



# **Life of Peter: Lessons In Discipleship**

Life Group Series, Autumn 2020 – Birmingham City Church

## **Part 2:** **Friendship**

# Series Overview

There is a huge amount we can learn from the disciple Peter!

This series unpacks key experiences and events from Peter's life to see what discipleship lessons there are for our own lives, as follows:

- Part 1 Discipleship
- Part 2 Friendship
- Part 3 Destiny
- Part 4 Insight
- Part 5 Faith
- Part 6 Integrity
- Part 7 Leadership
- Part 8 Suffering

## Introductions

Take a moment to describe something you really appreciate about a close friendship...

## Searching the Scriptures: Three Friendship Foundations (A, B and C)

### A: Jesus called his disciples his friends

Although this is not specific just to the life of Peter, it is really important to say from the beginning that Jesus describes us as his friends. This is a foundation for this study on friendship.

#### John 15:12-15

<sup>12</sup> My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. **Instead, I have called you friends**, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** What do you make of the fact that Jesus makes friendship with Him conditional: 'you are my friends if you do what I command' – is this fair to ask?

### B: Jesus modelled that different levels of friendship is perfectly normal and healthy

3, 12, 70, 120 and 5000 are New Testament increments represent different scales of connection to Jesus, on concentric circles moving out from Jesus at the centre, as follows:

1. **Three:** Peter, James and John
2. **Twelve:** 12 disciples
3. **Seventy:** the sending out of the 70 on mission
4. **One Hundred and Twenty:** the gathering of followers in the upper room

5. **Five Thousand:** the number of people who started following Jesus on the day of Pentecost

Not all connections with people where friendship are concerned are destined to make it to the closest level – that is OK.

We might have just a few very close friends – but wait! There is a special exception when it comes to Jesus – in the next point...

- **FOR DISCUSSION** Have we ever got friends in the wrong grouping of closeness to us? What advice could you give to help someone keep this area healthy?

## **C: The friendship mystery that is unique to Jesus: we all get invited into His inner circle**

When Jesus was present in his earthly ministry, he was limited to one physical body, and he chose three of the disciples to form an inner core friendship with Him.

But Jesus also provides two really key ways in which each and every person who follows Him may become a part of that inner circle with Him:

1. Sharing the Word with us, in the bible. We get access to all the 'inner circle' moments He wants us to know about and be a part of
  2. Sharing the Holy Spirit with us at Pentecost, to overcome the limitation of his finite human body. Each and every one of us now has access to the closest and most intimate friendship with Jesus, just as Peter, James and John enjoyed with Jesus.
- **FOR DISCUSSION** What have you found helps you build 'inner circle' closeness with Jesus for yourself?

Following these points about the foundations for friendship, the study now explores 6 things that Jesus aimed to teach Peter, James and John about being in a close friendship.

We will aim to do this from an unusual angle, as often we focus on Peter himself.

In each of these key 'inner circle' situations which follow, we are going to approach the subject of friendship from the standpoint of:

**'What close friendship lessons might Jesus be trying to teach from having his inner circle with him at these experiences?'**

(Clearly these relate to James and John, as well as Peter.)

## **Searching the Scriptures: Six Friendship Lessons**

### **Mark 5:40-42**

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and said to her, '*Talitha koum!*' (which means 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!'). <sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old).

## The Healing Of Jairus' Daughter: (1) Heart

Jesus showed Peter, James and John his heart of compassion when he raised Jairus' daughter from the dead.

We need to be able to reveal to our closest friends the good things that lie deepest within us.

- **FOR DISCUSSION** How can we best show our close friends the really good things God has put inside us?

## The Healing Of Jairus' Daughter: (2) Capability

Jesus also showed Peter, James and John his incredible capability when he raised Jairus' daughter from the dead.

We need to be able to reveal to our closest friends our greatest capabilities.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are weak. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world ... As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Marianne Williamson "A Return To Love" (often incorrectly attributed to Nelson Mandela)

- **FOR DISCUSSION** What is a healthy balance for revealing our capability, but without becoming prideful or annoying to be around?

### Mark 9:2-4

<sup>2</sup> After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. <sup>3</sup> His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

## Transfiguration: (3) Identity

Jesus showed Peter, James and John his true identity as the Son of God in dazzling holiness.

We need to be able to reveal our true identity to our closest friends.

- **FOR DISCUSSION** What is scary about revealing who we truly are?
- **FOR DISCUSSION** Is it wrong to suggest there is something really glorious that God has put inside each one of us, that our closest friends adore about us?

## Transfiguration: (4) Connection

Jesus showed Peter, James and John his connections with other people from heaven – in Elijah and Moses.

We need to be able to maintain strong connections to our closest friends.

- **FOR DISCUSSION** Who are the friends you have had the longest connection with – and why?
- **FOR DISCUSSION** Do we ever feel a bit envious if one of our really close friends shows that they have other close friends? How do we handle that, in the Lord?

### Mark 14:32-37

<sup>32</sup> They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' <sup>33</sup> He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup> 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' he said to them. 'Stay here and keep watch.'

<sup>35</sup> Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup> 'Abba, Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.'

<sup>37</sup> Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Simon,' he said to Peter, 'are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour?' <sup>38</sup> Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

## Gethsemane: (5) Struggle

Jesus showed Peter, James and John his huge struggle the night before the cross.

We need to open out our own deep struggles to our closest friends.

- **FOR DISCUSSION** Why do you think we hold back about our struggles sometimes?
- **FOR DISCUSSION** How does it make you feel when your close friends open up to you about what they are finding really hard?

## Gethsemane: (6) Vulnerability

Jesus showed Peter, James and John that he felt really vulnerable the night before the cross.

We need to let our closest friends know what makes us feel vulnerable.

- **FOR DISCUSSION** When is it good to show vulnerability and when is it good to keep our guard up?

# Holy Spirit Pause

Heart, capability, identity, connection, struggle, vulnerability – all these play a key part in the formation of our closest friendships, if the example of what Jesus showed to Peter, James and John is anything to go by.

- What is something from this list of 6 things that the Holy Spirit is speaking to you about?

# Life Application

- Call, text, write or message a close friend to say what it is about them that you think is great! We don't do this enough.