

Introduction

- Introduce myself...

Title Slide “further up and further in” Todd Misfeldt

Slide 1

- In Acts 2:14a
¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd:
- You may recall this line from the beginning of the Book of Acts.
- This marks the moment where Peter and the Eleven, become worthy of the title Apostles of Jesus Christ.
- From this point on they become the pillars of the Church and spread the Gospel.
- The Apostles look after the Church - the people of God.
- The Apostles proclaim the Gospel and invite people into the church where they are nurtured by their fellow Christians.
- They give their all for the Church.
- How did Peter and the Eleven get to this point? Were they born that way, natural evangelists who effortlessly spoke to people and freely gave of themselves to Christ?
- Today, I want to make the case that Peter and the Eleven were not natural born evangelists. In fact, they were born just like us. Selfish, uncertain, and needing to grow their faith.
- Further more, we can be just like them, fearlessly proclaiming Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and inviting everyone into the Church.
- To make my case, I will follow Peter through the Gospels, and show that he has nothing more than we have.
- The only difference between Peter and us is how much our faith has grown.

What we share with Peter

- Let's look at how we are like Peter.
 - Peter was part of a family. His father's name was John (John 1:42).¹
 - He had a brother Andrew (Matthew 4:18)
 - Peter was married. In Matthew 8:14–15 we learn that he has a mother-in-law who Jesus heals from a fever.
 - Peter was a businessman. In Luke 5 we learn that he was in partnership with James and John, the sons of Zebedee and we see him at work fishing.
 - Slide 2
 - Peter is not perfect. When he sees Jesus perform a miracle Luke says 'he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"' (Luke 5:8)
 - Peter is a little slow at times understanding what Jesus says. In Matt 15, after Jesus teaches a parable,
 - ¹⁵ Peter said (to Jesus), "Explain the parable to us."
 - ¹⁶ "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. (Matt 15:15-16)

¹ In Matthew 16:17 he father's name is Jonah

We Know Better Than God

- Like Peter, we at times think that we know better than God what should be done.
 - An example of Peter thinking he knew more than Jesus did in Matt 16:21-22a. After Jesus explained that he must suffer and die
 - Slide 4
 - ²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”
 - Other times, we want to take matters into our own hands to do what we think needs to be done that we don’t listen to Jesus very well.
 - In the garden of Gethsemane, despite Jesus surrender to the soldiers, Peter took matters into his own hands to physically defend Jesus.
 - In John 18:8–11 (NIV) Jesus admits who he is, effectively surrendering himself to the mob which has come to arrest him.
 - ⁸ Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.” ...
 - Peter was there but Peter isn’t listening to Jesus?
 - ¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.)
 - ¹¹ Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”
 - Peter didn’t know better than Jesus. Peter didn’t understand the big picture.
 - However, his actions to ignore Jesus’ leading and take charge are so much like what we are tempted to do at times.
 - I remember one time when I had a job offer. I wanted to pray about it but I so wanted the new job. I confess that instead of being patient and listening to God respond to my prayer, it turned in a prayer of “bless what I’m about to do.” Instead of tell me your will.

We find it hard to obey

- In addition to the times in which we think that we know better than God,
 - there are the times when we can't even do a small thing that God asks us to do.
- **Slide 5**
- Earlier in the garden of Gethsemane, on the night Jesus was arrested, Matthew 26:37–39,40-41 (NIV): 37 He (Jesus) took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. [Stay here and keep watch with me.](#)”
- A simple request from one friend to another - Stay awake with me. How did Peter fair?
- In v.40 we learn
40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. 41 “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Old Habits Pull Us Back

- What about our faith in Jesus?
- Peter’s faith, like ours, is at first a little uneven. He believes Jesus is his Lord but his old habits hold him back.
- For example, after Jesus tells his disciples that they will all fall away, Peter professes at the Last Supper that he is fully committed to Jesus.

Slide 6

- **Matthew 26:33–35 - Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial**
 - ³³ Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”
 - ³⁴ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.”
 - ³⁵ But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same.

- Like us, Peter has the best of intentions. However, a few short verses later in the Gospel of Matthew, after Jesus is arrested, we see Peter's commitment to Jesus being tested and failing

Slide 7

Matthew 26:69–75 - Peter Disowns Jesus

⁶⁹ Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said.

⁷⁰ But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

⁷¹ Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth."

⁷² He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!"

⁷³ After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away."

⁷⁴ Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵ Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Slide 8 – emphasize last sentence

Our Denial

- If we ponder this a little, it sounds like us doesn't it.
- Despite our best intentions, we can fail to publicly profess our faith because of fear of embarrassment, or in Peter's case, out of fear for his safety.
 - Sometimes for as little as fear for our social reputation.
- These may seem like small matters to us.
 - I'm not quite sure what to think about that logic.
 - On the big scheme of life, does a little white lie, a little sin, or a little denial of Jesus matter?
- However, small sins don't disappear. They repeat.
- If we can't resist temptation this time, what hope is there of resisting it in the future?
 - At best small sins may repeat.
 - At worse, they can lead to more egregious sin.
 - For example, stealing a small thing can lead to stealing larger and larger things until we are caught.
- In Peter's case, denying that he knew Jesus, especially after he made a big point that he would never do it, was a big deal. And Peter knew it.
 - V. 75 says that "he (Peter) went outside and wept bitterly."
 - Slide 8

Expect Forgiveness

- Peter knew that he had betrayed Jesus. To his credit, he did not give up hope. Peter knew, as we know, that even if we do disobey God, if we repent, that is regret our actions and ask for God's forgiveness, that reconciliation with God is possible. In fact, it is guaranteed through the promises of Jesus.
- Despite his denial of Jesus and with the hope he had in Jesus' forgiveness, Peter remains with the other disciples.
- In Peter's case, Jesus forgives Peter and restates Peter's mission in John 21:15-19. While in Galilee with the other disciples after the resurrection:

Slide 9

John 21:15–17, 19b - Jesus Reinstates Peter

¹⁵ ... Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" (the disciples present)

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, (Note Peter had denied Jesus three times) "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." ...

¹⁹ ... Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

- Jesus' charge to Peter is often spoken of Jesus appointing Peter as the shepherd of his flock, the Church.

Only Peter?

- However, Jesus' instruction to care for his flock is not limited to Peter.
- Theologian GAIL R. O'DAY writes:
 - These verses do not point to Peter as Jesus' distinctive successor, but as embodying what is true of all of Jesus' disciples. These verses position Peter as a model of what it means to live out one's love of Jesus.² ...
Jesus' command to Peter, "Follow me" (v. 19b), is a general invitation to discipleship; to follow Jesus is to be one of his sheep (10:4, 27).³
- Jesus effectively told Peter that despite his sin of denying Jesus, he was forgiven. Not only did Jesus forgive Peter but he continued to trust him with the mission to care for Jesus' church.
- This is great news for us all. No matter what sin we have committed, how little or how great, if we repent of it and ask Jesus for forgiveness, he will forgive us and be entrusted to continue to care for his church.

Peter's Journey

- Peter certainly went on quite a journey in his faith.
- As an apostle of Christ, we tend to place him up on a pedestal,
 - a place that we can never hope to be.
- As we have seen, he is like us in so many ways.
- If we look at Peter before we idolize him, we can see ourselves.
- Peter doesn't do anything that one of us couldn't do.
- God Provides us with the same Spirit which he provided to Peter.
- Peter is just like us and like Peter, we can have a similar journey in our faith. We need to go deeper into our faith.

² Gail R. O'day, "[The Gospel of John](#)," in *New Interpreter's Bible* (ed. Leander E. Keck; vol. 9; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994–2004), 9861.

³ Gail R. O'day, "[The Gospel of John](#)," in *New Interpreter's Bible* (ed. Leander E. Keck; vol. 9; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994–2004), 9861–862.

The mortal human, the foundation of Jesus' church

- Some may disagree with me that they can do what Peter did. They might point out that Jesus founded the Church upon Peter. Perhaps Peter had a special gift from God?
- **Slide 11**
- In Matt 16:18-19 Jesus says
¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”
- What does Jesus mean when he says that upon this rock (Peter's new name) that he will building his church?
 - Keys – used to lock or acquire access to something.
- Does Jesus just pick Peter out of the crowd or does Jesus says these words to Peter because of what Peter has already done and said?
- Let's hear the larger context for these verses (v. 18-19):

Slide 12

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, ^e and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. (Matthew 16:13–20)

- The entire section is not only about Peter but applies to us as well. It applies to anyone who proclaims Jesus' identity as the Messiah.
- Jesus is establishing his church upon people who confess that “You (Jesus) are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”
- So Jesus was not talking only about the specific individual human, Peter, in v. 18, but rather anyone who proclaims that Jesus is the Son of the living God.
- We all proclaim Jesus is our Lord. We are all the foundation of the church. We are all the stones upon which the church rests.

Growth

- Peter does grow in his faith.
- We his faith expresses through his actions in the Book of Acts.
- In the book of Acts, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, at Pentecost, we see that his faith has grown by leaps and bounds. Rather than being afraid to be associated with Jesus, we see Peter proclaiming the gospel to the crowd after Pentecost.
- That is the verse that we began with from Acts 2:14a
[¹⁴Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd:](#)
- Peter spoke about Jesus in front of strangers.
- Peter has certainly matured in his faith.

Further up and further in

- I'm reminded of a phrase from CS Lewis' The Last Battle. At the end of the book, in chapters 15 & 16, as our heroes' journey towards what one might call heaven, they say "Further up and further in".
- This describes Peter's faith journey and our faith journey. We move further up in our faith and further into our commitment to Jesus.

Slide 13 - "Further up and further in"

- Like this picture of a mountain stream.
- We can choose to stop and enjoy the view but we are called to continue to journey up the valley, closer to the heavens.

We begin as self-centered people,

- we receive God grace and
- we begin to see ourselves as we are and who Jesus is.
- We profess our faith in Jesus as our Messiah
 - We learn from his teachings.
 - We grow in our faith.
 - We grow our faith through prayer, bible study, personal devotions and worship.
- We learn that faith is not just what we believe,
 - But is expressed in what we do.
- We learn to listen to the Holy Spirit and not our desires.
 - We don't tell God what he should be doing but
 - make our actions conform to what he tells us to do - "Further up and further in"
- We learn that Christ calls us to be part of a community of believers, his church.
- We also learn that we must invite others into this community, into faith in Jesus.

Peter's journey in

- After Pentecost, we see Peter and the other Apostles faith really grow.
- With the coming of the Holy Spirit, we see Peter change.
- Slide 14
- In Acts 5:29 Peter is arrested for his faith and instead of denying as he did just before the crucifixion.
- He proclaims
“We must obey God rather than human beings!”
- Peter no longer fears what others think about him.
- “Further up and Further in.”
- Peter and the apostles were flogged, that is whipped by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish authorities.
- Acts 5:41 says ⁴¹“The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.”
- Peter isn't concerned what his faith will cost him.
- “Further up and Further in.”
- This is not the Peter who denied Jesus earlier. His faith has grown.
- Peter grew to stand by his faith in Jesus no matter what.

Our Journey

- What about us? Have we grown in faith or are we still denying Jesus a little bit at a time?
- It is never too late to change. It is never too late to go “Further up and Further in” to follow Jesus.

- We may ask how can I grow? I’m too old, I’m too stuck in my ways, I don’t have enough faith.
 - Peter too faced this situation:
- We may feel overwhelmed by this and are tempted to give up on Christ and turn back to our old comfortable ways.
- If Peter can grow in faith, so can each of us.

- First, as long as we have breath, God has a mission for us. It is never too late.
- Don’t sell yourself or God short.
- We can repent of our habitual sin, listen to God, continue to grow in our faith and step out in faith as Peter did, and serve Jesus’ church.

- Secondly, we do not undertake this journey alone. The Holy Spirit will be with us every step of the way.

- Will we always be comfortable as we grow in Christ? No! We should expect to be uncomfortable at times.
- As we mature in Christ, we are learning not be self-reliant but to be more attentive upon Christ’s leading us.
- Like Peter, we have the grace of God and the Holy Spirit with us. We cannot fail.

- **Slide 16**
- Jesus tells us in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:20b)
And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

- This is our comfort, that we are on Jesus’ mission and that he will be with us always.
- Let us pray ...