

It's All About Him 19: All About *him* or All About *HIM*

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These *All about Him* messages are given very careful consideration. Over the years we have done many of the most obviously Christ-centered passages in Scripture. Colossians 1. Revelation 5, and many others. As the list gets longer, the "obvious choices" list becomes shorter. This year we have been teaching through 1 Peter. Living faith when Christianity is on the margins. In exile. Peter exhorts them to live so full of joy and satisfaction in Jesus that the sufferings and offenses from the world around them are a small price to pay.

We have learned so much from 1 Peter but have we ever thought about the guy that wrote it? Peter himself? How did Peter become Peter? When you think about the most famous flops in the Bible, Peter's got about three of the top 10.

How did Peter go from spiritual failure to leader of the early church and author of 1 and 2 Peter? Today is the first ever biographical *All About Him* message. Sometimes we can learn more by a real life example and Peter is a fascinating example of the transformation of a life once it becomes *All About Him*.

Who Was Peter?

You may be new to the story of the Bible and Christianity. Peter is new too. If you read through the four accounts in the New Testament about the life of Jesus, the second most referred to person is this guy named Peter.

His name: Simon Peter

His given name is Simon. Jesus meets him and changes his name to Peter. Peter is a form of "Petra" which means, *rock*. With his flimsy character, this seems more like a cruel joke. Simon was no rock. Eventually and most dramatically, he would become one.

His vocation: Fisherman

His home: Bethsaida

If you are a fisherman, you better live by fish. He did. He lived on the Sea of Galilee.

His family: brother to Andrew; married

His brother Andrew introduced Peter to Jesus. Andrew was also one of the 12 disciples. We know he had a wife and a mother-in-law.

His hubris and his mouth

Peter had many strengths. He was a leader. He was the only disciple who got out of the boat and dared walk on water with Jesus. He was the first to confess Jesus' true identity (Matthew 16:16). He was close to Jesus because Jesus wanted him close. So there are a lot of positives here.

But Peter was a man of great inconsistencies. He had tremendous strengths and devastating weaknesses. He was arrogant, brash, impetuous, and domineering.

Let's look at some examples: which disciple refused to let Jesus wash his feet? Peter. Which disciple rebuked Jesus? Peter. Which disciple decided to say something stupid during Jesus' transfiguration? Peter. Which disciple threw himself overboard and swam to shore leaving the other disciples to fend for the nets? Peter. Those are the little things. They along with the big things show that there are two Peters. The All About *him* Peter and the All About *HIM* Peter.

All About *him*

There is one night in Peter's life that shows everything broken and messed up in Peter. It was Thursday night, the night before Jesus dies on the cross. His disciples are with him in the Upper Room.

Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same. (Matthew 26:31–35 ESV)

This passage summarizes Peter quite well. Notice first Peter's self-comparison.

Self-comparison: *Though they all fall away because of you, I will never...*

Who says things like this? Someone with an incredibly high view of self. Self-confident. Self-trusting. From that high view of self, Peter enjoyed drawing comparisons between the level of commitment he had to Jesus and the other disciples. You can picture him sweeping his hand around the table saying, *Though "they" all fall away, I never will. You can count on me, Jesus. Philip? He's flakier than a Christmas snow. Thomas? Doubt it. John? He's weak. But me, Peter, I'm better, stronger, smarter, and more committed than any of "them."*

Like the rest of us, Peter's problem was pride. It just expressed itself so obnoxiously. Whenever we find ourselves comparing our perceived strengths to the weaknesses of others we can know pride is the source.

Self-promotion: *I will never fall away*

Peter is constantly self-referential. He is the plumb line. He is the sun. He is the center—in his own thoughts. Look at this passage. Jesus has just said that he was about to be "struck down." He would rise again. Jesus refers to his death and his resurrection. Peter is oblivious to the two greatest moments in all of human history. He wants to talk about himself. His amazing courage. He doubles down, *"Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!"* (v. 35) Whose death is he promoting for admiration? His own.

Self-determination: *Peter took up the sword and cut off the ear*

Quickly, one more example is just hours away. They go to Gethsemane. Jesus prays earnestly in the garden. The disciples fall asleep when suddenly there is Judas kissing Jesus and the Roman guard arresting him. What should a guy like Peter do? Of course, take matters into his own hands.

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" (John 18:10–11)

Besides having terrible aim, what was wrong with what Peter did? It was the same thing that was wrong when he rebuked Jesus, and when he wanted to build a temple on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus was following his Father's plan. Peter had his own plan and it didn't include Jesus arrested or dying.

He was essentially doing as Satan did in the temptation when he offered the kingdoms of the world to Jesus if only he would bow down. It was glory without suffering. It was a kingdom with a cross. Peter repeatedly sought to control Jesus. To take matters into his own hand. To show that he, Peter, was the Savior. Peter was, all too often, All About *him*.

Can you relate? Don't we see a little Simon Peter in all of us? Down in the crevices of our hearts and motives, who are we actually all about? For whom are we actually living? But what changed? How did he become Peter the Rock?

Peter's Shattering All About *him* Moment

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean." And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man." After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you." Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly. (Matthew 26:69–75)

When we are all about us, God will allow our self-obsession to run its course. At some point in life or even on our deathbed, we see starkly the foolishness of our self-worship. For Peter, God turned all his braggadocio upside down. You're courageous? You're better? Your willingness to die is what you want highlighted? Jesus needs your sword?

But then this night in the courtyard, not in front of the tribunal but before a servant girl, he wilted. Feared. Denied. Peter's hubris was shattered on the rocks of his own ambition. In that moment he saw himself as he truly was. Not the great Peter but the small one. He saw how small he truly was. That sight destroyed him. He ran out of the courtyard and wept bitterly.

How do we become All About HIM? We aren't born this way. I love my daughters but they are not All About HIM. They are all about their food, their wants and desires. We are naturally self-focused. It requires a divine work of God in our hearts. Doctrinally this is regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Spiritually, we are born again by the power of God. He makes us a new creation. His grace changes us.

However, don't most people look to Jesus when they are in need? In crisis? In pain? Why? Often, like Peter, the pain comes from our own failures. Pride desperately holds on to All About Me but sin and pain and trial cause us to see the futility of living with me on the throne. Maybe you are in just such a trial. You've spent most of your life comparing yourself favorably to others, and you are quick with the sword to take matters in your own hands.

You have been the master of your destiny. But now your life is shattered. Your heart is breaking. Maybe for the first time you are looking away from self for something or someone else to hope in.

Peter ran. Peter wept. Peter wept *bitterly*.

Here's the bio of Peter during Jesus' darkest hour. He was completely absent over the next two days. He was not there in the morning for Jesus' trial. Or at the appearance before Pilate. He wasn't at the scourging. The cross-carrying. He was not there while Jesus hung on the cross even while other disciples were there. Mary his mother was there. Mary Magdalene was there. The disciple John was there. He wasn't there at the burial even though Nicodemus the Pharisee was there. Joseph of Arimathea was there. Yet Jesus' right hand man was not there for any of it. Where was he? What was he doing?

Peter was having a painfully wonderful revolution in his heart.

Saturday passes. Sunday comes and apparently Peter rejoined the disciples in the Upper Room when all of a sudden Mary Magdalene burst in saying Jesus' body was gone. Long story short—that very day Jesus appears to Peter, conquering sin and death, alive once again. Scars in his hands and feet. But alive. In that moment, the last remnants of Peter being all About Peter vanished. Peter gave up All About *him* and became Peter living All About *HIM*. Talk about a changed man....

Peter preached the first sermon – never mentions himself, only Jesus (Acts 2ff.)

"Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:36)

Peter courageously faces down the Sanhedrin

"We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29)

All About Peter wilted before a teen girl. All About *HIM* Peter is courageous—even before the powerful.

Peter rejoiced to be physically beaten for Jesus' sake

"Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name." (Acts 5:41)

Peter writes two letters with no mention of his own importance (1 and 2 Peter)

Instead he writes, *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."* (1 Peter 2:9, emphasis added)

This is a kind of life purpose statement for Peter. That night, Peter saw the darkness of his own selfish heart. When Jesus appeared in the Upper Room, he saw marvelous light. The rest of his life he was all about the excellencies and glories of Jesus. He was All About *HIM!*

"The cross which brings Peter to an end of himself is the cross that raises him up to God and his purpose. In that moment of self-disillusionment, Simon, the inadequate man of sand, becomes Peter, the rock who is strong and dependable precisely

because he has learned to depend utterly on Christ...For us, as for Peter, failure need not be final." (Bruce Milne, *The Message of John*, p. 262.)

Here is how Peter is so encouraging and helpful. Peter living for himself was a disaster. Yet, after his failure, Jesus reinstates Peter as leader of the apostles by asking him a simple question three times.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." (John 21:15-17)

Who do you love? How would you answer that today? Jesus' question spans the centuries and speaks into this room today, *Who do you love? Who are you all about? Who holds your heart?* This really is the bottom line. Love. Love for Christ.

Peter's words again, *"Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory."* (1 Peter 1:8)

This is the bottom line and this is the whole point of the gospel—to take self-loving sinners dwelling in darkness and to give us the incredible privilege of knowing and loving God through his Son Jesus and living my life *All About HIM*.

This is my 19th *All About Him* message. My dear church, I have had as my aim all these years to build our dream as a church on the sufficiency and glory of Jesus. Not Him as a means to growing our church and not Him as a means to self-fulfillment, but Him for Him. All About Him because no other doctrine or ministry idea or purpose as a church is more worthy of our heart's affection than Christ and him crucified, the hope of glory.

The glory of Christ will inspire our young people to live radically as exiles in their schools. The glory of Christ will inspire adults to center their life's ambition on making much of Him. The glory of Christ confronts all our attempts at vain glory and self-reliance.

Over the years I have seen many kinds of churches rise in popularity only to fade as the next fad arrives. I am determined to stay on this bandwagon of *It's All About Him*; all my years here as many as God gives me, to stay on this one central theme—the supremacy of Christ. I want us to be a church that regularly asks ourselves Jesus' question, *Do we love Him?*

What is your answer? What is the answer of your life?

I remember some years ago walking into St. Peter's Basilica in Rome (see picture on next page). It is a church building built over what is believed to be the remains of the Apostle Peter. It is the biggest church building in the world. It is overwhelmingly huge. You've probably seen the interior on TV. Peter was martyred in Rome. This building is built on his legacy and his grave. I think All About *him* Peter would have loved it. He might even have thought it wasn't big enough.

My thought as I walked around though, was how much the real Peter would hate St. Peter's Basilica. Especially the inscription you see over my shoulder on the front of this biggest church in the world. It is in Latin but translated says, "*In Honor of the Prince of the Apostles.*"



Let's make sure we remain a fellowship of believers where inscribed on our hearts is, *In honor of the Prince...of Peace. In honor of the Lord of Lords. In honor of the King of Glory. In honor of the virgin-born Incarnate God. In honor of Jesus Christ because here at Bethel Church, It's All About HIM.*

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