BIBLE STUDY

Simon Says



RESONATE

Simon Says

Love Jesus

Simon Peter knew Jesus was alive; he had seen Him. Despite his joy over the resurrection, Simon Peter still experienced pain over the way that he had denied Jesus three times. The issue had to be addressed. May the way Jesus dealt with Simon Peter be a reminder of the tender ways God deals with each one of us.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5

DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: John 21:2-4, Matthew 4:18-20, John 20:21-22

Have you ever been around a person who always must be doing something? He or she can never sit still. People like that make me feel guilty. I feel lazy as I watch them in constant motion. My grandfather is like that. He will create work just to work. For example, one time he came to my house and noticed that my mailbox was beginning to rust. He went out immediately and bought another mailbox and then installed it. He had to do something. I, on the other hand, was not bothered by the mailbox nor had it even occurred to me to do something about it. Some people just need to keep moving!

I think Simon Peter was a fidgety type. He was not one for just sitting around. After witnessing the resurrected Christ, he just did not know what to do. He created work.

John 21:2-3

> 2Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 3"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Verse 1-3: Simon Peter by trade was a fisherman. This is what he had been doing before Jesus called him to be a disciple.

Matthew 4:18-20

> 18As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." 20At once they left their nets and followed him.

Verse 18-20: It had been three years since Jesus had called Simon Peter to follow Him. Three years ago he had dropped his nets. Now, he picks them back up. He goes back to where he had been. He returns to his comfort zone. He takes a few other disciples with him.

I think this is a commentary on many of our lives. We know Jesus. We have spent time with Jesus. We love Jesus. But we are not sure what He wants us to do. Instead of waiting for Him to tell us, we come up with our own plans. Often, we revert back to what was easy in the past. We go back to our old friends, old habits, old ways, or old jobs. We want to do something, anything, but wait for God.

Simon Peter did not understand that he had to wait for God. He was not equipped for what God wanted him to do. When he had seen Jesus before, the Lord said to him and the other disciples:

John 20:21-22

> 21Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."
> 22And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

Verse 21-22: Simon Peter knew two things. One, Jesus was sending him out. Two, that he would receive the Spirit. He could not be sent out until he had the Spirit. He had to wait. He did not fully understand what it meant to receive the Spirit, and he did not fully know what it meant to be sent out by Christ. All he knew was that Jesus had said these things to him.

But Simon Peter got frustrated while waiting. He wanted to do something. And since he was unable to be sent out and unable to force the timing of the Spirit, he went to his own plan. “I may not be able to get the Spirit, but I can fish!” But the funny thing is, he couldn’t do that either!

John 21:3

> 3"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Verse 3: They caught nothing! This seasoned fisherman did not even catch a guppy! His efforts done in his own way and in his own strength were not going to be blessed by God. The Lord had called him away from fishing. The night of fishing failure was setting him up to get back on track toward spiritual victory. But that is only possible if Jesus shows up. And He did!

John 21:4

> 4Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

Verse 4: Jesus met Simon Peter where he was. Even though he had reverted back to his past life, Jesus was willing to meet him there. Even though he had not waited on God, Jesus was patient with him.

Where are you? Are you waiting on God or have you gone into action without His counsel? Have you reverted back into some of your old ways? He is getting ready to call out to you. Will you listen?

DAY 1

Application

Confess any tendency you have to not wait on God. Ask Him to help you to be patient and to trust His timing.

When have you faced a time in your life when you had to wait on God?

What is the difference between waiting on God and just doing nothing?

How do you revert back to “old ways”? How can you protect yourself from doing this?

DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: John 21:4-8, Luke 5:1-11

Simon Peter and his buddies had gone fishing. They had caught nothing. They are tired. They feel defeated. Dawn is breaking. The darkness is becoming light. They did not realize that the Light of the world was standing a few hundred feet away. But His Voice made them aware of His presence.

John 21:4-5

> 4Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.
>
> 5He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered.

Verse 4-5: I wonder how long Jesus watched them struggle. He was on shore yet they were unaware of Him. They were so busy attending to what they were doing that they did not realize that their Best Friend was nearby. He had let them go the whole night experiencing failure. He did not intervene. They had decided to go back to their old lifestyle and He had not stopped them. He could have met them before they got on the boat. Instead, He waited. He let them fail. Then, He made them acknowledge their failure. No, they had caught nothing. No, their plans did not work. No, their choices did not produce the results that they had desired. Now, they were just worn out and had wasted an entire night for nothing.

Jesus did not berate their failure, instead, He met them in it.

John 21:6

> 6He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Verse 6: When only moments before there had been no fish, suddenly, there was a multitude! An entire night of futility is broken by a moment of abundance. In their strength they were unable to accomplish anything. With a few words from Jesus, they received a catch of a lifetime! The Man who wasn't even on the boat, gave them fishing success! He blessed them just because He could! I believe this blessing brought to Simon Peter's mind an event that had taken place three years earlier.

Luke 5:1-11

1One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, 2he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

5Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

6When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

8When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." 11So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Verse 1-11: A past miraculous catch had caused Simon Peter to follow the Lord. This next catch caused him to return to the Lord.

John 21:7-8

7Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. 8The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.

Verse 7-8: Simon Peter jumps in the water. He just wanted to be near Jesus. Imagine a grown man diving in and swimming ashore. He comes out of the water like a shaggy, wet dog. Water is dripping from him. He looks pathetic. His fellow disciples are trying to row to shore with this huge catch with one less man to help. Simon Peter did not care. He was not concerned about anything but Jesus.

DAY 2

Application

Praise the Lord for being so patient with us. He met us all in our failures. Thank Him for His mercy.

In what ways has Jesus met you in your times of failure?

Explain why the failure in not catching fish was important in God's plan in getting Simon Peter's attention.

What emotions do you believe drove Simon Peter to jump in the water and swim ashore?

How have you risked looking foolish in order to align your life back with Jesus?

DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: John 21:9-14; 18:18, 25

Simon Peter is dripping wet. He just swam to shore because he knew Jesus was there. The sight of his Friend is not the only thing he sees.

John 21:9

> 9When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Verse 9: On the shore was a fire of burning coals. Do not miss this detail. This is the same type of fire that Simon Peter stood by when he denied the Lord.

John 18:18, 25

> 18It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.
>
> 25As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not."

Verse 9: Simon Peter sees that fire on the shore. Jesus is nearby. His mind would have been triggered back to what he had done. He had denied knowing Jesus. The Lord knew. Jesus could have decided to cook the fish over an open flame. Instead, He chose a charcoal fire, the same kind that Simon Peter had warmed himself at while denying Jesus. It was as if Jesus was saying, "Simon Peter, you went to the enemy for a time. You warmed yourself at their fire while you were denying you knew Me. You failed me, but I will not fail you. You are dripping wet. Come. Warm yourself at the fire I made. Join me. Live for Me. Let others know about Me. You had your time away and it left you broken. I will restore you to wholeness. The fire that was your shame will now be your testimony of My grace."

John 21:9-10

> 9When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.
>
> 10Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

Verse 9-10: Fish and bread are already on the fire. Jesus did not need their catch to make a meal. He already had food prepared. Let me tell you a truth that in our culture is hard to grasp: you are not important. You are not needed. God can do His will without you. He wanted fish on the fire; He just created fish on the fire. However, He chooses to allow you to

join His work. He wants you to be a part of what He is doing. He invites you to Himself. Are you eager to join Him? Simon Peter was!

John 21:11

> 11Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

Verse 11: Simon Peter was excited to obey. He goes over to the boat and heads the effort to get that net ashore. He experiences another miracle. This seasoned fisherman knew that the net should be torn yet it holds together. Let's get abstract for a moment, shall we? That net can represent Simon Peter. That net had been unable to catch anything all night. It was a net and it was made to catch fish, yet it had not. However, with one word from the Master, the net went from empty to full. The net did not crumble under the pressure but miraculously it held together. Simon Peter had failed. He had denied Jesus. He should have done what was right but he did not. However, the Master was getting ready to speak words to Simon Peter (which we will study tomorrow.) Those words will take empty Simon to full. He would be the preacher to have one of the biggest catches in history as he preaches a sermon that leads 3,000 to salvation (Acts 2:41). Why am I going this abstract route? Because next time you feel that God is calling you to do something greater than you think is possible, I want you to remember the net. Just as Jesus did not allow the net to unravel or break, so too He is able to strengthen you to face any situation! You do not have to fall apart! Instead, you can experience a miracle in and through your life. (For all of you left-brained people who hate dealing with abstracts, thank you for bearing with me.)

John 21:12

> 12Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.

Verse 12: A night of failure leads to breakfast with Jesus! He truly meets us right where we are. He extended an invitation to spend time with Him. They all accepted. They sat down to eat while Jesus served them.

John 21:13

> 13Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

Verse 13: I wonder if all of them thought back to the Last Supper when Jesus broke bread and told them it was His body. At that time, they did not understand. Now, on the other side of the cross, it was a visual reminder of what Jesus had been through. One thing I do know, their time with Him was precious.

John 21:14



> 14This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Verse 14: Moments with Jesus are wonderful. Do not take them for granted. These disciples cherished this time for the rest of their lives. May you and I do the same.

DAY 3

Application

Spend time with Jesus. Talk to Him. Listen to Him. Enjoy your time together.

Why is it important to understand that we are not necessary for God to carry out His plan?

If God does not need us, then why does He ask us to do things for His kingdom?

How can the illustration of the net help you during difficult times?

In what ways are you joining the invitation of the Lord to spend time with Him?

DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: John 21:15-19

The moment had come. It was time to address Simon Peter. Jesus knew he had to deal with his past in order to prepare him for his future. In a tender way, Jesus redirected Simon Peter back to His heart.

John 21:15-17

> 15When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."
>
> 16Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."
>
> 17The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Verse 15-17: The meal was over. Conversation may have been winding down. Jesus turns to Simon Peter and asks if he loves Him. This is not your typical breakfast conversation. I do not know if they were still in the group or if the two were walking by themselves. But I do know that this conversation forever impacted Simon Peter's life.

Three times Jesus asks about Simon Peter's love. Three times Simon Peter affirmed his love for Jesus. It was three times that Simon Peter had denied the Lord. I wonder if Simon believed that his ministry was over. Maybe he felt his calling had been revoked due to his sin. I lean toward believing this because Jesus assigned him ministry tasks three times. He tells him to feed the lambs, take care of the sheep, and feed the sheep. All of these are significant tasks for the church. It takes from the imagery that Jesus had used in the past.

John 10:14-15

> 14"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Verse 14-15: Jesus is the head Shepherd. Yet, He calls others to be shepherds under Him. These are the people He calls to feed and care for the sheep. Simon Peter tells us the responsibilities of these shepherds.

1 Peter 5:1-4

> 1To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Verse 1-4: Shepherds are to care for the flock and serve them. They are to understand that the people have been entrusted to them by God Himself. They are to oversee the growth and development of the people around them. Jesus was asking Simon Peter to be one of His shepherds. In fact, Simon Peter was the first man assigned this task for the church.

Please note the connection between love and service. Jesus assigned the task of shepherding to Simon Peter as he declared his love toward Christ. Simon Peter's past did not prevent his future service. Instead, his present love for Jesus enabled Simon to receive the call of God on his life. That calling would not be easy. In fact, it would have a tragic ending.

John 21:18-19

> 18Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." 19Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Verse 18-19: Church tradition claims that Simon Peter was crucified by the command of the Roman emperor, Nero. Simon Peter did not feel worthy to die in the same manner of the Lord so he requested that he be crucified upside down. The man who had denied Jesus three times, would willingly die as a follower of Jesus Christ. Simon Peter loved His Lord to death.

I believe that everyday we have the opportunity to answer the same question, "Do you truly love me more than these?" The "these" may be different in our lives. Do we love Jesus more than our families, our friends, our jobs, our wealth, our material possessions, our time, our hobbies, our preferences, our ideas, our…(fill it in with what rivals your love for Jesus Christ). What is your answer? Do not take this lightly. The nice answer is "yes". But is that truly the answer reflected in our thoughts, attitudes, and actions? I'm not talking about your past. What is done is done. Simon Peter could not take back his denial, but he could make different choices in the future. At the end of his life when he faced either denying the Lord or dying on the cross, Simon Peter chose the cross. Loving Jesus is not about sitting around a campfire and singing praise songs while eating marshmallows. This love costs. It costs our energy "feed My lambs"; it costs our time "take care of My sheep"; it costs our resources "feel My sheep." It costs us everything!



Matthew 16:24-25

> 24Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

Verse 24-25: To be a follower of Jesus is not easy. His love for us and our love for Him is necessary to make it through. Count the cost. Jesus gave everything for you. Now, He is asking, “Do you love Me?”

DAY 4

Application

Ask God to increase your love for Him. Request that He help you to love Him in thought, word, and deed.

Write down the reasons that keep you from serving God.

How can you let the past go and move toward Jesus' call in your life?

How would others know that you love Jesus?

What do you need to let go of in order to place Jesus as the first love in your life?

The connection between the love of Jesus and the service of Jesus is vital. If you have one without the other, what would be the result?

DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: John 14:23, 21:15, 15:13, 13:34-35

Yesterday we learned that Simon Peter was able to follow the call of God on his life because he loved Jesus. The love he had for the Lord led to his service of the Lord. However, I feel like we throw the word "love" around easily. We all say that we "love" God. But what does that love look like? How does love turn into the action? The answer is one word: obedience.

John 14:23-24

> 23Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

Verse 23-24: Love is not just a feeling. It is an action. Love is obeying God whether I feel like it or not. We can say that we love someone but if our actions do not prove it then our words are void. It is what we do that proves our love. When Jesus spoke to Simon Peter in order to reinstate him to his calling, He tied the words of love to action.

John 21:15

> 15When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Verse 15: Do you think that Simon Peter always wanted to help others? Do you always want to help others? No, but we do it out of love. Our love for the person and our love for Jesus compel us to act out in love. That is why love is ultimately defined as sacrifice.

John 15:13

> 13Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Verse 13: Jesus literally laid down His life for others. However, we need to lay down our lives everyday. It is time that we quit living for ourselves and give ourselves up for others. We need to put others in front of ourselves. I know that this sounds like a basic lesson, but I need it. That is why I am writing it. The fundamental part of Christianity is not living its way through me. I cannot honestly say that I am known by the hallmark of the church which is love. This is the one aspect we should be known for!

John 13:34-35

> 34"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Verse 34-35: We are to be known for our love. Are we? Are you? Am I? Would a description of us include the word “loving”? If not, we must change. Simon Peter loved Jesus to the point of death. Can I love Him to the point of giving vacation money to missions, spending time with a lonely neighbor, hugging the person who drives me crazy, babysitting for busy parents who need some time together or a countless others ways that show love? Each night, can I pinpoint a time that day when I had showcased love to others? If not, it is time to make some changes.

We are to be known for our love. This needs to go beyond our family and friends. The world on the outside looking in needs to be able to brand us with the reputation of “those people love everybody.” Are you helping the church’s reputation or hurting it? Are you involved with others in a way that they can see the love of Jesus through you? If not, will you join me in making some changes? I have been convicted. I hope you have, too.

DAY 5

Application

Ask God to help you be a showcase of His love to others.

How is love and obedience connected?

If the church should be known by the world for its love, how do you believe the churches of this nation are doing? How about your local congregation?

What are some sacrifices that you need to make in order to consciously move toward showing love toward others?

Write down some people that you will make an effort towards showing them the love of Christ and how you will accomplish this.

BIBLE STUDY

Simon Says



RESONATE

Simon Says

Preach Boldly

Simon Peter experienced the supernatural. He is a visual representation of a life truly transformed by the Holy Spirit. His example can inspire us to live beyond ourselves by allowing the Spirit to live through us.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5

DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Acts 1:3-11

Jesus was alive from the dead. In the forty days following His resurrection, He met with the disciples from time to time. On one of these occasions He told them an amazing truth.

Acts 1:3-5

> 3After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Verse 3-5: Do not skim over this. These men were going to receive the Spirit. God Himself was going to indwell them. They did not understand what He was talking about. They were familiar with the Spirit from the Old Testament but they still could not comprehend the magnitude of what Christ was saying to them. They, at least, have an excuse, this had never occurred before. However, what about us? If we believe that Jesus is our Lord then we have the Spirit within us. Do you marvel at this? Or have we become so familiar with this concept that we forget this amazing truth? God is in us. The Creator of the universe somehow resides in you. It is a mystery that should leave us in awe. We should not grow accustomed to this amazing Gift. The disciples, at first, missed the importance of it.

Acts 1:6

> 6So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Verse 6: The disciples were so focused on the present that they missed out on the miracle that was getting ready to take place. How much do they reflect each one of us? We want what we want now. They wanted an earthly kingdom. They did not realize that Jesus was going to establish a spiritual kingdom and that they would be the first ones brought into it!

Acts 1:7-8

> 7He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Verse 7-8: The same Sprit that came upon these disciples also comes upon us. This Spirit gives us power. This power enables us to be a witness in our world. If we are not being a witness to our world, then we are not living in the power of the Spirit. To be a witness does not mean that you have to stand up and give a sermon to thousands of people. A witness is someone who testifies to what he saw. If I was called to court as a witness in a case, then I would have to share the information that I know. That is all a witness is. You share what you know about Jesus to those in your sphere of influence. That is all it is. Yet, there is a Power behind this simplicity. This Power grabs a life from eternal destruction and holds him forever in eternal life.

Acts 1:9-11

> 9After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.
>
> 10They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Verse 9-11: These disciples were so overwhelmed that they just stood there. God sent two angels to give them a “heavenly push” in the right direction. That push can apply to us today. Jesus will return. He has given us the Spirit to be a witness to this world. When He comes back, can we say that we have been a faithful witness? Truly ponder this today.

DAY 1

Application

Praise God for being the Giver of the Spirit. Thank Him for the Power He has willingly given to you.

Write your thoughts about the truth that the Spirit, God Himself, lives within you.

DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Acts 1:12-14, 2:1-11

Jesus has ascended into heaven. He has told them that they would receive the Spirit. The "how" and "when" of it all was still in question. He did not give the details. Unsure of what to do next, they what they could; they prayed.

Acts 1:12-14

> 12Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. 13When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Verse 12-14: Have you ever felt "in-between"? You are just not sure of what to do next. You had a clear vision before but now you feel stagnant. There is no going forward yet you cannot go back. In these times of waiting, pray. Pray alone, pray with others, pray fervently. Do not give up hope. God will answer in His time.

Acts 2:1

> 1When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

Verse 1: It had been ten days since Jesus went to heaven. For ten days they prayed and waited, waited and prayed. I wonder if they questioned if anything would happen. Some may have held onto faith, others may have been losing it. But they came together for Pentecost and something amazing happens.

Acts 2:2-4

> 2Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Verse 2-4: Violent wind. Tongues of fire. Filling of the Spirit. Speaking in tongues. This is not your typical day! Let your imagination run wild. Picture hurricane force winds filling your living room. Your hair and your clothes would be wildly thrashing. You would probably hang

onto furniture to keep yourself from being blown away. Suddenly you see fire. What would be your first impulse? To get away. But the wind keeps you from moving. The fire seems to head towards you as if it is on a mission. Suddenly, God Himself is in you. How do you explain it? You just know because the Spirit Who is now in you is telling you. Before you can process what is going on, a crowd has gathered outside your door.

Acts 2:5-11

> 5Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.
> 6When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one
> heard them speaking in his own language. 7Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these
> men who are speaking Galileans? 8Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own
> native language? 9Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and
> Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near
> Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11(both Jews and converts to Judaism Cretans and Arabs—we
> hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

Verse 5-11: When God wants to gather a crowd, He can! Jews from all over the known world at this time were in Jerusalem, having just celebrated Passover and now to celebrate Pentecost. Jews staying within the city were drawn together by the sound of the wind and fire. Other sounds permeate the air. The group who had received the Spirit was so excited that they kept talking in their new languages. The crowd was able to understand because they were hearing the words in their native tongue. What were they hearing? It was a declaration of the wonders of God. When you have the Spirit and live in the Spirit, then you are going to live a life of praise.

An ordinary day turns extraordinary. That is the Spirit at work. Have you experienced Him?

DAY 2

Application

Reflect on the power of the Lord. Let praise spring forth from your thoughts.

When have you felt like you were “in-between” in life? How did you handle it?

What does prayer accomplish during an “in-between” time of life?

The receiving of the Spirit led to praise. If you have the Spirit, your life should be marked by praise. Are you known as a person who worships God? How can you become more of a person who lives to praise the Lord?

DAY 3

The Word

Today’s Scripture: Acts 2:8-21

The Holy Spirit has ascended onto the group of believers. The sounds that occurred drew a crowd. Jews from all over the world heard the praise of God in their native language because the believers were equipped by the Spirit to speak in different languages. In this moment, two different thoughts form.

Acts 2:8-13

> 8Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11(both Jews and converts to Judaism Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"
>
> 13Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Verse 8-13: This is typical in every situation. Some people view their circumstances in a positive, curious sort of way (“Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘what does this mean?’”) Others go straight to the negative. (“Some, however, made fun of them and said, ‘They have had too much wine.’”) How do you handle new situations? Do you investigate them with amazement or do you draw negative, hasty, false conclusions? Simon Peter addresses the entire crowd but especially shows a rebuttal to the negative ones.

Acts 2:14-15

> 14Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!

Simon Peter then goes on to explain what the people were experiencing. The explanation is from Old Testament Scripture.

Acts 2:16-21

> 16No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17" 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Verse 16-21: There are two important points that we can learn. First, Simon Peter memorized Scripture. He knew these verses. At the time that he memorized them, he did not fully understand what they meant. Now, at this very moment, years after applying these words to his heart, these verses come alive. Are you memorizing Scripture? If not, come up with a plan to begin. If you can memorize commercial slogans or lyrics to songs, then you can memorize Scripture!

Another vital truth from this passage is equality. Everyone who receives Jesus will receive the Spirit. There is no discrimination based upon gender or race or age or economic status or past achievement. None of that matters. There is no hierarchy in the kingdom of God. He gives His grace to all. How the Spirit indwells us may be different, meaning that we each may have different spiritual gifts. The fact of the presence of the Spirit, however, is still the same. God is God. He is fully in you. You do not receive less than Him or more of Him. You are just in Him. Thus, we do not have the excuse of not being able to do something that God has called us to do. God Himself is in you. He can enable you to do anything He desires. (In fact, apply that principle to the above topic of Scripture memorization. God is in you. God wrote the Word. He wants you to know the Word. He can enable you to memorize the Word!) You are filled with the Spirit! Let your life reflect this amazing truth!

DAY 3

Application

Ask God to deepen your understanding of the truth that the Spirit indwells you.

Are you prone to negativity? Confess this to the Lord. How can negativity affect your life?

Are you prone to jump to conclusions? Confess this to the Lord. How can this trait affect your life?

What is the value of memorizing Scripture? How would this be beneficial to you?

Do you memorize Scripture? If so, please share your plan with others. If not, how could you begin to incorporate this discipline into your life?

Every believer has the Spirit. Yet, not everyone portrays this truth. If we are each given the Spirit, what keeps His Presence from being outwardly shown to the world by every believer?

What is stifling the Spirit in your life? Confess it now. How will you make changes?

DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Acts 2:22-36

Yesterday, we studied the beginning of Simon Peter's first sermon. Now, we will look at the rest of it. Read the entire passage and then we will highlight just a few of the many applications learned in these powerful words.

Acts 2:22-36

22"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. 25David said about him: " 'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 26Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, 27because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. 28You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

29"Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, " 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand 35until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." '

36"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Verse 22-36: First of all, Simon Peter spoke truth. He did not gloss over the fact that some of the people in that crowd had also been a part of the mob that had screamed for Jesus to be crucified. He is honest and upfront with the people. This is a good lesson for us. Often our culture is so focused on networking and not burning any bridges that we do not confront sin. Instead, we deny it, minimize it, ignore it, justify it, or excuse it. But how are people going to discover their need for a Savior if they do not realize that they need to be saved from their

sin? Simon Peter addresses the sin issue and then gives Jesus as the only solution.

Secondly, Simon Peter met his culture. These were Jews. They were devout or they would not have traveled many miles to come to Jerusalem for the Passover and then stay in town for the Pentecost. Because of who was in the crowd, Simon Peter discussed David. This man David had been a king of Israel about a thousand years before Simon Peter spoke these words. David was Israel's most beloved king. He was their biggest hero in history. This man as a boy had defeated a giant named Goliath and as a man had extended the borders of Israel. Simon Peter, knowing his people's love for David, informed them of one greater than David, Jesus Christ the Lord. We, too, need to be able to meet our culture where they are at. They do not speak "Christian lingo" so do not use it with them. Use mediums they are using. For example, fifty years ago while other preachers were calling television the "devil's box", Billy Graham decided to hold a television crusade. Why? Because he realized that this was a medium that people used so why not proclaim the gospel in a way that would cause them to pay attention? How many lives have come to Christ because of one man's willingness to meet his culture where it was at? We need to be able to do the same with those around us. Meet the people of your work, of your school, of your community where they are.

The third lesson that we will study deals with confidence. Simon Peter was not confident in himself, instead he was confident in who Jesus was and what Jesus did. His boldness did not stem in the fact that he was a good preacher because he did not know that he was one! He had never preached before, this is his first public speaking engagement. He was standing firm in Jesus. When people question our beliefs, we do not need to back down. Be confident in Jesus. They may disagree or laugh or ridicule; do not lose your courage. If it is placed in yourself, it will surely fail. But if you stand firm on the Rock, Jesus Christ, you will not fall.

DAY 4

Application

Request that the Lord teach you how to be truthful in your interactions, how to connect with your culture, and how to have confidence in God Himself.

Reread Simon Peter's sermon again. Ask God to give you His insights into the passage. Write what you learn here.

How will you apply what God has taught you through this Scripture passage?

DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Acts 2:37-41, 1 Peter 3:15-16

After proclaiming the gospel message to people, they need to have the opportunity to respond. How this response takes place varies from situation to situation. But in the case of Simon Peter's sermon, the crowd itself initiated their need to take action to change their lives.

Acts 2:37

> 37When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Verse 37: Simon Peter's sermon would not have taken long to speak. His words were not planned out or prepared. They just flowed out of the moment. He was ready to share what he knew about Jesus. That is true for us as well. In fact, Simon Peter reminds us of this reality.

1 Peter 3:15-16

> 15But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Verse 15-16: We must be ready to give an answer. If we are truly living for God, people will ask us questions about our reasoning behind our values, our decisions, and our priorities. Be ready to explain your hope in Jesus, how your belief in Him affects every area of your life. Let them know how this hope can be theirs as well.

Acts 2:38-39

> 38Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Verse 38-39: Simon Peter, who had only received the Holy Spirit moments before, now leads the way for others to receive the Lord into their lives. He just shared with them what he knew about the Lord and it had a dramatic impact.



Acts 2:40-41

> 40With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Verse 40-41: Three thousand people came to know Jesus in one day! All because one man was faithful to speak what he knew about Jesus. How about you? How will you be faithful to tell others about Jesus? What excuses do you have that keep you from it? Do you have a “bad” past? Only fifty days before Simon Peter spoke this message, he had deserted and denied the Lord. Do you feel like you don’t know enough? Simon Peter was a fisherman. He was your blue-collared worker. He was not one of the religious “elite” but instead was one of the good ol’ boys. All he did was tell the people Who he knew: Jesus. You can do the same.



DAY 5

Application

Spend time praising the Lord for the “day of His salvation” in your life. Ask Him how to join His work in reaching others with the good news about Jesus!

Who do you desire to tell about Jesus? Pray for that person now.

How will you work to be prepared to give an answer for the hope you have?

What excuses do you have that keep you from telling others about Jesus?

How will you turn away from the excuses and turn toward obedience to the call of God to share the good news?

What evidence is there in your life, or better to say, who is the evidence in your life that proves that you are telling others about Jesus?