

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

Life Group Series, Autumn 2020 – Birmingham City Church

## **Part 4:** **Insight**

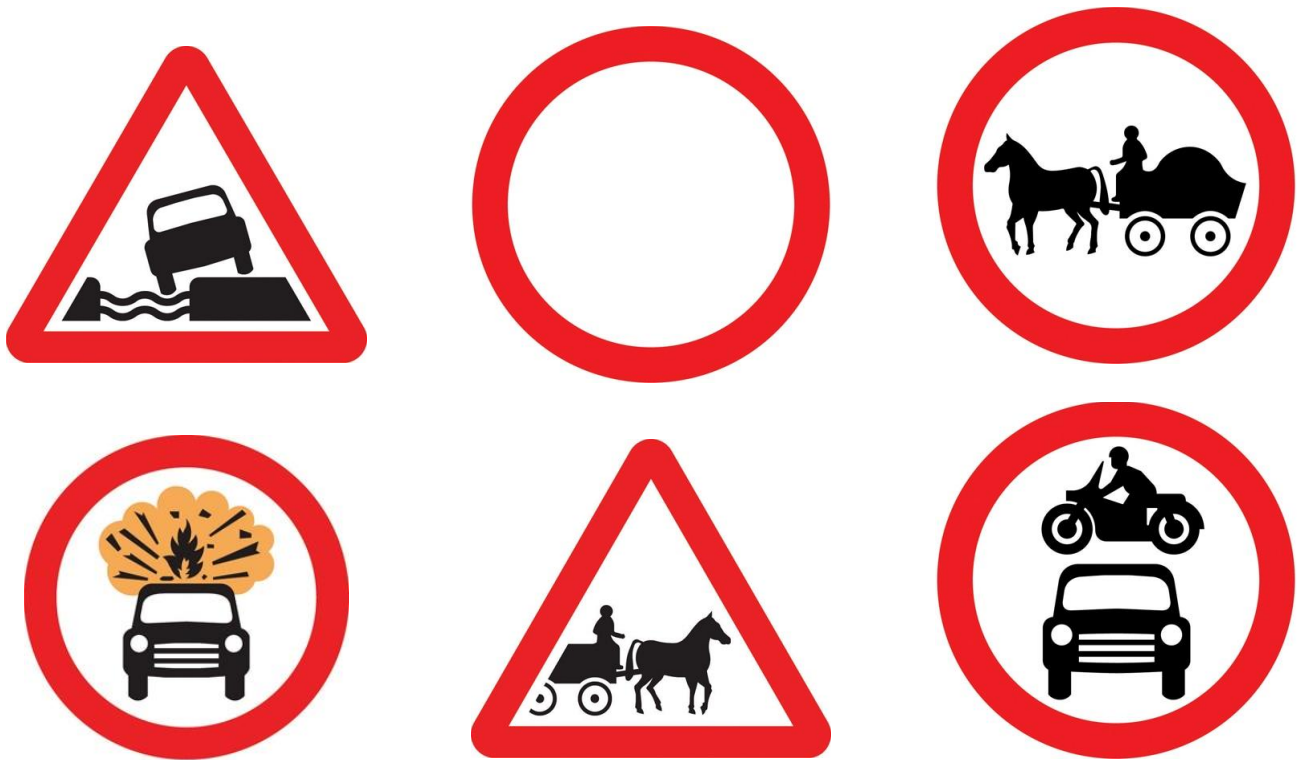
## Series Overview

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

## Introduction

Do you know what these signs mean?



## Insights Into God Depend Both On Signs And Our Own Attitudes

In this session, we are exploring what happens when Peter grasps something about Jesus deeply, and then immediately seems to miss the point about Jesus completely!

We do this, don't we, sometimes? We think we've understood something about God – and then we realise we've only understood a little bit!

There are some great lessons for us all in this episode, about how we arrive at insight about Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit.

What is more, Matthew as a writer seems to be taking a lot of care to show us all the layers of how this works in Matthew 16.

The best way to approach this study is to take it in two halves:

- Different kinds of signs
- Different kinds of people & their attitudes

As we examine each, we will begin to get some clues about what to pursue and what to avoid when trying to understand who Jesus is more.

## Matthew 16

**16** The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

<sup>2</sup> He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' <sup>3</sup> and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. <sup>4</sup> A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away.

<sup>5</sup> When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. <sup>6</sup> "Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

<sup>7</sup> They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread."

<sup>8</sup> Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? <sup>9</sup> Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? <sup>10</sup> Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? <sup>11</sup> How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." <sup>12</sup> Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

<sup>13</sup> When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

<sup>14</sup> They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

<sup>15</sup> "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

<sup>17</sup> Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." <sup>20</sup> Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

<sup>21</sup> From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

<sup>22</sup> Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

<sup>23</sup> Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. <sup>26</sup> What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

<sup>28</sup> "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

## 7 Different Kinds of Signs in Matthew 16, And What They Teach Us About God

**A sign from heaven** – the Pharisees and Sadducees demand this to test Jesus.

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** How far would you say a sign from God would build up your relationship with Him? Are there any dangers in signs from God?

"When confronted with the question, "What's your testable, repeatable evidence for God?" you should immediately counter with: 1. What evidence are you looking for? 2. How would you know it if you saw it? You will probably discover that your challenger has no idea." Sarah Salviander, Christian astrophysicist on Twitter

**Signs from the weather** – we all know how to read certain kinds of weather by looking into the sky. Jesus rebukes the religious leaders for knowing how to do this, but not understand the times they were in.

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** Are we good at weather, but not very good at the times we are in? What would make us any different from these religious leaders?

**Signs of the times** – Jesus is referring to the fact that he has arrived, the Kingdom of God is near, and the religious leaders are missing it!

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** How do you respond to people who seem to be trying to interpret the times spiritually? What criteria would you hope for them to have before you would start to believe what they are saying and take them seriously?

**The sign of Jonah** – this was Jonah being in the belly of the fish for 3 days and nights, and visiting the Ninevites. This resulted in their repentance and turning to God. This is in strong contrast to the religious leaders. Jesus is greater than Jonah – and yet they are not repenting or turning to God!

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** There are hundreds of signs in the Old Testament pointing to Jesus. Some of them seem incredibly clear e.g. Isaiah 53. How do you think people miss these signs?

**Signs from miracles** – Jesus asks the disciples to reflect on his ‘feeding crowds’ miracles. These are signs in themselves.

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** Why does Jesus ask the disciples to consider his miracles again? Why aren’t the Sadducees and Pharisees happy with these signs – as presumably they must have heard what Jesus had been doing?

**Signs in specific aspects of miracles** – Jesus makes a point of highlighting ‘the basketfuls gathered’

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** Why does Jesus ask the disciples to remember the basketfuls gathered up?

**A sign through revelation from “my Father in heaven”** – Peter is called blessed because of the revelation from God that Jesus is the Messiah.

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** What do you make of the fact that Andrew already told Simon this (John 1) when he first introduced Peter to Jesus?

## Summary of How Signs Can Work

1. Sometimes the signs we think we want are already there
2. Don’t be good at reading less important signs, but all the while miss more important signs
3. Stay alert for signs that God is on the move – in your life, in our church, in the nation, internationally
4. Look for signs in Scripture – especially ones pointing forward to Jesus from Old Testament
5. A miracle for a group of people is an incredible sign!
6. A miracle which has been tailored by God just for you (basketfuls) is just as incredible!
7. The biggest sign from heaven in Matthew 16 is the revelation God gave Peter about the true identity of Jesus
8. Don’t ever go against what Jesus says! Peter supplied humanity in his rebuke, not revelation – and that then got occupied by Satan.

## 7 Different Kinds of People in Matthew 16 – And What They Teach Us About Receiving Signs

**The Pharisees and Sadducees** – came to test Jesus, but didn’t want to acknowledge signs that had already been given. Their influence is also like yeast – subtly spreading everywhere.

The **wicked and adulterous generation** – get no sign

The **Ninevites** – got a sign from God through Jonah and all repented

The **crowds who had been fed** – they all received food, but note how Jesus didn’t suddenly get 5,000 then 4,000 followers!

**People in general** when consulted about Jesus – unsure about who Jesus is (could be John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or a prophet?)

**The disciples listening in** – perhaps they have a better idea of who Jesus might be than people in general, but they can't bring themselves to have a guess

**Peter** – Peter receives his own revelation from God about Jesus, and has the courage to declare it

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** Who do we want to be, out of these different kinds of people in Matthew 16?

## Summary of How People Can Be

1. Sometimes we can't receive signs because we are too religious (by that I mean striving, not receptive)
2. Sometimes we can't receive signs we are being wicked or adulterous, or our whole generation is being that way
3. Sometimes we *can* receive signs, and we totally surprise the world with our receptivity and repentance – Jonah and the Ninevites
4. Sometimes we've clearly received a miracle (or been in a group that's all had a miracle) but we've not made the jump to following Jesus
5. Sometimes we're only collecting anecdotes about Jesus and haven't got a clear picture of who He might be
6. Sometimes we are in close proximity to Jesus, but we're still not sure enough to say it
7. Sometimes God tells us exactly who He is, and we are confident enough to declare it!
8. BUT – even in the last case – we can veer off into our humanity again; or still be influenced by the enemy! So we stay to be 'sober and alert', and always be guided by what Jesus says to us. Don't ever rebuke Jesus!

## Holy Spirit Pause

- Ask the Holy Spirit about the signs God has been putting in your life – whether you have missed any, or whether there is something Jesus is trying to tell you about Himself...?

## Life Application

Prayer to pray this week: "Lord please do something in my life for which the only possible explanation is You! Amen!"