

## Peter's Turning Point

Growing up in Bethsaida on the northeastern shores of the Sea of Galilee, Simon and his brother Andrew enjoyed commercial fishing.

One day on the banks of the Jordan River, Andrew heard John the Baptist declare, as Jesus was approaching, *"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* (Jn. 1:29). Immediately on the following day, Andrew went and found Simon, his brother, and brought him to Jesus.

### Fishers of Men

When Jesus met Simon He renamed him Peter (Jn. 1:24). When God changes one's name, it reveals that He has a **special purpose** for that individual. In fact, Jesus promised to make him and the others *"fishers of men."*

It appears in Scripture that the disciples followed Jesus off and on for about the first year or so. Peter came to the realization that Jesus was truly the Messiah when Jesus asked His disciples, *"But who do you say that I am?"* Simon Peter answered, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matt. 16:16).

### Peter's Return Prophesied

One would think that from this point on Peter would confidently follow Jesus with no **turning back**. However, Jesus declared to Peter during the Last Supper before He was betrayed, *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have **turned again**, strengthen your brothers."*

Peter was greatly offended and replied, *"Lord, with You I am ready to*



*go both to prison and to death!"* Jesus said to Him, *"I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me"* (Lk. 22:31-34).

Later that same night in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter was quick to take up his sword to protect Jesus from the mob. Even later, as he was warming himself by the fire in the High Priest's courtyard, he was confronted a third time for being a follower of Jesus. He cried out, *"Man, I do not know what you are talking about."* Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. *The Lord **turned** and looked at Peter... And he went out and wept bitterly"* (Lk. 22:60-62)!

After Jesus' resurrection, however, the angels singled out Peter by name,

*"But go, tell His disciples, and Peter..."* (Mk. 16:7). This was to encourage Peter, assuring him that his denial would not be held against him. God had a **special purpose** for Peter's life.

### Return to the Fishing Nets

Nevertheless, Peter was discouraged and disillusioned. The text indicates that he was *"throwing in the towel"* and was returning to his former profession of commercial fishing. Peter said to the six other disciples with him, *"I am going fishing."* They said to him, *"We will also come with you."* They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing" (Jn. 21:3).

Jesus again pursued Peter. He had a **special purpose** for Peter's life. As Jesus was preparing breakfast on the beach for the disciples, he called out to them after their fruitless night of fishing. They immediately acknowledged their failure to catch even one fish! Before they recognized that it was Jesus, He had them cast their net one more time on the other side of the boat. They caught a 153 large fish, causing a huge strain on the net. In their astonishment, they were quick to acknowledge *"It is the Lord!"* (Jn. 21:7).

### The Shepherd's Purpose

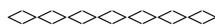
Peter's **turning point** came after breakfast when Jesus changed the metaphor from fishing to shepherding as He commissioned Peter as His undershepherd to *"tend My lambs... shepherd My flock ... tend My sheep"* (Jn. 21:15-17).

From then on, Peter's focus was on Jesus—no longer on Peter. He learned that **"It's not about me—It's all about HIM!"** (Continued on other side)

Peter was a transformed apostle of Christ from this time on and became Jesus' humble representative to the early church. No longer did he look back and yearn for his past life, but followed Jesus until he died a martyr's death many years later.

### Return to the Shepherd

Peter learned his lesson well and shares some of his last words of appreciation and passion with us, "He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Son [Lamb] of God" (1 Pet. 1:19 (NLB)). "For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have **returned** to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (1 Pet. 2:25). And in his second epistle he summarizes, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen**" (2 Pet. 3:18).



### Growing in Grace

~a testimony~

I can confidently say that without some type of intervention, my husband and I would probably be separated and ministry would have been a lost dream. God knew we would never have been able to **turn to Him** on our own for the simple reason that **we didn't know how**. We wanted to, but were helpless in making that happen.

Our stories are pretty much typical: Christian home, little or no understanding of grace, bad marriage, helplessly trapped. That pretty much sums up where we were. The best part is where we are today!

God chose to bring us out of our situation and to live in an understanding of Grace. Dottie began taking me through the grace cards and I began to see what hope lies in Christ. I began to believe that God did love me and that He wanted to live through me.

As a child my picture of God was: I was in a battle and the enemy was all around me. I made choices and moves that were critiqued by God. He would watch over me and say, "That was a good move; that was dumb; what did you do that for? You'll never get this;

or, Okay, that was good enough." I never felt I measured up.

**God knew we would have never been able to turn to Him on our own for the simple reason that we didn't know how. We wanted to, but were helpless in making that happen.**

Through Gracestoration I began to see that picture begin to change. It turned into: I'm in the same battle; God is watching, but now Christ is in front of me, beside me, and behind me. I simply move where He moves and God is watching in delight of His Son. What unbelievable peace comes with that understanding.

Over time I began to realize that our marriage had to have some help. My husband had to talk to someone. After one of our worst disagreements, my husband agreed to talk with Bob. We set up phone counseling and for one year we talked weekly. I remember Bob told me if we would work with him, listen and apply what he taught us, we could have a marriage beyond our wildest dreams. I laughed, and said I doubt it.

My husband learned from Bob two things that have altered the course of his life and ministry. One was how to be a godly man—one who is strong in truth, but tender in spirit. The other thing he learned was a good foundational understanding of grace.

We felt healed and united together in our new-found understanding of **how God wanted to work through us** as we embarked on the ministry in Florida. I had always been afraid of being a pastor's wife. What would I say to the ladies that came for counseling? How would I encourage them?

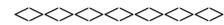
With the Gracestoration lessons, I couldn't wait to have the opportunity to get started. I have taught the grace cards for many years in all kinds of settings. I have seen women find peace, relief and

joy when they begin to understand who they are in Christ.

My pastor husband has been teaching grace and sovereignty, and every year he gets deeper and stronger. He stands for truth solidly and with unashamed strength. Yet, when he confronts problems, he is gentle and can tenderly lead people back to the Truth [Jesus].

We are continuing to **grow in grace** and in the understanding of who we are in Christ. We are very grateful for the CUPbearers / Gracestoration ministry which has led yet another couple to the well of Truth [Jesus], which in turn is splashing into the lives of countless others.

~Submitted by a pastor and wife ministering in Florida.



Enclosed is our brochure regarding our Tenth Annual CUPbearers/Gracestoration Retreat, May 28-31, 2004 at Spring Canyon Conference Center in Buena Vista, Colorado.

This has proven to be an inspirational and fabulous time of focusing on our Creator and Shepherd. The grounds are awesome, the food is superb and the fellowship is outstanding! Please join us for this special Memorial Day Weekend!

**You may now order resources and make secure donations from our web page. Check us out at: [www.shepherdinggrace.org](http://www.shepherdinggrace.org)**