

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 471

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be about Simon Peter. He is perhaps the most famous of the original 12 apostles. There are four lists of the 12 apostles found in the Scriptures - (Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; and Acts 1:13) Each list in the Gospels puts Peter first and Judas Iscariot last. The list in Acts 1:13 also mentions Peter first, but Judas is not mentioned at all as he had committed suicide. Peter had many faults but still became a great Christian leader and was even considered to be a "pillar" in the church (Galatians 2:9). That's at least one reason why he is mentioned first in the lists of the apostles. If you are keeping count, however, Peter actually made more mistakes that are recorded in the Bible than Judas did. In fact, on the night before Jesus was crucified Peter denied three different times that he even knew Jesus. To make this denial emphatic **"He denied it again with an oath: 'I don't know the man'"**. (Matt. 26:72) Peter, however, repented of his sins, returned to the upper room to be with his fellow apostles, and was restored to his role as an apostle. Because Peter didn't give up or quit, he found a prominent place in the apostolic hall of fame. Judas, however, was **"seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver coins the chief priests and the elders. 'I have sinned,' he said, 'for I have betrayed innocent blood.'"** (Matt. 27:3-4) Instead of returning to the upper room with Peter and the other apostles, however, Judas took matters into his own hands and killed himself. Truly, it would have been better for Judas if he had never been born (Matt. 26:24).

Here are a few of Peter's mistakes mentioned in the Bible:

- After Peter reluctantly obeyed Jesus and caught two boat loads of fish he said to Jesus: **"Go away from me Lord; I am a sinful man."** (Luke 5:8)
- When Peter rebuked Jesus for saying he was going to die in Jerusalem Jesus said to him: **"Get the behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."** (Matthew 16:23)
- On the Mount of Transfiguration Peter said to Jesus: **"Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"** (Matt. 17:4-5)
- At Capernaum Peter wrongly concluded that Jesus had to pay the temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27).
- Peter also wrongly concluded that he only had to forgive his brother 7 times (Matt. 18:21-22).
- Peter fell asleep while Jesus prayed and Jesus said to him: **"Simon . . .are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?"** (Mark 14:37)
- When Peter cut off the ear of Malchus **"Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?'"** (John 18:11)
- After denying Jesus three times Peter went outside and wept bitterly (Luke 22:60-62).
- Before ascending into heaven Jesus commanded Peter and the other apostles to make disciples of "all nations" (Matt. 28:19). "Nations" is the Greek word "ethnos" which is translated 93 times in the KJV of the Bible as "gentiles". Peter, however, didn't preach to the Gentiles!
 - Jesus promised: **"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."** (Acts 1:8) Peter still didn't do it for over ten years.
 - At Pentecost Peter preached by inspiration that **"The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call."** (Acts 2:39) Peter apparently didn't understand what he had said. Neither did anyone else!

- **“Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, telling the message only to the Jews.” (Acts 11:19)** This was not what Jesus commanded them to do!
- It was approximately ten years after the church began before Peter finally preached to the Gentiles. God emphasized this to Peter in a vision (Acts 10:1-23).
- Even though God repeated the vision to Peter three different times he still didn’t understand what it meant. Finally **“The Spirit said to him, ‘Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.’” (Acts 10:19-20)** These men were sent by a Gentile centurion named Cornelius.
- When Peter arrived at the home of Cornelius it finally dawned on him that he was to preach to the Gentiles: **“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.” (Acts 10:34)**
- Even after this Paul had to rebuke Peter to his face for when certain men came from James Peter separated himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group (Galatians 2:11-16).
- Peter was originally called “Simon” which means “to hear, or be heard.” Jesus changed his name to Peter which means “rock” (John 1:42).
- Jesus saw in Peter not only the potential to be heard, but also the potential to be a rock solid pillar in the church. Jesus can also see potential in us!
- We have listed some of Peter’s many failures to encourage you to never give up even when you make a mistake.
- Since Jesus didn’t give up on Peter, I believe He will never give up on you!

The book of Romans declares emphatically **“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)** Consequently, God has to use imperfect people, because that’s the only kind of people that there are. The difference between Peter and Judas is that Judas gave up and quit, and Peter kept trying! Please consider this poem by John Greenleaf Whittier and keep trying:

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,
 When the road you're trudging seems all up hill,
 When the funds are low and the debts are high
 And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
 When care is pressing you down a bit,
 Rest if you must, but don't you quit.
 Life is strange with its twists and turns
 As every one of us sometimes learns
 And many a failure comes about
 When he might have won had he stuck it out;
 Don't give up though the pace seems slow—
 You may succeed with another blow.
 Success is failure turned inside out—
 The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
 And you never can tell just how close you are,
 It may be near when it seems so far;
 So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit—
 It's when things seem worst that you must not quit.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce