

Chosen and Scattered

January 11, 2026

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Luke 5:1-11; John 21:15-19; 1 Peter 1:1-2

Session Outline

1. Fisher of Men (Luke 5:1-11)
2. Feeder of Sheep (John 21:15-19)
3. The Rock (1 Peter 1:1-2)

Theological Theme

God chooses to work through imperfect people for His purposes.

Synopsis

Our identity in Christ as chosen ones grants us hope and purpose, motivating us to live out our faith boldly in a world that is not our home.



Leader Guide

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Introduction

What comes to mind when you hear the words “Starry Night”? Are you picturing Vincent van Gogh’s swirling masterpiece of white and yellow stars on an enchanting blue backdrop? While thinking of Vincent van Gogh, if you hear, “Sunflowers,” do you see his famous golden painting?

Today, we’d be hard pressed to find many adults, even if they can’t picture his famous works, wouldn’t know van Gogh’s name. Today, he’s known as one of the greatest Dutch painters of all time, creating over 800 paintings and 700 drawings during his lifetime.

Did you know, though, that during his lifetime, van Gogh didn’t have the fame or fortune you might expect? He was virtually unknown and desperately poor, and of those 1,500 works of art (which now grace museum floors and are worth small fortunes), he sold only one.¹

Surprisingly, this artist we consider so great seems an unlikely candidate to have led such an obscure life. But appearances are not always what they seem.

When we study the big picture story of Scripture, we discover quite a few “unlikely candidates,” noteworthy names that had unexpected starts or road bumps in their journey to be a tool for the living God. In the New Testament, Peter is a prominent example. Today, we are kicking off a study of 1 Peter by looking at Peter’s beginnings, and what happened when God grabbed ahold of his life.



What other stories of “unlikely candidates” can you think of, in the Bible or otherwise?





Why was Peter an unlikely candidate to be a church leader?

Session Summary

Simon didn't fit the mold of your typical disciple in Jesus's day. He wasn't wealthy. He didn't come from an important family. He was a small-town fisherman—an everyday guy, and not a perfect one, but Jesus still called him and used him to build Christ's church. When Jesus stood in Simon's boat on the Sea of Galilee and told him to throw his nets in, following a long night of no fish, Simon did it, saying "if you say so," (v. 5). Simon was obedient even when it didn't make sense (an attitude he would carry with him as he followed Jesus).

Peter was called, but he wasn't perfect. One of his biggest mistakes was denying Jesus three times after Jesus's arrest. Yet, even in light of this heartbreaking choice, Jesus still wanted to use him. He met him on the shore and restored their fellowship. Peter would still play a foundational role in the church Jesus was building.

1. Fisher of Men (Luke 5:1-11)

-  What can we learn about Simon in this passage?
-  What does it mean to "catch people" and how did Simon go on to do that? How are we called to do the same today?

Luke referred to Peter as "Simon." We might know this disciple as "Peter" or "Simon Peter." Simon was his given name, and Peter is the name Jesus gave him in Matthew 16:13-19. Simon's new name ("Cephas" in Aramaic, "Peter" in Greek) meant "rock." Simon Peter would go on to have a foundational role in the church Jesus built, and this passage tells how he came to be a disciple of Jesus.

As Jesus was preaching by Lake Gennesaret (another name for the Sea of Galilee), Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from Simon's fishing boat. After He finished teaching, Jesus told Simon to "put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch" (v. 4). This was a simple enough request in the boat of a vocational fisherman, but Simon had been fishing all night and caught nothing. This was a moment Simon could have pushed back on Jesus's instruction based on his experience.

Has God ever called you to do something that went beyond common sense? Something that defied something you thought was true? We learn in Simon's story that God works in ways that defy our understanding, and when we're obedient, we get a front row seat to the amazing works of His hands.

Don't miss what Simon said next: "But if you say so, I'll let down the nets" (v. 5). Simon was bold and rash and didn't always get things right, but we see that Simon often held an "if you say so" attitude when it came to the direction of Jesus. We can learn from that kind of obedience.

Jesus had a purpose and a plan. After a no-catch night, now with Jesus on board, Simon pulled up so many fish that the nets tore, and they had to call James and John for backup. They caught so many fish that both Simon's and his partners' boats began to sink because they were so full. This was an early taste of the abundant provision Simon would experience walking with Jesus.

Simon recognized this sign of Jesus's divine power.² Simon also recognized his own standing. He was a sinful man, not worthy to follow Jesus . . . but Jesus called him anyway. Jesus can work in and through us no matter what is in our past, present, or future. Jesus told Simon not to be afraid, and gave him a new job: catching people. And he would! Just like the impossibly large catch of fish he pulled in here, we get to read about Peter "catching" an impossibly large crowd of people for the gospel in Acts 2:41!

When they got to land, Simon and the others left everything and followed Jesus. In Jesus's day, disciples weren't unique to Jesus (or even unique to Jewish culture). A Jewish rabbi (religious teacher) would normally be selective in the disciples they chose, often seeking those from wealth or a family of significance. Simon had none of these things. He was a poor fisherman, an everyday guy from Galilee. Simon was, to your average rabbi, a nobody . . . and yet, Jesus chose him not just to be a follower, but also to be the leader of His church. Simon reminds us we don't need any sort of special credentials to be a follower of Christ. God can work in and through anyone.



What tempts you to believe that God can't use you for His purposes? How have you seen Him use you despite these things?

2. Feeder of Sheep (John 21:15-19)



Why did Peter's relationship with Jesus need restoration here (see John 18:15-27)?



When was a time you needed restoration with Jesus?

Peter's restoration on the beach followed perhaps his biggest failure . . . denying Jesus three times. Jesus warned Peter this would happen (Matthew 26:33-35). At the time, Peter protested, saying he would never deny Jesus, but when the time came, He acted just as Jesus predicted.

When the rooster crowed (which Jesus also foretold), Peter realized what he had done and “broke down and wept” (Mark 14:72).

Put yourself in Peter’s shoes for a moment. Imagine the long-awaited Messiah came during your lifetime, and He picked you to be among His disciples. He gave you a new name and said He would use you to build His church. You followed Him, traveling with Him for years. You walked on water with Him. You’ve seen Him do incredible miracles. You are friends. You love Him. Then, in a moment of pressure, you deny that you know Him . . . three times. Any of us would break down and weep, don’t you think?

After this denial, Jesus died an awful death on the cross and Peter had to sit with his guilt and shame for three days, but when the women encountered the angel at the empty tomb, he said, “But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there just as he told you.’” (Mark 16:7) Peter got a special invite. God wanted him at the table. He had denied Jesus, but he was still going to be the foundation of the church Jesus was building. God was still going to use him, and Peter hadn’t thrown off that plan.

John 21 is the story of Peter’s restoration on the beach. Three times, Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, and three times, Peter answered yes. Three times, Peter reaffirmed his love for Jesus, and Jesus told Peter to feed and shepherd His sheep. Peter would not only fish for people, Peter was to act as a shepherd, caring for them and feeding their souls. Making disciples by teaching them what it means to follow Jesus, God used the shepherd/sheep metaphor throughout Scripture to describe His relationship with His people (Psalm 23), and Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd (John 10). Now Jesus was commissioning Peter to shepherd God’s people too.

When have you messed up? I mean really messed up? We all do, and so did people in the Bible, like Peter. Peter’s story shows us, that with a repentant heart, our mistakes don’t disqualify us from what God calls and wants us to do.



How does this passage remind us Jesus is always willing to restore? How does that change what you believe about how He can use you?

3. The Rock (1 Peter 1:1-2)



How did Peter address the church in these verses? How might his experiences with Jesus have shaped these words?



How would His experience with Jesus have given Him greater confidence in the security and faithfulness of life in Christ?

Elect Exiles

Peter addressed his readers as “God’s elect” and “strangers” who were “scattered.” Although such terms as “chosen” were sometimes used in reference to the Jews (Isa. 43:20), Peter designated the church as a special people temporarily away from their heavenly home. Election began with the foreknowledge of God the Father, included the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and was sealed by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Now that we know a little background about Peter, we have arrived at the letter we will be studying in the coming weeks!

The letter of 1 Peter was written by Simon Peter, the disciple of Jesus, around 62-64 AD.³ In 1 Peter, Peter encouraged the believers he was writing to and instructed them how to live a Christ-like life in the midst of pain and suffering.

In these verses, Peter first identified himself, then his audience: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ: To those chosen, living as exiles dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen” (v. 1). The places Peter mentioned here were Roman provinces likely located in modern-day Turkey.⁴ The individuals Peter wrote to were probably Gentile believers that faced persecution.

Peter encouraged his readers to stand firm in the face of cultural difficulties and persecution. Though we don’t find ourselves facing the same persecution today, in modern-day America, we do find ourselves in a Rome-like society, where our culture values (and even promotes) morals that do not align with what Christ teaches. We have hardships of our own (the Christian life is guaranteed to have them!). This calls to mind that we are living in the world but not of the world. We, too, are “exiles” of a sort, living temporarily in a world that is not our long-term, eternal home.

Just like the recipients of Peter’s letter, even though we live in a culture that doesn’t embrace what the Bible teaches, we are called to strive to live a life that glorifies God, even if our culture doesn’t. Peter’s opening statement of apostleship here showed his authority as a representative of the church.

These believers were chosen recipients of God’s grace (this is true for believers today, too). Peter’s original readers may have been marginalized and outcasts in their society because of their faith, but God chose them. They were sprinkled by the blood of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was sanctifying them (this is still true for believers today too). Praise God!

We are saved by God’s grace and He extends it to us repeatedly. Paul wrote that when our sin multiplies, God’s grace multiplies even more (Romans 5:20-21) and it overflows (2 Corinthians 9:8). We encounter this grace every day, in the gifts and kindnesses God extends to us. Let it multiply in our lives, Lord!

Likewise, true peace is something we can only have in the Lord. It's the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) that is cultivated in us through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit all believers experience throughout their lifetime. He can give us peace during times that make no sense (and when we need it most!). Peter had experienced this reality firsthand and would continue to impart it to his listeners throughout this letter.

- ❓ How have you experienced God's grace? How can you share it with others?

Conclusion

- ❓ How can we exhibit more of an "if you say so" kind of faith when we are called by Jesus? How might you do that now?
- ❓ How can we encourage one another toward faithfulness by reminding one another of God's use of Peter?
- ❓ Who is God calling you to pursue a gospel conversation with? How will you show simple obedience in that area?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for choosing to work through every day, imperfect people. Thank Him for including examples in Scripture like Simon Peter, who show us firsthand that we don't have to be perfect to be used by Him. Thank Him for the overflowing grace He gives and ask that His grace and peace would multiply in the lives of the people in your group. Ask for His help as you seek to live with an "if you say so" kind of faith daily.

Memory Verse

*... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient and to be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ.
May grace and peace be multiplied to you. —1 Peter 1:2*

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in 1 Peter* by Daniel Akin
- *1 Peter* by Wayne Grudem
- *Be Hopeful* by Warren Wiersbe

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Historical Context of 1 Peter

Purpose

First Peter emphasizes that suffering is normal for believers because they are temporary residents in this world. As such, they lack rights and receive no justice in this foreign land. Though suffering occurs on earth for temporary residents, their inheritance and exaltation await them in their eternal homeland.

Author

The author of 1 Peter identified himself as “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). He viewed himself as a divinely ordained, directly commissioned, authoritative representative of the Lord Jesus himself. Several statements in the letter indicate that the Peter who plays a prominent role in the Gospels is the author. For example, he called himself an “elder and witness” to Christ’s sufferings (5:1). Further, he described Christ’s crucifixion with an intimate knowledge that only a disciple would have of that event (2:21–24).

Setting

The recipients of 1 Peter are identified in 1:1. Peter wrote to the “exiles dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” These were Roman provinces located in the northern part of what is now modern Turkey, unless Galatia includes the Galatia in the southern region of Asia Minor. These people were likely persecuted Gentile Christians. They had earlier been involved in idolatry (4:3), were ignorant (1:14) and “empty” (1:18) before they came to Christ, and formerly were “not a people” but now were “God’s people” (2:9–10).

Special Features

First Peter provided encouragement to suffering believers living in northern Asia Minor who faced intense persecution. The letter encourages faithfulness while under oppression. Specifically, God’s holy people should lead distinctive lifestyles as temporary residents in a foreign land. Although they will suffer for Christ while in this non-Christian world, they should remember that heaven is their future homeland.

Extended Commentary

Luke 5:1-11

5:1–3 Lake Gennesaret was an alternate name for the Sea of Galilee, which is also called the Sea of Tiberias (Jn 6:1; 21:1). The boat Jesus chose belonged to Simon Peter, whose mother-in-law he had recently healed (4:38–39). Jesus sat down in the boat; this was the normal posture for a teacher (see note at 4:19–21).

5:4–7 In spite of the fact that his night labors had been fruitless, at Jesus's command Peter responded in faith (if you say so, I'll let down the nets). His faith was rewarded with a catch so big that their nets tore and the boats almost sank.

5:8–11 Peter's realization of Jesus's divine power and holiness through the catch of fish was essentially the same as that of Job (Jb 42:6) and Isaiah (Is 6:5). James and John, along with Simon Peter, formed Jesus's inner circle (9:28; Mt 26:37). Jesus used the huge catch of fish to illustrate the kind of evangelistic impact Simon would have (catching people; see Ac 2:41; 4:4). Peter and the other fishermen left everything and followed Jesus. This thoroughgoing commitment is the essence of true discipleship (14:26).⁵

John 21:15-19

21:15 On Simon, son of John, see note at 1:42. Jesus's question do you love me more than these? probably meant, "Do you love me more than these disciples do?" rather than, "Do you love me more than these fish [i.e., his profession]?" or "Do you love me more than you love these men?" though each of the three meanings is possible.

21:15–17 Peter had denied Jesus three times (18:15–18, 25–27); now Jesus asked him three times to reaffirm his love for him before recommissioning him for gospel service.

21:18 Stretch out your hands refers to crucifixion, where a person's hands and arms are spread out and nailed to the crossbeam. Tradition says Peter chose to be crucified upside down because he felt himself unworthy of dying in the same exact manner as Jesus.

21:19 The reference to indicate by what kind of death Peter would glorify God echoes the reference "to indicate what kind of death he [Jesus] was about to die" in 12:33. This verse therefore establishes a connection between the deaths of Jesus and Peter. As God's Lamb, Jesus died for the sins of the world (1:29, 36); Peter died a martyr's death, giving his life as a witness to his faith in Jesus.⁶

1 Peter 1:1-2

Peter identified himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. The apostles were Christ's divinely ordained, directly commissioned, authoritative representatives in the early church. The recipients to whom Peter wrote were living as exiles dispersed abroad. The term exiles (v. 1; 2:11) refers to people living in a region that is not their permanent place of residence—in this case, the five Roman provinces located in what is now modern Turkey. Heaven is the true home of believers. "Dispersed" means a "scattering" and usually refers to God's people scattered outside of their homeland. Divine foreknowledge is the basis on which a believer is chosen (i.e., "elect"). It is more than just God's prior

knowledge of everything; it also includes his predetermination. Through the sanctifying work of the Spirit is the means by which being “chosen” is made a reality. The phrase to be obedient and to be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ describes the aim and purpose of election (Ex 24:3–8). Christians were chosen by God to have a covenant relationship with him that is characterized by obedience; Christ’s blood brings believers into this relationship.⁷

References

1. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vincent-van-Gogh/The-productive-decade>
2. A. Boyd Luter, “Luke,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1612.
3. Terry L. Wilder, “1 Peter,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1974.
4. Ibid.
5. *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.