



## From faithless to faithful – Peter the Rock.

### Introduction:

Simon Peter was one of the first disciples to be called by Jesus to follow him. Born in, or near Bethsaida, on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, Peter was a fisherman by trade. He was the brother of the disciple Andrew, was married and it is probable that his wife later accompanied him in his work for the early church.

The very human, flawed character of Peter is one with which we find it easy to relate. We may ruefully acknowledge our own faults as we read of times where he promised much in terms of faithfulness but was found wanting when it came to the test. Some may find echoes of their own nature in his headstrong reactions to unfolding events; his haste to walk on water to Jesus (Matthew 14:28-31); his inappropriate response at the Transfiguration (Mark 9:5-6); his declaration of unconditional loyalty at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:33-35); his desertion in the face of danger (Mark 14:66-72).

Yet a study of Peter and his relationship with Christ ultimately gives us a sure and certain hope in Christ's response to ourselves. For Peter's story is one of forgiveness and grace; of a life transformed from failure to fulfilment of God's plans for his life.

In the Greek, the word for Peter is *petros*, whilst the word for rock is *petra*; thus, we see the significance of Christ's naming of Peter in the light of his purposes for him. When Jesus declared Peter to be the rock on which he would build his church he was not showing bad judgement. Rather, he was proclaiming his power to be greater than our weakness. His ability to achieve his purposes overrides our tendencies to failure.

In the Gospels, Peter was anything but a rock; he was impulsive and unstable. In Acts, he was a pillar of the early church. Jesus named him not for what he was but for what, by God's grace, he would become.

*NIV Study Bible notes*

Reflect on these episodes in Peter's life: ask the Holy Spirit to illumine his word to you.

Peter's confession of Christ: *Matthew 16:13-23*

Peter's betrayal of Christ: *Mark 14:66-72*

Peter's forgiveness by Christ: *John 21:15-19*

Peter's witness to Christ: *Acts 2:14-24, 37-41*

Spend a moment in quietness and prayer:

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be pleasing in your sight,  
O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.  
*Psalms 19:14*

Consider the following questions:

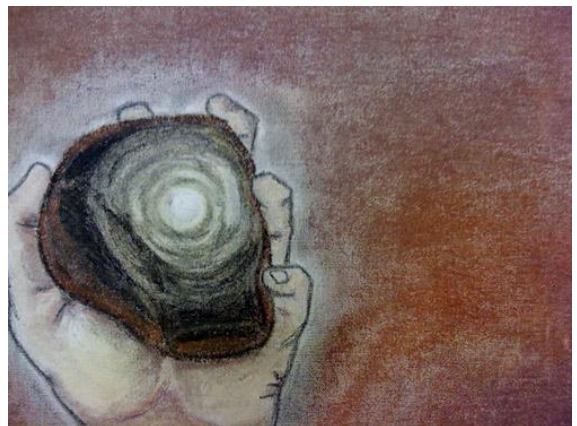
Would Peter have been our choice to build Christ's church?  
What does this teach us about God's forgiveness and attitude to past failures; his willingness to trust us?

Is it valid to say that Peter's faithlessness came from fear not doubt? Consider the reasons why we sometimes find it hard to stay faithful to Christ and others.

What was the difference in Peter before and after Pentecost?  
If the change arose not just from Jesus' forgiveness but from the power of the Spirit, what implications does this have for us as we seek to be faithful to Christ?

To reflect on:

Consider our response to life's events. Do we jump in promising commitment and then draw back, letting people down? How do we react when others do this to us or the projects for which we're responsible?  
Reflect on the challenges and encouragements that we find in the life of Peter. What can we learn which will positively affect our lives, and the work of Mothers' Union with which we're involved?



## Prayer

Gracious God,  
we try so hard to put the past behind us,  
to let go and start again,  
but all too often mistakes we imagined long buried  
return to haunt us.  
We do our best to make amends,  
but there are times  
when even if we can learn to live with the wounds,  
*others* can't, scars running deep and hurts hard to forget.  
But you are always there to offer us a new beginning,  
no matter how foolish we have been  
or how many opportunities we have wasted.  
Whatever we may have done,  
you grant us free and total forgiveness,  
a new page on which to start a fresh chapter.  
The past is done with, the future before us –  
and nothing can ever change that.  
Receive our thanks and lead us forward,  
in the name of Christ our Saviour.

Amen

*Nick Fawcett*