keep reminding you to push past your comfort zone and go deeper in your relationship with Jesus and in the activeness of your faith?
8. What was your biggest takeaway this week?

### **Prayer requests and other notes:**