

**Peter: The Expressive Disciple**  
Sunday School Lesson 5  
*Personality and God's Purpose*  
*Matthew 16*  
7/12/2020

**Introduction:** We cannot have a lesson series on personalities without observing one of the most outward-expressing personalities in the Bible – the personality of Peter. Similar to the personality of Moses, it is somewhat difficult to pack Peter's personality into one small grouping. The Bible gives us more examples of Peter's personality than just about any other Bible character. Peter was very much an outgoing person. He craved social interaction with others. It is likely that he was not very fond of spending time by himself, as there is little evidence of alone time for him in the New Testament. Additionally, Peter was married, and several sources from early Christian writers tell us that he had children (The Bible specifically mentions Peter's mother-in-law.). We also observe that Peter was quick to show his emotions. This is one of the reasons why most Christians seem to identify well with Peter on some level. While you may not display your emotions outwardly as Peter did, you have likely experienced similar feelings as Peter at one point or another in your life. Peter became the natural spokesperson for all of the disciples mainly because he was willing to express what many of them were thinking or feeling. David is another Bible character who was very expressive and prone to emotional responses. It's no coincidence that these are two of the most well-known Bible characters. Last week, we examined how God was able to use the independent personality of Jeremiah for His purpose. This week, we'll see how God used the expressive and dependent personality of Peter to help start the work of the early church. Some might look at Peter's personality and wonder whether he was the best fit to lead the disciples after Jesus' ascension, but the truth is that a person like Peter was exactly what was needed to light a fire that would burn throughout the world.

**I. THE LORD USED PETER'S PERSONALITY TO TURN HIM INTO A POWERFUL MESSENGER OF THE GOSPEL. (ACTS 2:14-38, 4:13; 1 PETER 1:1)**

- A. Notice that Peter had no problem speaking to strangers and relating with people (Acts 4:13; 1 Peter 1:1).** Throughout the New Testament, it's very clear that Peter had no problem speaking to strangers. In fact, Peter's first epistle was written to strangers that had been spread abroad. Most of the other epistles were all written with a specific church or group of people in mind. While speaking to strangers in the time of the Bible was a more common thing, we can still observe that Peter had no problem speaking to people. John often accompanied Peter, but it was almost always Peter who did the speaking. It seems that the Lord creates certain individuals who just more naturally have an ability to interact with others. While this does not mean that they are always liked by others, it does at least open the door for that person to accomplish the number one objective for every born-again believer. Peter's message to people was very relatable. It also helped that he was a common man. He spoke very plainly, and this helped him in the mission that the Lord had given him.
- B. Notice that Peter led many souls to Jesus Christ (Acts 2:14-38).** The day of Pentecost is given here as an example, but we know that Peter led many more souls to Jesus as well. While every person can and should be an effective witness for Jesus Christ, there is likely no greater personality type for witnessing than that of the social and expressive person. This type of person often finds himself in conversations with other people without much effort. Before his conversion, Peter was probably that fisherman who had some of the great fishing stories to tell those in the town. It is important to note that having this personality does not automatically lead a believer into being a great witness. I've seen many Christians who've had this personality, but Christ rarely came up in their conversations with others. There still must be an intentional act of witnessing that comes from their spiritual walk. Ultimately, God will use any believer to spread the Gospel who is willing to die to themselves and live for Him. The New Testament is filled with examples of men with varying personalities who were effective soul winners. The point here is that the believer with the expressive personality is especially without excuse when it comes to being a witness for Jesus Christ.

**II. THE LORD USED PETER'S PERSONALITY TO SHOW OTHERS THE FOOLISHNESS OF MAN'S THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS. (MARK 8:32-33, 9:5, 11:21, 14:29-37; JOHN 21:20-22)**

- A. Notice that Peter often spoke on behalf of all of the disciples (Mark 11:21, 14:29-37).** The person who spends much time in interaction with others will generally know what others think about certain issues or subjects. Given Peter's personality, he was well-informed as to what the other disciples were thinking. He likely initiated many discussions with them. It ought to be no surprise then that Peter often spoke on behalf of the entire group. Given his interactions with them, he was best equipped to represent

them when asking questions of Jesus. One example of this is the story of the fig tree. All of the disciples were curious why Jesus had cursed it, but none of them had been brave enough to ask Him about it. Peter finally spoke up on behalf of the group. There are at least four different examples of Peter speaking on behalf of the feelings of all of the disciples. The social, expressive person does not only express his own feelings, but he will have times where he expresses a general feeling or thought among a group of people.

- B. Notice that the Lord often rebuked Peter and used his response as a teaching opportunity for all of the disciples (Mark 8:32-33, 9:5; John 21:20-22).** If you've read the New Testament, you've likely seen the multiple occasions where the Lord rebuked Peter. We often look at these examples and limit them to forming a specific opinion about Peter. The reality is that the Lord's rebuke was rarely only for Peter. He was just the one who brought the thoughts and feelings of the disciples before Jesus. Have you ever had feelings of thoughts or doubts against the Lord that you did not voice out loud, but then you later heard someone who did? Upon hearing their thoughts and examining the Bible, you are able to see just how foolish your thoughts were. In our flesh, we look at this and think only the person who verbally voiced these thoughts has sinned, but the truth is that you were just as guilty as they were. The Lord pondereth the heart. Consequently, we understand that a person with an expressive personality can be used by the Lord to help us see just how foolish we are in our hearts. Now, this does not excuse or justify this person's sins, as Peter had to repent just as the other disciples did. The point is that we are all sinners, but God can still use our personalities to accomplish His purpose. The Lord's answers to Peter still serve today to help us understand the necessity of His death on the cross of Calvary.

### **III. THE LORD USED PETER'S PERSONALITY TO TURN HIM INTO A FIERCE DEFENDER OF THE SAVIOUR. (MATTHEW 16:16; JOHN 13:36-37, 18:10-11; ACTS 2:14-38, 4:8-23, 5:9-29, 8:20)**

- A. Notice that Peter's personality caused him to be outspoken in his loyalty to his friends (Matthew 16:16; John 13:36-37, 18:10-11).** One of the manifestations of an expressive and social personality is very vocal support for that person's friends and family. It's not necessarily that the personality causes greater loyalty so much as it causes that loyalty to be more visible. Certainly, John loved Jesus, but he did not speak out in the same way that Peter did. Love is the basis of friendship and family. Peter displayed his love outwardly. That was his personality. We know that some people prefer to display love and affection more publicly than others (Important to note that God's love requires certain public displays of it that validate that it dwells within us and makes it visible to the lost.). Real Biblical love is the basis of loyalty. Other than his moment of failure, Peter had no problem publicly supporting Jesus.
- B. Notice that Peter figured out how to properly express His love for the Saviour through His preaching (Acts 2:14-38, 4:8-23, 5:9-29, 8:20).** Throughout the four Gospels, we see that Peter's expression of loyalty and love for Jesus was often misguided or poorly executed. His responses tended to be more fleshly based than spiritually based. After the ascension of Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Peter gained the wisdom to properly channel that love and loyalty that he had for Jesus. He preached some very bold messages in defense of Jesus, which is exactly what the people needed to hear. He was also able to stand strong against the enemies of the Lord. Sometimes, expressive people struggle with how to properly express themselves through principles instead of emotions, and this can lead to some really poor decisions. However, once they figure it out, they can become strong advocates for the cause of Christ.

### **IV. THE EXPRESSIVE PERSONALITY ALSO HAS SEVERAL CHALLENGES THAT WE MUST BE AWARE OF. (GALATIANS 2; JOHN 18, 21:17-21)**

- A. Notice that the expressive and social person may struggle greatly to resist being a "people pleaser" (Galatians 2; John 18).** While it was Peter who said that he ought to obey God rather than men, it was also Peter that Paul had to rebuke because he was trying to please the Jews. Early on, Peter was also worried about what the Jewish leaders thought. He fretted over their accusation about the temple tax. Of course, his desire to please people also played a part in his denial of Jesus. This can be a big area of weakness for the social person, especially when dealing with friends.
- B. Notice that the expressive and social person may struggle when affection is not expressed backed in the same manner (John 21:17-21).** The social and expressive person needs acceptance. He does not necessarily need it from everyone, but he definitely craves it more than other personality types. Additionally, he needs to have his expressions of love (and other expressions) reciprocated back to him in an equally expressive manner. It bothered Peter greatly that Jesus questioned whether Peter really loved Him, but it greatly frustrated Peter when he perceived that Jesus loved John more than him. Expressive people can be especially sensitive. Peter was very sensitive when it came to the Lord's love.