



# ***DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY***

A CASE-STUDY OF THE LIFE OF PETER

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# HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

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This series is all about our identity as disciples—people who are following and becoming more like Jesus. The goal of our discipleship journey is to become a person of Christ-like love, experiencing ongoing communion with God in all its fullness. This will continue to happen and become more of a reality as we grow in every stage throughout our lives.

Along with this study guide, we will be using a tool called the Discipleship Pathway to help us grow in our awareness, check our levels of engagement, and encourage our ongoing movement on the pathway of discipleship. You can pick up this tool at Salem Alliance Church or access it online. You will need to have both this study guide and the Discipleship Pathway to be able to engage with this series.

It may help to have some definitions for the three words we will use as we work through this tool:

**Awareness:** *understanding where we are on the Discipleship Pathway.*

In order to take our next steps along the Discipleship Pathway, we have to first understand where we are. This awareness comes through self-reflection and community discernment. As we grow in our awareness, we are enabled to better engage with our current stage of discipleship.

**Engagement:** *pursuing deeper communion with God and growing in Christ-like love.*

In each stage of the Discipleship Pathway, we are invited to experience deeper communion with God and become people of Christ-like love. These invitations from God will look different depending on the stage in which we find ourselves. Our level of engagement depends on our willingness to respond to these invitations.

**Movement:** *transitioning into another stage on the Discipleship Pathway.*

Movement involves moving into a new and unknown stage of discipleship or revisiting a previous stage in a deeper or different way. It isn't something we can force and yet it does require us to act—to risk, obey, and surrender to God's will in our lives.

We will explore these concepts more in this study guide.

Although you may like the idea of a straightforward path and you may not want someone to classify your journey, remember, this is a tool. As we walk the Discipleship Pathway together, we have the opportunity and privilege to learn from one another as we focus on Christ.

# WEEK 1: AWARENESS

Jesus began His ministry here on earth by calling ordinary people to join Him. He used the words, “Come, follow me” (**Matthew 4:19**). These words are still alive and active today as Jesus continues to call ordinary people to walk with Him, learn from Him, and imitate Him.

This week, we are asking you to interact with the Discipleship Pathway in order to grow in awareness of where you are on your discipleship journey and then to share what you noticed and learned with your group. But to begin, let’s look at **Matthew 4:18-25**.

The events recounted in this passage take place right at the beginning of the story for Jesus and His disciples. As you read, notice their growing levels of awareness. For an addition perspective on this story see **Luke 5:1-11**.

*18 One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. 19 Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” 20 And they left their nets at once and followed him. 21 A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. 22 They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind. 23 Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. 24 News about him spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon possessed or epileptic or paralyzed—he healed them all. 25 Large crowds followed him wherever he went—people from Galilee, the Ten Towns, Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from east of the Jordan River.*

# QUESTIONS

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From **Matthew 4:18-25**, what stands out to you about the way Jesus called these men and their responses to His call?

Why do you think they followed Jesus immediately, leaving everything behind?

“To ‘follow’ means to accept Jesus as authority, to pursue his calling, to model after his example, to join his group. Jesus was asking these men to become his disciples and to begin fishing for people. ‘Follow’ is the [most used] term for discipleship in the Gospels. Disciples in Jesus’ day literally followed their masters around and imitated them. Jesus required his disciples to give him their allegiance, daily count the cost of commitment, and serve others as he did.”

Barton, Bruce B. *Matthew*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1996. 68

How would you describe what it means to follow Jesus?

Now, grab your copy of the Discipleship Pathway (or access it online). Take some time to read through it. Please respond to the Reflection Questions on page 5 and be ready to share them with your group.

After completing the reflection questions, interact with the questions on the following pages in this guide.

## FOLLOW UP

Take some time to share your answers to the reflection questions on page 5 of the Discipleship Pathway with your group.

As you look at the responses on page 6 in the Discipleship Pathway, which one best expresses where you are right now? Why?

We each get to start where we are and not where we would like to be or where we feel we “should” be. As you become aware of where you are on the journey:

What are you celebrating?

What are you finding challenging?

What anticipation or excitement rises in you as you think about where you are headed on your journey?



In light of your growing awareness of your unique journey, how is God inviting you into deeper communion with Him?

## REFLECTION

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Read and pray through **Colossians 2:6-7**.

*And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.*

Reflect on the following prompts:

Jesus, what does it look like for me to continue to follow You?

Jesus, I'm letting my roots grow down deeper.

Jesus, I invite Your life and love to overflow in me.

# SERMON NOTES

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# PRAYER REQUESTS

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## WEEK 2: ENGAGEMENT

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In the last lesson, we got to see Peter's discipleship journey begin—his awareness of Jesus and himself grew. Now let's take a look at the rest of Peter's story to see how he continued to engage on the journey.

Peter had seasons in his life where he was actively engaged in his discipleship journey. He was thriving as he encountered and lived out Jesus' teachings.

Peter, as well as Jesus' other disciples, were empowered and sent out to lead and serve. They cast out evil spirits, healed the sick, and announced that the Kingdom of Heaven was near. Peter had the awe-inspiring experience of witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus as well as many other incredible acts and teachings of Jesus.

It is important to note that Peter also had seasons where he struggled, where he felt stuck, and where he kept making the same mistakes over and over again. He pushed back on some of the hard things that Jesus claimed and taught. At one point Jesus even told Peter to "get behind me, Satan." And, at Jesus' weakest moment, Peter denied even knowing Him.

However, even after denying Jesus, Peter met Jesus face to face and was restored and called to feed Jesus' sheep—to lead His church—which Peter did until he died as a martyr.

References for Peter's discipleship journey:

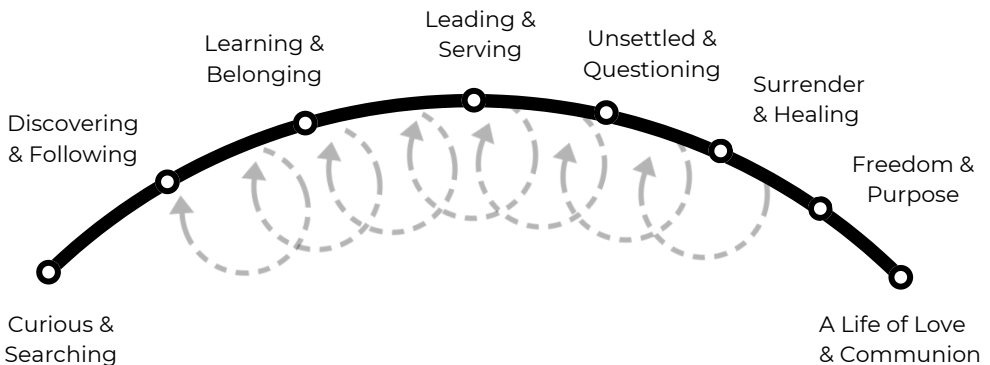
**Matthew 10:1-15; Matthew 17; Acts 2-4; Matthew 16:21-23;  
Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75; John 21**

“When Jesus entered Peter’s life, this plain fisherman became a new person with new goals and new priorities. He did not become a perfect person, however, and he never stopped being Simon Peter. We may wonder what Jesus saw in Simon that made him give this potential disciple a new name: Peter, the ‘rock.’ Impulsive Peter certainly didn’t act rock solid much of the time. But Jesus was looking for real people. He chose people who could be changed by his love; then he sent them out to communicate that his acceptance was available to anyone—even those who often fail.”

Barton, Bruce B. *Matthew*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1996. 68

## QUESTIONS

Where do you see Peter journeying through some of the Discipleship Pathway stages?



What do you find encouraging about Peter's journey?

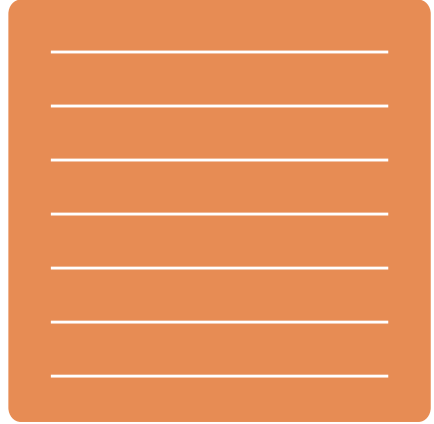
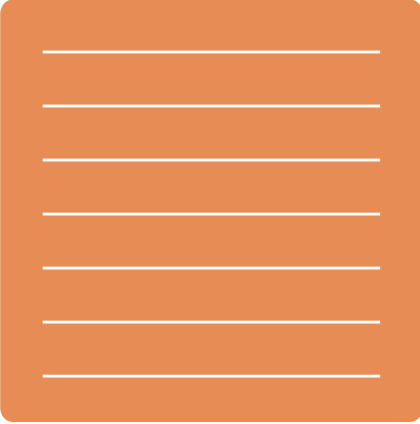
Surprising?

Challenging?

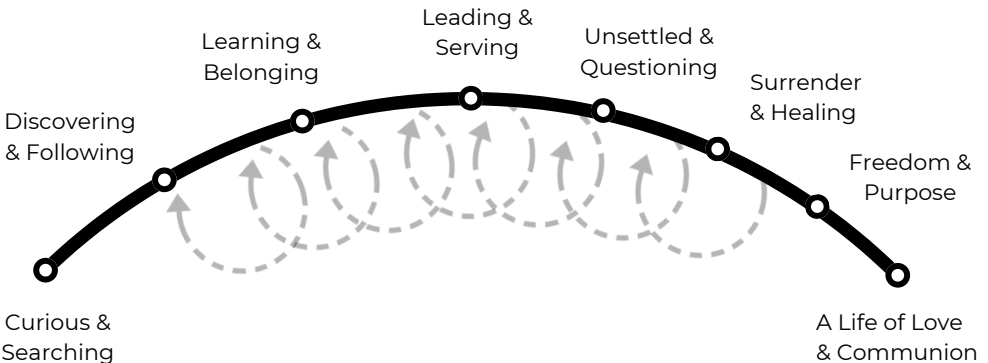
In what ways can you relate to Peter's journey?

# FOLLOW UP

Take some time to remember your journey with Jesus. What have been some significant moments along the way as you have walked with Him? Start with when you first said yes to Jesus and then keep going. Include both positive and negative moments—encouraging and difficult. List some of the key moments here:



As you look at your list, notice where they may intersect with the Discipleship Pathway. (Remember, this journey may not look like a “straight line.”)



Engagement for Peter looked different in different seasons of his life and journey. As you think about your own life, where do you notice signs of engagement on the journey?

Are there any areas where you feel stuck? Take some time to process with the Lord, and your group, about those areas and what getting unstuck could look like.

Where are some of the places you feel you are being called to greater engagement?

What might that greater engagement look like for you?



# REFLECTION

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Reflect on the following prompts:

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# PRAYER REQUESTS

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## WEEK 3: MOVEMENT

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The goal of the discipleship journey—of ongoing movement—is to live a life of Christ-like love and deep communion with God. As we move along the pathway, there is even more fullness to be experienced. This is going to look different for each person.

Movement isn't constant—sometimes we are healthily planted in a stage, and that's good. However, we need to guard against getting too comfortable, lazy, or stagnant. Movement involves risk, obedience, and stepping out in faith. It means saying yes to the invitations God gives us into something new and different from what we have previously experienced. Sometimes this may mean going back to a stage we have already experienced but in a different or deeper way.

Remember, the Discipleship Pathway isn't a “move through” or “get to the next step;” it's an ongoing journey. It's “adding on” or “growing deeper.” It's paying attention to what God has for you and what He is teaching you: good, hard, and everything in between.

## QUESTIONS

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Let's jump back into the life of Peter. There were multiple significant moments in Peter's journey where God invited Peter to take a risk—to step out in faith and obedience to God and move deeper on his discipleship journey.

In **Matthew 14:22-33**, Jesus called Peter to step out onto the water with Him. Read the passage on the next page and make note of where you see risk, obedience, and movement.

22 Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home. 23 After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone.

24 Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. 25 About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!"

27 But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!"

28 Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water."

29 "Yes, come," Jesus said.

So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

31 Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

32 When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. 33 Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

What Peter experienced in this story is what the movement from one stage to another can feel like. Peter was stepping out into something unknown—it was new and different. Movement means moving from the comfort of the boat onto the choppy sea.

On the surface, it may not seem like Peter's movement was good or fruitful movement. Sometimes movement can feel like failure; yet in God's kingdom, movement allows us to grow deeper in our communion with Him and in our Christ-like love for one another.

How do you think this event impacted Peter's discipleship journey?

Next, let's look at an invitation Peter received much later in his life. This invitation happened after Jesus had ascended back into heaven. Peter was leading the apostles as they were building the early church—just as Jesus had said (**Matthew 16:18; John 21**). Peter was doing great things, and thousands were coming to know Jesus because of his preaching and healing ministry. Yet, God was calling Peter to again step out of his comfort zone and move deeper on his journey.

Read **Acts 10** on the following pages.

1 In Caesarea there lived a Roman army officer named Cornelius, who was a captain of the Italian Regiment. 2 He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God. 3 One afternoon about three o'clock, he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him. "Cornelius!" the angel said.

4 Cornelius stared at him in terror. "What is it, sir?" he asked the angel. And the angel replied, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering! 5 Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. 6 He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore."

7 As soon as the angel was gone, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier, one of his personal attendants. 8 He told them what had happened and sent them off to Joppa.

9 The next day as Cornelius's messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, 10 and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11 He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. 12 In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. 13 Then a voice said to him, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat them."

14 "No, Lord," Peter declared. "I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean."

15 But the voice spoke again: "Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean." 16 The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven.

17 Peter was very perplexed. What could the vision mean? Just then the men sent by Cornelius found Simon's house. Standing outside the gate, 18 they asked if a man named Simon Peter was staying there.

19 Meanwhile, as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, "Three men have come looking for you.

20 Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. Don't worry, for I have sent them."

21 So Peter went down and said, "I'm the man you are looking for. Why have you come?"

22 They said, "We were sent by Cornelius, a Roman officer. He is a devout and God-fearing man, well respected by all the Jews. A holy angel instructed him to summon you to his house so that he can hear your message." 23 So Peter invited the men to stay for the night. The next day he went with them, accompanied by some of the brothers from Joppa.

24 They arrived in Caesarea the following day. Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 As Peter entered his home, Cornelius fell at his feet and worshiped him. 26 But Peter pulled him up and said, "Stand up! I'm a human being just like you!" 27 So they talked together and went inside, where many others were assembled.

28 Peter told them, "You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean. 29 So I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. Now tell me why you sent for me."

30 Cornelius replied, "Four days ago I was praying in my house about this same time, three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly, a man in dazzling clothes was standing in front of me. 31 He told me, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your gifts to the poor have been noticed by God! 32 Now send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.' 33 So I sent for you at once, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here, waiting before God to hear the message the Lord has given you."

34 Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. 35 In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. 36 This is the message of Good News for



the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. 37 You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, after John began preaching his message of baptism. 38 And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

39 “And we apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a cross, 40 but God raised him to life on the third day. Then God allowed him to appear, 41 not to the general public, but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses. We were those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead. 43 He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name.”

44 Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. 45 The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. 46 For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God.

Then Peter asked, 47 “Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?” 48 So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterward Cornelius asked him to stay with them for several days.

What was Peter called to do and why was it a risky invitation for him?

What did God accomplish through Peter's obedience?

“Peter’s prejudices had to be put aside in order for him to enter this Gentile home to fellowship with those who gathered there. Word would spread. Tongues would wag, and they did. But God was behind this opportunity. Peter knew this and obeyed. ... Having been sovereignly (even miraculously) guided to the home of Cornelius and having been impressed by the truth that God doesn’t show partiality, Peter took the keys of the kingdom of heaven given him by Christ and, in a epoch-changing moment, opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles.”

Barton, Bruce B., and Grant R. Osborne. *Acts*. Tyndale House, 1999. 178-179

Sometimes movement requires us to unlearn things about God, others, and our practice of faith. For Peter, he had to let go of previously held beliefs about his relationship with Gentiles and certain foods in order to respond to God's revelation of truth to him.

How does the thought of unlearning things make you feel?

Where have you had to unlearn things in your own discipleship journey?

## **FOLLOW UP**

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Do you feel like you are being invited into movement? If so, what could a step of faithful obedience look like for you?

If you don't currently feel like you are in a place of movement, share a time in your past that you have experienced movement on your discipleship journey?

How can we be preparing for God's invitations of movement in our lives? Ask others what has been helpful for them.

It's important to remember that there may be invitations within the stage you find yourself as well as the opportunity to move into another stage.

# REFLECTION

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# PRAYER REQUESTS

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## WEEK 4: TELL YOUR STORY

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The discipleship journey isn't just a "me and Jesus" experience. He called multiple disciples and they did life together. They argued, they prayed, they served, they ate together—and they changed the world.

How have you seen your life with Jesus impact others?

Our stories can be articulated in words and speech, but we also share our stories as we live out Christ-like love everyday. Process together with your group: How does my story impact my world?



Part of sharing our stories with others is talking about how we are experiencing communion with God—sharing what God is up to in your current stage on the Discipleship Pathway.

As you have processed this over the last few weeks, how could you share what communion with God looks like for you?

What are some experiences you have had with sharing your story? What were the outcomes?

Take some time to intentionally share your story this week.

# REFLECTION

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