

LESSON 6
July 12, 2026

Unit II: Faithful Witnesses Say “Yes” to Jesus Christ

From a Rock to a Hard Place

DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 40:26-31

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Mark 8:27-29; Luke 22:31-34;
John 18:25-27; 21:15-17

PRINT PASSAGES: Mark 8:27-29; Luke 22:31-34; John 18:25-27; 21:15-17

KEY VERSE

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. (John 21:17, KJV)

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The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” (John 21:17, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Discover from Peter’s life that saying yes to Jesus is full of ups and downs.
- Celebrate trial and error as a learning tool in saying yes to Jesus.
- Claim our shortcomings as opportunities to say yes to Christ.

*Key Terms

Christ (Mark 8:29)—Greek: *Christos* (Khris-tos’): the Anointed One; “Messiah” (NIV).

Denied (John 18:25)—Greek: *arneomai* (ar-neh’- om-ahee): said no; refused.

Pronounce (Mark 8:27)—Greek: *legó* (leg’-o): to speak about; mention; “say” (KJV/NIV).

Questioned (Mark 8:27)—Greek: *eperótaó* (eper-o-tah’-o): inquired of; “asked” (KJV/NIV).

Sift (Luke 22:31)—Greek: *siniazo* (sin-ee-ad’-zo): to prove by trials; winnow.

Strengthen (Luke 22:32)—Greek: *stérizó* (stayrid’-zo): to make fast; to establish; to fix firmly.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



The Biblical Context

The biblical background of this lesson is found in three Gospel accounts of Jesus' life and ministry: Mark, Luke, and John. Christian tradition attributes the authorship of the Gospel of Mark to John Mark, Barnabas's cousin, who left Paul and his companions during their first missionary journey. Mark presents Jesus as God's servant and targets a non-Jewish audience, as shown by his inclusion of historical facts and explanations of Jewish customs and traditions. The immediate biblical context of the Mark passage (8:37-39) is Peter's insightful confession of Christ as the Messiah at Caesarea Philippi. The Luke passage (22:31-34) was written by Luke, a physician and Paul's traveling companion. Luke depicts Jesus as the Savior for everyone, emphasizing His concern and compassion for the marginalized, the poor, and the outcasts. The biblical context for this passage is Jesus' warning to Peter about his impending denial and testing in the Upper Room during the Last Supper, before His arrest. The final passages (John 18:25-27; 21:15-17) are from the Gospel of John, written by the apostle John, which highlights Jesus as God's Son, Savior, and stresses the importance of believing in Him for salvation. Overall, John's passages reveal Peter's predicted denial of Christ, as well as his gracious restoration and commissioning after the Resurrection and before His ascension.

commission to "feed" the Lord's sheep.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

A Bold Confession and a Brash Promise (Mark 8:27-29; Luke 22:31-34)

Introduction

Chaos theory is a branch of mathematics that explains how complex and unpredictable behaviors can emerge from straightforward, predetermined rules. In the spiritual realm, chaos theory is closely connected to theology, creation, and prophecy. For example, the Creation account demonstrates how divine order can develop from disorder. Before God acted, the earth was "formless and void." Still, He brought order through His Word (Genesis 1:1-2), demonstrating that God transforms hidden chaotic patterns into structure and beauty out of formlessness. The butterfly effect is a concept within this theory, suggesting that small causes can lead to significant, widespread effects. In the biblical context, this principle is evident when minor actions and decisions have crucial consequences in God's unfolding plans. Ruth's small decision to stay with Naomi led her to become David's great-grandmother and part of Jesus' genealogy. David bringing his brother's lunch led to Goliath's defeat and his rise to the throne of Israel. Peter's inconsistent relationship with Jesus also reflects the butterfly effect in chaos theory. His small spiritual choices and moments of faith and failure impacted his life and the early church. His impulsiveness sparked bold preaching at Pentecost and established his place as a steadfast pillar in the developing Christian church. This lesson explores Peter's up-and-down relationship with Christ, from his bold confession that Christ was God's Son, to his cowardly denial, and his final restoration and

KJV

27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

28 And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

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31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

33 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

34 And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

NIV

27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

28 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

29 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

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31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat.

32 "But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

33 But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."

34 Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

Mark 8:27-30 marks the beginning of Mark's shift from focusing on Jesus' public ministry of healing and teaching to His final journey toward the cross, suffering, death, and resurrection. As Jesus and His disciples travel to Jerusalem and near the area around Caesarea Philippi, He asks who the people think He is (verse 27). The disciples' response reflects common views among the people—they compare Him to John the Baptist and Elijah—highlighting their style, message, and authority, but not recognizing Jesus as the Messiah (verse 28). After giving the disciples time to consider what others have said, Jesus asks for their opinion about His identity (verse 29). Peter, speaking for the group, confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One. On the surface, Peter's response appears to be an insightful spiritual breakthrough. Still, he does not yet fully understand what his confession means for Jesus and the disciples in terms of what

being the *Christos*, the Greek word for Christ, entails. However, Peter's bold confession leads to overconfidence that will be tested as Jesus reveals in the Upper Room during the Last Supper.

During the Supper, after alerting the disciples that one of them is His betrayer, addressing their argument about who among them is greatest, emphasizing servant leadership, and assuring them of their future roles in His kingdom (Luke 22:21-30), Jesus warns them—especially Peter—that they all are vulnerable to betraying Him (verse 31). Jesus identifies the source of this danger as Satan's desire to "sift them as wheat" (test them severely). He addresses Peter by repeating his original name, Simon, to highlight his fragile humanity and vulnerability to failure, along with the promise of His intercession and a forecast of Peter's eventual restoration and leadership (verse 32). Boldly, Peter claims he will stay loyal, insisting that his faith is unshakable even to the point of death (verse 33). In response, Jesus predicts that Peter and the other disciples will soon abandon Him, revealing that Peter will deny knowing Him (verse 33). Peter's confident declaration and bold vow show that it is possible to speak well of Jesus without truly understanding the cost of following Him when facing challenges. Therefore, believers need to go beyond superficial words to genuine submission to Christ's transformative power—trusting Him to restore and use them, rather than abandoning them when they fall short.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can we show we truly know Jesus through our actions instead of just words, and why is that challenging?

A Devastating Denial and a Gracious Restoration

(John 18:25-27; 21:15-17)

KJV

25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.

26 One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?

27 Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

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15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

NIV

25 Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, “You aren’t one of his disciples too, are you?” He denied it, saying, “I am not.”

26 One of the high priest’s servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, “Didn’t I see you with him in the garden?”

27 Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

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15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

16 Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

17 The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

After Jesus’ arrest, Peter follows Him to the high priest’s courtyard, trying to blend in and stay warm with the servants while Jesus is on trial. For a second time, Peter is asked if he was one of Jesus’ disciples and denies it, a stark contrast to his earlier bragging (John 18:25; Luke 22:33). Peter’s third denial is prompted by a relative of the man whose ear Peter severed when Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane (verse 26). This accusation was more direct and threatening because it positioned Peter to be accused of assault, which was a crime. A panic-stricken Peter, fearing for his life, denies knowing Christ for the final time, fulfilling Christ’s prediction as a rooster crowed, validating it (verse 27). Peter’s failure was complete, public, and devastating, but not final, and his forgiveness and restoration would occur as Jesus had predicted earlier.

Sometime after the Resurrection, Jesus appears to seven disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (also known as the Sea of Galilee), miraculously helps them catch many fish, and prepares and shares breakfast with them (John 21:1-14). When they finish eating, Jesus singles out Peter and asks him three times about his love for Him, paralleling Peter’s three denials in a similar setting just days earlier (John 21:15-17). Jesus uses this triple questioning to restore Peter’s leadership role and gently reinstate him publicly. Jesus uses phrases like “feed my sheep” to reappoint Peter as a shepherd leader of His people. Peter’s journey from denial to restoration offers hope to every believer who has stumbled. Jesus not only forgives but also reaffirms their calling. Like Peter, when believers fail, they can rise again through repentance, receive restoration, and move forward in renewed service to Christ.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does Peter’s restoration and recommissioning inspire hope when believers feel they have let God down?

A Closing Thought

Peter’s “up-and-down” spiritual journey teaches vital lessons for believers, inspiring them to be faithful witnesses who say yes to Jesus. Initially, Peter’s confession that Jesus was the Christ,

the Messiah, through divine insight, shows us that the path to discipleship starts with truly understanding who Jesus is. Additionally, spiritual pride without prayerful dependence on God can lead to spiritual danger and failure. Furthermore, Peter's triple denial of Christ under pressure shows that fear, especially when faith is untested, can cause even devoted followers to stumble and falter. Finally, Jesus' gracious forgiveness and reinstatement of Peter after he confesses love for Him demonstrate that, instead of discarding the broken, God's grace restores and prepares them for renewed responsibility in Christ's kingdom.

Your Life

Peter's life demonstrates that our weaknesses—our failures—can become opportunities for renewed faith and greater responsibilities in God's kingdom work. Therefore, consider how God might be using your past mistakes as a foundation for deeper intimacy with Him and expanded ministry to others by embracing your calling, loving Him more deeply, and serving others more faithfully.

Your World!

There are people in our churches, communities, and the world who may let their failures cause shame and remorse, hindering their spiritual growth. The outcome of Peter's fluctuating spiritual journey is a message of hope worth sharing. Therefore, consider praying for them and looking for opportunities to share Peter's story.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank You for not abandoning us when we fail, for extending grace, for restoring us when we repent, and for granting new opportunities to serve as faithful witnesses. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson examines the transformative possibilities available for those who encounter and accept Christ into their lives (Luke 19:1-10).

Home Daily Bible Readings		
MONDAY, July 13	"God Calls for Restitution"	(Exodus 22:1-6)
TUESDAY, July 14	"God Desires Justice for the Oppressed"	(Isaiah 58:3-7)
WEDNESDAY, July 15	"Blessings and Woes"	(Luke 6:20-26)
THURSDAY, July 16	"Love, Hospitality, and Contentment"	(Hebrews 13:1-6)
FRIDAY, July 17	"Meeting Needs through God's Love"	(1 John 3:14-18)
SATURDAY, July 18	"The Righteous Are Generous Givers"	(Psalm 37:1-5, 18-22)
SUNDAY, July 19	"Salvation Has Come to This House"	(Luke 19:1-10)