**First Baptist Church**

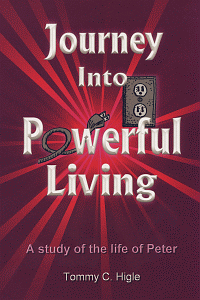
**Discipleship Study**

**Journey Into Powerful Living**

**A Study of the Life of Peter**

**by**

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**Lesson 1: Requirements for Spiritual Power**

Do you sometimes feel your spiritual life has little or no power? If so, this series is for you. This "journey" traces the life of an obscure, uneducated, hot-tempered fisherman named Peter. However, the Lord empowers Peter to become the most prominent of Jesus' original twelve disciples and one of the most famous spiritual forces in church history. There are at least three requirements for spiritual power like that found in the life of Peter.

**Requirement #1: Commit to Christ**

John 1:28-44

Peter's given name is "Simon," and in this lesson we will discover how he gets the name "Peter." Simon and his brother Andrew grew up in Bethsaida (Jn 1:44), but after Simon is married (Mk 1:30) he lives in Capernaum (Mk 1:21, 29), on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. There he and Andrew are fishing partners, along with what other two men we will meet later (see Luke 5:10a)?

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Simon is in Bethany the first time we meet him. He and Andrew are followers of John the Baptist and are in Bethabara (Bethany) because that is where John is baptizing (Jn 1:28). John the Baptist has already baptized Jesus and is preaching that Jesus is the Son of God (Jn 1:32-34). While in Bethany, Andrew and another disciple of John the Baptist see Jesus passing by. At this point, what does John the Baptist say about Jesus (see Jn 1:36)?

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When Andrew and another unnamed disciple (probably John, who does not call himself by name in his gospel) hear this, they begin to follow Jesus. When Jesus sees them following Him, He turns around, and asks, What seek ye? Perhaps at a loss for words, they respond, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? Jesus responds, Come and see (Jn 1:38-39).

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After spending the day with Jesus, Andrew is convinced of who Jesus is. The first thing he does is find his brother Simon to tell him he has found the Messiah (Jn 1:41). Andrew then takes Simon to meet Jesus. Jesus looks at Simon and says what to him (Jn 1:42b)?

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The name Cephas is the Aramaic word for "stone" or "rock." Peter is the Greek translation of Cephas. Peter's new name indicates that at Jesus' first encounter with Simon, He sees not only Peter's flaws but also his God-given potential and power. Every time Jesus calls him by his new name, Simon is reminded the Lord expects him to become the "Rock of Gibraltar" of the Christian faith. When we come to Christ, we also get a new name, "Christian," to remind us Jesus wants us to become His fully-developed followers.

After their first meeting with Jesus in Bethany, Simon Peter and Andrew return to their fishing business on the Sea of Galilee. Sometime later, Jesus is walking on the seashore and sees them fishing. What does He say to them, according to Matthew 4:19?

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The word translated make (poieo, poy-eh'-oh) refers to the ongoing, creative work of God that continues throughout our lives and is going on at this very moment. Therefore, becoming a fully-developed follower of Christ takes a lifetime. How does Philippians 1:6b express this truth?

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Simon Peter and Andrew immediately leave their nets and follow Jesus (Mt 4:20). Peter's life then begins to change because of his commitment to Christ. Differences among people are not dependent upon abilities or education. It is the object and degree of their commitment that determines their successes or failures in life. Until we commit our lives to Jesus Christ we will never receive the power to achieve our highest potential in life. As we shall see in the life of Peter, before God can do a work through us, He must do a work in us.

The process of Peter's becoming a "rock" began the day he committed his life to Christ. Requirement #1 for spiritual power is commit to Christ.

**Requirement #2: Omit doubt**

Luke 5:1-7

Do you like to fish? If so, you know how discouraging it is when you fish for hours and catch nothing. At our next encounter with Peter he has been fishing all night (Lk 5:5).

Peter, Andrew, and their partners James and John have fished hard all night. As Jesus is teaching a very large crowd on the seashore, He sees two boats left by Peter and his associates as they wash their nets. Jesus climbs into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon Peter, and asks Simon to take it out a little way from shore. Jesus then sits down in the boat and continues teaching the people (Lk 5:1-3). When Jesus finishes teaching, He tells Peter to take the boat into deep water and let down his nets for a catch (Lk 5:4b). This was a demanding request because Simon hasn't slept all night and is exhausted.

Fishing is always much better at night near the shore where fish feed close to the surface. Daytime in deep water is the worst time and place to fish. Simon tells Jesus they have fished hard all night and haven't caught anything (5:5a). Then, what does Peter say? (5:5b)

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Peter is a professional fisherman—He makes his living by fishing. Now, a carpenter is telling him how to fish. However, Peter, probably rubbing his eyes and yawning, does not doubt Jesus so he takes his boat into deep water and drops his nets into the water. There they catch such a large amount of fish the nets begin to tear (5:6).

To draw in all the fish, Peter and Andrew signal their partners, James and John, to bring the other boat and help them. They fill both boats so full they start to sink (5:7). When we omit doubt and do as the Lord says, we will experience what truth found in Psalm 126:3?

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To experience spiritual power, we must commit to Christ, omit doubt, and...

**Requirement #3: Outfit for evangelism**

Luke 5:8-11

Each boat was about eight feet wide and over 25 feet in length, so this is an unbelievable catch. When Peter sees this massive miracle, he realizes even the fish of the sea obey the wishes of Jesus. Therefore, Peter falls before Jesus. Then, what does he say to Jesus in Luke 5:8b?

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When Peter sees the miraculous number of fish, a light comes on in his mind and he calls Jesus Lord. Up to this point he had called Him Rabbi. When Peter realizes Jesus is God in flesh and blood, he reacts like Isaiah who, when he saw God in a vision, felt unclean, or sinful (Isa. 6:5). However, Peter does not see a vision; he is in the very presence of the Christ, God in flesh and blood. Peter is overwhelmed with an awareness of his own sinfulness and feels so unworthy to be in the Lord's presence that he asks Him to leave.

This is spiritual immaturity Peter will later outgrow. Let's move forward in Peter's life until after Jesus' resurrection (Jn 21). Peter is deeply convicted by his denial of the Lord and travels back to Galilee. There he and some other disciples fish all night. In the early morning they hear a voice from the shore saying, "Children, have ye any meat? They answer, No. Then, the voice from shore says, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. When they do this, they catch such a large amount of fish they are unable to draw in the net (Jn 21:5-6). This incident brings back memories of the first time Peter and his partners went fishing with Jesus (Lk 5). Therefore, John says, It is the Lord (Jn 21:7a). What does Peter then do (see Jn 21:7b)?

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Peter goes to Jesus as fast as he can because he now knows the truth about Jesus. Later, he writes: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness (1 Pet. 2:24a-b). I love what Jesus says to Peter in Luke 5 when Peter tells Him to go away from him. What does Jesus say (Luke 5:10b)?

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This is God's ultimate purpose for us as well. Whenever we stop trying to catch people for Christ, we stop following Jesus and experiencing spiritual power. That's why we should continually be outfitting ourselves for evangelism. To outfit for evangelism so we can become fishers of men and women, we must take advantage of every opportunity to learn how to share our faith. At the very least our "outfit" should include an explanation of the Roman Road to salvation (Rom. 3:23; 6:23, 5:8, and 10:9-10).

When the fishing party lands, they pull their boats onto shore and leave everything, including the fish, to follow Jesus (Lk 5:11). God's ultimate purpose for our lives is more than accepting Jesus as Savior; it also includes catching men and women for Christ. When we receive spiritual power, what does Jesus say we will do (Acts 1:8b)?

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**Lesson 2: Why God Allows Storms in Our Lives**

Now we will examine one of the most famous events in Peter's life and one of Christ's most awesome miracles. This incident occurs just after the disciples participated in the feeding of the 5,000, the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. Jesus feeds 5,000 men, plus uncounted women and children, on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. Immediately after this miracle, Jesus tells His disciples to get into a boat and sail across the Sea of Galilee while He dismisses the crowd (Mt 14:22). Jesus is in a hurry to get the disciples and Himself away from the crowd He had just miraculously fed. Why, according to John 6:15a?

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They want this because He can put food in their mouths. However, they are not interested in Jesus for any spiritual reasons. Jesus wants to get His disciples away from all the excitement lest they decide to go along with the crowd. In the incident that follows their rapid departure from the crowd, we can learn four reasons why God allows storms in our lives.

**To review our faith**

Mt 14:23-24

After Jesus dismisses the crowd, He goes alone upon a mountainside to pray (Mt 14:23). Darkness comes, and Jesus still has not joined His disciples (Jn 6:17b). Things are much more frightening in the dark, aren't they? Even in our spiritual lives what seems so clear in the light we quickly forget in the darkness of a terrible storm. Like this incident in the disciples' lives, many times after a mountaintop experience, such as the feeding of the 5,000, we experience a very dark storm. While Jesus is praying, what does Matthew 14:24 tell us is happening to the disciples?

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The disciples set out for the other shore as Jesus told them, but a strong storm keeps them stranded in the middle of the sea. Ironically, the disciples are in a storm because they are obeying Jesus. What a lesson for us! Just because you are in the midst of a storm does not mean you are out of God's will. It was obedience to the Lord that got the disciples into this storm.

This storm follows a day of exciting teaching and the greatest miracle thus far in Jesus' ministry. To have a "journey into powerful living," we need teaching, but we also need testing to see if we can apply what we learned. When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, the Lord told Moses He would rain down manna from heaven, but the people were to gather only enough for one day (Ex. 16:4a-b). Why, according to Exodus 16:4c?

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The storm is a review, or test, to see if the disciples are living by "fluff" or faith. God allows storms to review our faith and...

**To rebuke our pride**

Mt 14:25

Matthew tells us that during the fourth watch, 3:00 to 6:00 a.m., Jesus comes toward the disciples by walking on the water (14:25). The disciples started out in the early evening, and now, 6 to 8 hours later, they have made little progress. John tells us they rowed three or more miles (Jn 6:19a). The Sea of Galilee is about 13 miles long and 7 miles across at its widest point. So, they are in the middle of the sea, and if the boat sinks, they will all certainly drown.

Jesus waits for hours before coming to them because many were experienced fisherman who knew how to handle a boat in a storm. At first, they probably think the storm is no big deal. Then, it gets worse, much worse. Have you ever had a problem and thought, "I can work it out," but your solution didn't work, and the storm got much worse? This is what happens to the disciples. Now the waves are huge and fierce, breaking over into the boat. The disciples feel helpless. Sometimes God allows overwhelming storms in our lives to rebuke our pride and humble us. According to James 4:6b, why does God wait until we feel helpless?

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God can't work in our lives until we are humble (James 4:10). Sometimes He allows storms that are obviously more than we can handle to remind us we need Him and the grace He gives. If we never had a problem we cannot handle alone, we would not need God, or faith, in our lives.

God allows storms to review our faith, to rebuke our pride, and...

**To rejuvenate our prayer life**

Mk 6:48

One of the most surprising parts of this story is found in the last sentence of Mark 6:48. What is it? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus walks close enough to let them know He is there, but would have passed by if they had not called to Him. In other words, He waits for them to ask for help. Jesus is never presumptuous; He will not help us in the storms of life unless we ask Him. That is why Jesus gives us what promise in Matthew 7:7? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The verbs in that verse are ask, seek, and knock. What do the first letters in those three verbs spell? Jesus wants to help us in the storms of life, but we must humbly ASK.

We pray much more humbly and seriously during the storms of life. Therefore, more than anything else, storms rejuvenate our prayer life. During the storms of life we need to remember promises like Psalm 50:15. Write it below: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In the midst of a terrifying storm, nothing causes us to honor and praise God like answered prayer. God allows storms to review our faith, rebuke our pride, rejuvenate our prayer life, and...

**To remind us of His power**

Mt 14:26-33

When the disciples see Jesus walking on the raging sea, they are terrified and cry out, It is a spirit (14:26). They are terrified because they did not expect to see Jesus in the storm, even though just hours before they had seen Him feed at least 10,000 people with five loaves and two dried, sardine-like fish. That is why we read what statement in Mark 6:52a? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Even after participating in Jesus' feeding five thousand men, plus women and children, they did not understand what Jesus was trying to teach them. They still do not understand Jesus' awesome power, but because they have no other option, they call out to Him. How does He respond in Matthew 14:27? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Faith hears the inaudible, so if we are really listening with our spiritual ears in the dark storms of life, we will hear Jesus saying these same words to us.

At this point the impulsive Peter says, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water (Mt 14:28). Jesus answers with one word, Come (Mt 14:29), and Peter gets out of the boat and starts out magnificently, walking toward Jesus. However, Peter takes his eyes off Jesus, looks at the storm, and begins to sink. Then, in desperation he prays the shortest prayer in the Bible. What is it (see Matthew 14:30)? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

When we are in a crisis, we don't use a lot of religious "fluff" and jargon in our prayers. We get right to the point. That's what Peter does. Immediately, Jesus reaches out His powerful hand that flung the stars into space and catches Peter. Then, what does Jesus say to Peter (Matthew 14:31b)? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

"Peter-bashing" is tempting, but we should notice Jesus did not rebuke him for having "no" faith, but for having little faith. How many of us would have thrown a leg over the side and stepped out into the water? Peter is the only person in history, besides Christ, to walk on water. When he stepped out of the boat, even if he had immediately sunk like lead, he should be praised because at least he had enough faith to get out of the boat.

Peter began to sink because he changed his focus and looked at the storm instead of the Savior. Fear overruns faith when we take our eyes off the Lord. That's why we have what great promise in Isaiah 26:3? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

When Peter and Jesus climb into the boat, the wind dies down. In the boat the disciples worship Jesus and say, Of a truth thou art the Son of God (Mt 14:32-33).

**Lesson 3: Getting the Most Out of Life**

So far we have seen Peter catch a record number of fish and walk on the water. Through those incidents we discovered great insights into powerful living. Now, in response to questions from Christ on two different occasions, Peter makes two great confessions of faith regarding Jesus Christ. Not only does Jesus test the disciples with a storm but also with questions. The answers to these questions reveal three things we must do to get the most out of life.

**Realize who Jesus is**

Jn 6:66-69

Peter's first confession takes place in Capernaum on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus has been teaching and performing miracles. Jesus has been telling the people He is the Bread of Life from heaven and that anyone who eats this bread will not die, as well as other deep spiritual teachings (6:47-58). However, the people aren't interested in spiritual things; they are more interested in suppers than sermons. Therefore, many of His "fair-weather" disciples turned back and no longer followed Him. Jesus then turns to the Twelve and asks, Will ye also go away? (6:66-67). What is Peter's brilliant answer in John 6:68a? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This statement reveals two characteristics that will be true in our lives if we realize who Jesus is. First, don't look back. Peter asks: to whom shall we go?—a reference to returning to his old life. How does Jesus express our not being able to look back in Luke 9:62? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

When we follow Jesus, we must burn the bridges that lead back to our old ways of living. While plowing a field, Elisha is called to be a prophet and an associate of Elijah. Elisha then slaughters his oxen, burns his plows to cook the meat, and gives it to the people to eat before he leaves to follow Elijah (1 Kings 19:19-21). Why did he do that? To rid himself of the temptation to look back! The moral of the story is we should rid ourselves of things that might tempt us to go back to our old ways of living. Do you have some "oxen" you need to slaughter or "plows" you need to burn?

Peter also says to Jesus: thou hast the words of eternal life (Jn 6:68b). Therefore, if we know who Jesus is, we will also believe Jesus is the only way to heaven. He doesn't understand all about Jesus, but Peter knows He is the only way to heaven. Later, in John 8:24, Jesus says we will die in our sins if we do not believe what?

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To get the most out of life, realize who Jesus is and...

**Visualize yourself as a spiritual stone**

Mt 16:13-19

Several months later, Jesus and His disciples are in Caesarea Philippi, about twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee. As Jesus' popularity explodes, all kinds of rumors spread about who He is. Therefore, Jesus asks His disciples, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? The disciples answer that some people say He is John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets (Mt 16:13-14). These are great accolades but portray Him only as a prophet. Therefore, Jesus asks: But whom say ye that I am? (16:15). How does Peter respond in Matthew 16:16? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The word Christ (Christos, Chris-tos) is a tremendous affirmation because it is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew title "Messiah." "Jesus" is His name, and "Christ" is His title. Many liberal newspapers will not use these two words together because it means Jesus is the Messiah. Many also refuse to call Him Christ. Thus, Peter is saying Jesus is the Messiah—the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

Peter also says Jesus is the Son of the living God, which affirms His divinity—He is God incarnate. No one could better describe Jesus. No wonder Peter's statement is called "The Great Confession."

Jesus acknowledges this is a revelation from the Father in heaven and says to Peter, And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (16:18). Some believe this established Peter as the supreme pontiff, or pope, of the church, making him the final, infallible authority. But that is contrary to the New Testament. What does Paul write in Galatians 2:11? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The original language sheds more light and explains exactly what Jesus means. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (Petros, Pet-ros), and upon this rock (petra, pet-ra) I will build my church. Peter, or Petros, means "stone" and refers to a detached stone that might be thrown or easily moved. Rock, or petra, means a shelf or mass of rocks. Petros refers to a single stone, while petra refers to a formation of stones. Therefore, it seems Jesus is addressing Peter as a representative of the Twelve. Who does Ephesians 2:20 say is the foundation of the church?

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The prophets refers to New Testament prophets (Eph. 4:11). Peter is a single stone, petros, in the foundation, a position he will share with the other apostles, petra, for eternity. To emphasize this, the wall around the New Jerusalem will have twelve foundations, and on them will be the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Rev. 21:14).

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Giving Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 16:19a) probably refers to his first sermon that resulted in three thousand people being saved and baptized (Acts 2:41). This was the first sermon preached by an apostle. It was the key that opened the door of the kingdom, and it has been open ever since.

Jesus also says to Peter, whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Mt 16:19b). God's kingdom is depicted as a realm to be entered using the proper keys. Bind refers to prohibiting entry into the kingdom by those who reject the witness of the apostles, and loose means granting entry to those who accept the witness. The apostles are the foundational stones but we are all stones in Christ's church and are seeking to add additional stones. How does Peter himself make this clear in 1 Peter 2:5a?

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To get the most out of life, realize who Jesus is, visualize yourself as a spiritual stone, and...

**Analyze what it means not to follow Christ**

Mt 16:21-26

Once the disciples start to realize who Jesus is, He begins to explain to them He must go to Jerusalem to suffer... be killed, and be raised again the third day (16:21). However, the disciples want the Messiah to be a political deliverer who will defeat Rome and re-establish the kingdom of Israel. This would bring a time of unprecedented peace and prosperity. Therefore, Peter takes Jesus aside and rebukes Him by saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee (16:22). Whoa! Then, how does Jesus rebuke Peter in Matthew 16:23a? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus isn't calling Peter Satan but is telling Peter he is doing Satan's work. Satan's strategy has always been to circumvent God's plan of salvation. Jesus explains: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men (16:23b). Peter quickly goes from being a foundation stone to a stumbling stone—from the great confession to the great collapse. He goes from listening to God the Father to listening to Satan. We can all quickly move from the heights of spirituality to the depths of carnality. At church we can act like angels and on the way home act like demons. However, if we are to have our minds on the things that be of God, what does Jesus say we must be willing to do in Matthew 16:24? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Your cross is whatever makes it difficult for you to follow Jesus. It may be a job, a relationship, fear, pride, or whatever. But if we follow Jesus, we all have crosses we must bear. In the Roman Empire, a convicted criminal was forced to carry his cross through public streets to the place of execution as a sign of total submission to Roman rule. To follow Jesus, we must totally submit to Him. In other words, we must give up our lives and our selfish ambitions to follow Him. If we do, what does Jesus promise in Matthew 16:25b? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Every two minutes in the United States someone attempts suicide, and about every 15 minutes someone succeeds, for a total of more than 30,000 each year. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among teenagers. Why does this happen in the most affluent society on earth? As someone has said, "If you don't have something worth dying for, you don't have anything worth living for." Living life to the fullest means we know the answer to what question of Christ's in Matthew 16:26a? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Many people spend their lives trying to gain possessions, prestige, position, and power. Some attain it all, but they are the walking spiritual dead who will die and lose it all. But most tragic of all, they will lose their souls, which means they lose spending eternity with God.

To get the most out of life, realize who Jesus is, visualize yourself as a spiritual stone, and analyze what it means not to follow Christ.

**Lesson 4: Becoming a Balanced Believer**

Thus far we have seen Peter catch a miraculous number of fish, walk on water, and go from the great confession to the great collapse. Jesus has been teaching through miracles, sermons, questions, and testing. Now, Peter and the other disciples are ready for their next lesson, which we call the Transfiguration. In this lesson we will discover how to become balanced believers.

**First, balance worship with work**

Mt 17:1-4

The disciples are beginning to understand Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and they are now ready for the next level. Jesus has been telling them He must suffer and die, but they need to understand death will not be the end of Him. Therefore, Jesus says some of the disciples won't experience death until they see Him coming in his kingdom (Mt 16:28). Six days later, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up into an high mountain (17:1). Then, as the disciples watch, what happens (see Matthew 17:2)?

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Jesus usually wore homemade clothing and looked like an ordinary Galilean peasant. But now His deity shines through, and Peter sees the Son of God in His glory. This is called the Shekinah glory of God. "Shekinah" is a Hebrew word that means "the manifestation of Divine presence." Therefore, this is a confirmation of Peter's great confession (Mt 16:16). \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The word translated transfigured (metamorphoō, meta-mor-fo'-oh) is the Greek word from which we get our English word "metamorphosis." We use this word to describe the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. It refers to an outward change that comes from within. This is the same word translated transformed in Romans 12:2a. What command are we given in that verse? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This means we are to change from the inside out by renewing our minds. How do we do that? By reading the Bible, God's Word, hearing it taught and preached, and then applying it to our lives.

Back on the mountaintop, two Old Testament saints appear and are talking with Jesus. Who are they (Matthew 17:3)? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Both of these men also had tremendous experiences with God on a mountaintop: one on Mount Sinai (Ex. 20) and one on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). One represents the Law, and the other represents the prophets. Also, one is the only person in the Bible whom God buried (Dt 34:6), and one was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11). This could mean that Moses represents those who die in the Lord, and Elias (Elijah) represents those who are alive at Christ's return and escape death by being raptured.

Matthew tells us they talk with Jesus; however, he does not tell us what is said. But in Luke 9:31b we do find out what they talk about. What was it?

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I'm sure Moses was excited because he'd been waiting 1,400 years and Elijah for over 800 years for Jesus' final sacrifice for sin. Their presence confirms Jesus is the Son of God and the promised Messiah. What does Peter ask to do when he sees all this (Matthew 17:4)? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Peter wants to stay on the mountaintop. He doesn't want to go back to hard work, suffering, and heartache. Furthermore, he does not want to go to Jerusalem, where death awaits Jesus. We must always be willing to come down from the mountaintop to minister in the valleys. It is easy to become lopsided in our Christian lives, but we must keep a balance between inspiration and perspiration—worship and work. It is very tempting just to attend worship services and Bible studies but never do any ministry. Mountaintops are important, but they should never be an end in themselves. That's why James 1:22 gives us what command? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If we go to Bible study, worship, conferences, listen to Christian media, etc., we are just wasting our time if these things don't motivate us to work for the Lord. We must balance worship with work, and we must also...

**Balance information with declaration**

Mt 17:5-9

Peter makes a big mistake by suggesting the three tabernacles, or shrines. This would imply Jesus, Elijah, and Moses are all equal. Therefore, as Peter is still speaking, a cloud overshadows them. Then, what does a voice out of the cloud say (Matthew 17:5b)? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This is the second time in the gospels God speaks from heaven declaring Jesus to be His Son. When was the other time? His baptism (Mt 3:17). Why did God tell these disciples to listen to Jesus? Because they, especially Peter, had their own ideas about what Jesus should do. When the three disciples hear this, they are terrified and fall facedown on the ground (17:6). But Jesus comes, touches them, and then what does He say in Matthew 17:7? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

When the disciples look up, Jesus is alone. Why? Jesus is all they need. As they descend the mountain, Jesus tells them not to tell anyone what they have just seen until after He is raised from the dead (17:9). Why? Because it was not the transfiguration Jesus wanted them to talk about; it was the crucifixion and resurrection, which are the essence of the Gospel. That's why, after His resurrection, what does He tell them in Mark 16:15? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

To become balanced believers, we must balance worship with work, information with declaration, and...

**Balance receiving forgiveness with giving forgiveness**

(Mt 18:21-35)

Some time later, Peter comes to Jesus and asks how many times he must forgive a brother who sins against him. Then, Peter answers his own question: till seven times? (Mt 18:21). The rabbis taught that three times was sufficient, so Peter seems very generous by doubling and adding one to it. Also, seven is the number of completeness. However, Peter isn't even close to the right answer. In Matthew 18:22, how many times does Jesus say we must forgive? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

To illustrate the importance of forgiveness to Peter, Jesus tells the parable of the unforgiving debtor. A servant, about to be tossed into prison for his unpaid debts, successfully begs for mercy from his master. He owes a staggering debt of ten thousand talents, or about 20 million dollars in today's currency. Then, the forgiven servant refuses a plea for forgiveness from a fellow servant who owes him only an hundred pence, or about $20, and has him thrown into jail. Hearing about this, the master summons the unforgiving servant and has him sent to jail to be tormented until he repays all he owes (18:34). In essence, this is a life sentence. Jesus ends this parable with what somber warning in Matthew 18:35? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The word translated forgive (aphiēmi, af-ee'-ay-me) means "to send away." An unforgiving spirit harbors resentment, bitterness, and even hatred. When we forgive, we send those feelings and attitudes away and replace them with love. If we refuse to forgive, we become self-tormentors, tormenting ourselves with feelings of resentment, bitterness, jealousy, and hatred.

Forgiveness is never easy. Oxford scholar C. S. Lewis said, "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until he has something to forgive." It is doubly hard when the one who hurt us expresses no remorse. We should remember forgiveness does not depend on the character of the offender but of the offended. Few things determine whether or not we can have a "journey into powerful living" like our willingness to forgive.

When you find it hard to forgive, remember this question: If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? (Psa. 130:3). We are all debtors to God and have nothing with which to repay our debts. That's what makes the next verse in that psalm so wonderful. Write it below: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The word translated feared (yārē, yaw-ray') means to revere. It is a reverential fear that is the result of feeling our own unworthiness in God's divine, majestic, presence.

To become a balanced believer, you must balance worship with work, information with declaration, and receiving forgiveness with giving forgiveness.