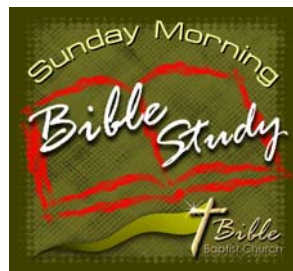




# THE LIFE OF PETER

## STUDY 6

### MINISTERING THROUGH BARRIERS



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## INTRODUCTION

**God develops Christians to be able to handle the flow of His power through them in ministry to others.** In order for His power to flow freely, pride and self reliance must be removed. *We* can address pride in our lives or ignore it and wait for *God* to directly bring it to our attention as He did with Peter (**Matthew 26:33-34** *Jesus' prediction of Peter's denials*). And as soon as we are ready to be restored to Christ, He meets us where we are and our repentance (*change of mind*) brings functionality back into the relationship we have with Him (**John 21:15-17** *Jesus meets with Peter, restores their relationship, and puts Peter back on mission; 1 John 1:6-9* *Each of us has the same privilege of restoring fellowship with God because of Jesus' payment for our sins*).

**God empowers each believer to be able to overcome the barriers that oppose His ministry to others.** Jesus warned His followers that they would face severe hardship and opposition when living for Him (John 15:18-21; 16:33). **Peter** would face major barriers shepherding the first century Christians. Any one of these barriers could have blown Peter right out of ministry; but with each obstacle Peter had to confront, Christ's life poured through Peter's efforts and others' lives were impacted forever while Peter's own faith and stability in Christ were reinforced.

In study six of Peter's life, we will examine 3 ministry barriers Peter faced and see if God can still *minister through barriers* with Christians today.



**BARRIER #1 ~ PAST FAILURE****Listen to Matthew 26:69-75**

Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. 70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. 71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. 72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. 73 And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. 74 Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. 75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

**John 21:2-3**

There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. 3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

**Peter's denial of Christ and abandonment of ministry could have been enough of a barrier to keep him permanently knocked out of reaching and growing others for Christ.** If Jesus had not sought Peter out to restore their relationship, Peter may have kept himself side lined the rest of his life. But Jesus knew how he wanted to use Peter and the need that the first century world had for a bold gospel preacher.

***Group Questions***

- Do Christians today pull back from doing ministry because of past failures? **Yes.**

- What can we do to help a fellow Christian get back involved in ministry? 1. Identify with them. 2. Point them to Christ's desire to be close to them. 3. Point them to truth: Philippians 3:13-14 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
- Besides past sin, what are some other reasons Christians don't participate in ministry? Present sin. Not experienced enough yet. Low self confidence. Too much into the things of this world i.e. work, hobbies, material things. They don't care – apathy. Burnout.
- What can we do to help Christians with the kinds of ministry barriers we just mentioned? Identify with them – don't judge them. Point them to the truth that Christ wants to be close to them. Commit to helping them through prayer. "Gently" check up on them to see how the battle is going. Ask them how their quiet times are going and offer recommendations that could help improve the quality of their alone times with God. Encourage them to get into Bible studies with other growing Christians – we all need accountability in our lives.

## BARRIER #2 ~ PERSECUTION & THREAT OF DEATH

### Turn to Acts 4:1-4

And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. 4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

### Acts 4:13-18

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. 14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. 17 But that it spread no further

among the people, let us straitly [*severely*] threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. 18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

**The record shows Peter faced persecution and the threat of death and yet God ministered through Peter and right on through the barriers to impact others eternally.** God's power was so evident that not only were the authorities taken back (4:14, 16-17) but thousands were responding to Peter's ministry and believing in Christ as Savior (4:4).

### ***Group Questions***

- Why are we so afraid to share our faith with others? *Are we afraid of imprisonment? Death? Or simple embarrassment? (We all better hope Christ isn't embarrassed to admit He knows us when we die.)*
- Look at Acts 4:13. How can unbelievers today realize, we have been with Jesus? *We have to have boldness about the things of God that only comes from being close to Him on a regular basis. Our boldness does not come from our training and education (self made confidence) but directly from the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit living in us.*
- Look at Acts 4:14. How can Christians today silence those that oppose them? *If a Christian's life shows nothing but Christ's life changing presence unbelievers have very little to attack. It is when Christians choose to act like the world that there is a conflict in their lives and they look like hypocrites to those who know of their profession to be saved. Christians today must make the choice to denounce their old, worldly ways of living and behave (speak and act and think) following Christ's and the other disciples' holy example.*

## **BARRIER #3 ~ DISAGREEMENTS WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS**

### **Acts 11:1-3**

And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, 3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

### Acts 11:11-17

And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. 12 And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: 13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

### Acts 11:18

When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

**The record shows that during this transitional time period, God's plan that all people would be able to enter His Kingdom through faith in Messiah had to be understood.** This was the plan from the beginning and keeps the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12.

However, this particular dispensation of truth came through Peter and caused a conflict among the Jewish believers of the day. Note how in the resolution of the disagreement, it is the truth of God's redemptive work that is the basis for peace between Peter and the others. Here, as in previous examples, the barrier to ministry was overcome by God working through His servant to reach others.

### *Group Questions*

- What things divide Christians today presenting a barrier to ministry?  
*You name it – taste – method – preferences...*
- Can God minister through these barriers. *Yes.*
- How can Christians help reduce barriers and overcome them? *By keeping ministry to others as the primary objective of their lives. By minimizing the importance to themselves for particular methods, tastes or styles – "stop majoring on the minors."*

# 🐟 FISHING

## (ON THE HANDOUT)

1. Christians will **regularly** face **barriers** to the ministry God wants to perform through them.
2. Christians' words and actions today can make the same **bold impression** for God that first century Christians' lives made.
3. A Christian's **lifestyle** should give critics no grounds for **accusation**.
4. Only by keeping ministry to others a **priority** will a church family today choose unity in Christ over personal preferences.
5. God is no less powerful today than He was during the first century to **minister through barriers**; and we are no less sealed with the Holy Spirit today than first century Christians.

# 🐟 THE CATCH

PETER EXPERIENCED TREMENDOUS SUCCESS IN MINISTRY BECAUSE HE LET GOD MINISTER THROUGH THE BARRIERS HE FACED.

1. What are the current barriers I am facing that are slowing or stopping my ministry efforts? *Be specific.*
2. How can God minister *through* these barriers?

3. Would advice from another mature Christian be helpful in my situation?  
Who can I gain counsel from?
  
4. If I have never been involved in ministry in others' lives, where might be a good place for me to begin?
  
5. If I have been involved previously in ministry, and am contemplating returning, what would God have me do differently?

## REMEMBER

YOU CAN EXPERIENCE TREMENDOUS SUCCESS IN  
MINISTRY IF YOU WILL LET GOD MINISTER THROUGH  
THE BARRIERS YOU WILL FACE.