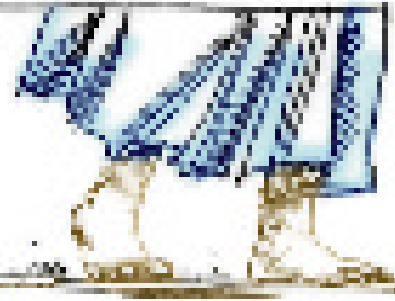


Learning from Jesus "Follow Me."

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Lesson 16/ Page 1

Loving Our Lord

In order for us to follow Christ as a disciple and desire to do what He calls us to do, we must be convinced of His love. We must hold firmly to the fact that Jesus loved us enough to die in our place. If this foundational core is not in place, we will not be compelled to listen and obey. Take a few moments and meditate on these words penned by Peter that so beautifully describe the love of Christ (the pronouns have been changed from second person to personal).

For *I* know that God paid a ransom to save *me* from the empty life *I* inherited from *my* ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. He paid for *me* with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God....

He personally carried away *my* sins in his own body on the cross so *I* can be dead to sin and live for what is right. *I* have been healed by his wounds! Once *I was* wandering like *a* lost sheep. But now *I* have turned to *my* Shepherd, the Guardian of *my* soul. (1 Peter 1:18-19; 2:24-25 NLT)

Can you turn this passage into a personal psalm of praise? Write it out in the space provided:

Learning His Word

Peter and the other apostles continued to follow Jesus even though His teachings became difficult (Lesson 15). Jesus did not try to shield the truth from His followers. He was upfront and honest about the cost of being one of His disciples. Salvation is free, but discipleship isn't. It will cost us in many ways and Jesus made that clear. He also made it clear that the rewards will be worth it. 1 Peter 1:3-9 confirms this promise. By the time Peter wrote his letter (1 Peter), he fully comprehended the call, the cost and the hope that is all wrapped up in following Christ. However, it took a long time for Peter to get to the place he was when he wrote that letter. Let's look at another step in his journey, a time when the Master used His chisel in the process to recreate Simon into the masterpiece we know as Peter.

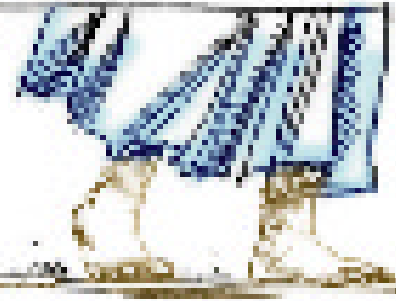
1. Read Matthew 16:13-20. Jesus had been teaching and performing miracles for over 2.5 years now as the disciples looked on. What question did He now ask them? _____
 - a. What were their answers? _____

 - b. How did Peter answer His question? _____

 - c. How did Jesus respond to Peter's answer in verse 17? _____

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Lesson 16/ Page 2

- d. Why do you think this statement so important? _____

2. The people of Israel, God's chosen nation, had been waiting a long time for the Messiah. He was the long promised, deeply desired deliverer. They knew that this Messiah would come and set things right for them. They were looking for better days ahead. With this in mind, what do you think went through the disciples minds as Jesus confirmed this truth? _____

3. Jesus continued to speak amazing words to Peter. Read verses 18-20 again. As you read, write down any observations you find important: _____

4. Jesus now referred to Peter with his new name—the Rock. Many have wrestled over the exact meaning of Jesus' words here (i.e. whether Jesus meant that the church would be built on Peter, or his words of confession). However, at face value what is He saying about the church? _____

 - a. Is it a building per say? _____

 - b. The magnitude of His statement was hard to comprehend. Unlike the familiar kingdoms of the Assyrians, Babylonians and the Greeks, Jesus' kingdom would never pass away. Even the Roman kingdom was beginning to decline at this time. Jesus was speaking of a very different type of kingdom, one that would be formed in human hearts and carried out in the community of believers (see Luke _____ 17:21). What keys does He refer to in verse 19?

 - c. What did Jesus accuse the Pharisees of in Luke 11:52? _____

 - d. Look again at Matthew 16:18-20. We won't dissect all the possible meanings of what Jesus was communicating here. But we can state the obvious. Jesus was saying that Peter and his colleagues would now have the authority to say that through acknowledging Jesus as Lord the kingdom would be inherited. This fact is the key to heaven and these apostles were given these keys. Think about the magnitude of what Jesus just said. How far reaching was this plan? _____

5. This was surely a high point in Peter's journey, but it was quickly followed by a low one. Keep reading in Matthew 16:21-23. What is Jesus explaining to his disciples? _____

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Lesson 16 / Page 3

- a. Who did Jesus say will inflict this suffering on Him? _____

 - b. What did Peter do upon hearing this explanation? _____

 - c. Picture this scene of Peter taking Jesus aside and rebuking Him. Why do you think this plan was so foreign to what Peter was expecting? _____

 - d. How did Jesus reply to Peter? _____

 - e. What was Jesus opposing according to verse 23? _____

 - f. Peter was resisting the way of suffering. He was human just like us. Can you relate to him? Do you ever feel like you have a better idea? Share your thoughts: _____

6. Jesus then turned to the crowd of disciples and told them the truth about His kingdom and the cost of following Him. Read what He said in Matthew 16:24-27. Notice that He was not just speaking to the twelve apostles (see also Mark 8:34). How do Jesus' words contradict our western culture? _____

- a. The challenge for us is how we cope when trouble comes. What's our immediate response to trouble? _____

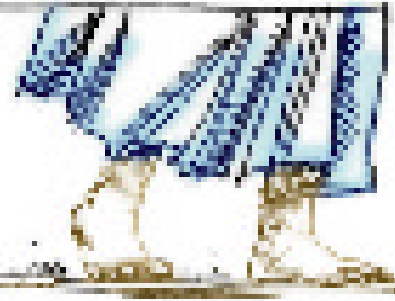
 - b. How do Jesus' words change this focus? _____

 - c. What promise can we stand on according to verse 27? _____

7. Go back and slowly read the whole passage studied in this lesson so far (Matthew 16:13-28). Next, read the same account as recorded in Mark 8:27-38. Try and put yourself in Peter's shoes that day. What thoughts and questions do you think may have been running through his mind as he lay his head down that night?

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Lesson 16 / Page 4

Living His Way

1. To identify ourselves with Christ means we embrace the cross of suffering. Peter wasn't ready to do that immediately; however, he did get there as the Master continued to shape His masterpiece. Remind yourself of Peter's words in 1 Peter 1:6-9 which he wrote years after this day. In what way was Peter restating what Jesus taught? _____

2. Jesus didn't disqualify Peter for his honest reaction to His words. He corrected him, but He never gave up on Peter. Do you ever feel like you don't get it? Are you afraid to be honest with the Lord about things you don't understand? What do you learn from Peter's experience? _____

3. Have you confessed that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God? If you have, then again thank the Father for revealing this truth to you. If you have not, why do you hesitate? Do you have questions you'd like help with? What are they? _____

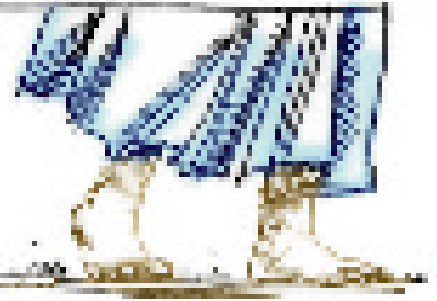
4. Once we claim that we do believe Jesus is the Christ He begins to give us His plan for His kingdom. As you read this plan from Matthew 16:24-28, what thoughts, questions or fears come to your mind? _____

5. What excites you about this plan with such amazing promises attached? _____

6. Just like Peter, we are a work in progress. We have good days and bad days. Sometimes we get it right, other times we blow it completely. Jesus loves us the same no matter what. How has looking at Peter's journey encouraged you on yours? _____

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Lesson 16/ Page 5

7. End your study where you started (see Loving Our Lord) praising God for the Spotless Lamb. Is there anything you want to add to your psalm? _____

Summary statement:

Memory verse challenge: Matthew 16:27
Jesus is going to come! No doubt He will keep His word.