



# Do You Think You Can Change?



## Introduction

Do you think you can change?

When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, sir, please leave us—I’m too much of a sinner for you to have around.” For he was awestruck by the size of their catch, as were the others with him, [10] and his partners too—James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Jesus replied, “Don’t be afraid! From now on you’ll be fishing for the souls of men!”

- Luke 5:8-10 TLB

Have you ever felt like you were too far gone to change? That’s how Peter felt when he first met Jesus. Jesus was trying to show him the purpose he was capable of having, but all Peter could see was all the ways he messed up and sinned. He thought he was too far gone



to change, so he almost missed out on the great purpose God had for him. I have often been in this same spot. God keeps trying to give me opportunities for growth, or show me the purpose I feel like I don't have, but I'm too focused on all the ways I've messed up or haven't changed that I don't see it. This study is going to look at Peter and how despite his weaknesses and doubts, God was still able to help him become one of the greatest and most influential leaders of the world.

## From Avoidant to Aware

Peter said, "All the other followers may lose their faith. But my faith will never be shaken." [30] Jesus answered, "The truth is, tonight you will say you don't know me. You will say it three times before the rooster crows twice." [31] But Peter strongly protested, "I will never say I don't know you! I will even die with you!" And all the other followers said the same thing.

- Matthew 26:32-35 ERV

When Jesus told Peter a truth about himself, Peter refused to listen to or believe it. He wasn't aware of his own sinful nature, and was too proud to admit that he was capable of hurting his friends. He avoided any conversation that would bring truth and make him feel worse about himself. He also led Jesus' other followers to do the same.

Peter's refusal to be humble and see his own sin led him to doing the very thing he said he wasn't going to do - betray Jesus. He became aware of his sinful nature the hard way.

- What are some things you do to avoid truth?
- What parts of your sinful nature do you think God is trying to help you be aware of? How do you think being more aware of your sinful nature would help your relationship with God and others?

[15] When they finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these other men love me?" Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Then Jesus said to him, "Take care of my lambs." [16] Again Jesus said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Then Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." [17] A third time Jesus said, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was sad because Jesus asked him three times, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you!" Jesus said to him, "Take care of my sheep.

- John 21:15-17 ERV

This conversation takes place after Peter does in fact betray Jesus. But this time, rather than try to prove and defend himself, Peter chooses to be honest and humble. Though in their previous conversation he kept the focus on himself and what he was capable of doing, in this conversation he shifts his attention to Jesus. He doesn't feel the need to prove he's someone he's not; he just wants to show his friend he cares, and is willing to face any truth in order to achieve that.

We avoid being honest when we care more about our image and pride than about our relationship with God. We need to develop a friendship with God in which closeness matters more to us than the brief discomfort we may feel from being honest or vulnerable.

- Is your relationship with God like this?
- What can you be honest about today to bring more closeness to your friendship with God and other people?

## From Cowardly to Courageous

The soldiers started a fire in the middle of the yard and sat together. Peter sat with them. [56] A servant girl saw him sitting there. She could see because of the light from the fire. She looked closely at Peter's face. Then she said, "This man was also with Jesus." [57] But Peter said this was not true. He said, "Lady, I don't know him." [58] A short time later, someone else saw Peter and said, "You are also one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" [59] About an hour later, another man said, "It's true. I'm sure this man was with him, because he is from Galilee." [60] But Peter said, "Man, I don't know what you are talking about!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. [61] Then the Lord turned and looked into Peter's eyes. And Peter remembered what the Lord had said, "Before the rooster crows in the morning, you will say three times that you don't know me." [62] Then Peter went outside and cried bitterly.

- Luke 22:55-62 ERV

Throughout the Gospels, Peter often comes across as passionate and confident. He tells Jesus he would die for him, he confronts Jesus himself on something he doesn't agree with, and he steps out of a boat to walk on water. But once he's put in a position of conflict, he gets afraid and insecure. His seeming confidence and passion are emotional and not rooted in any actual conviction, because once he is put to the test, he crumbles.

There have been countless times where I think I know myself - I think there are convictions and beliefs that I have, but like Peter I crumble when faced with any sort of conflict or opposition. I get afraid of what people think, how I look, or whether I will get rejected. I retract into myself and just conform to whoever is around me.

The part that gets me the most about this scripture is right when Peter gave into his fear, Jesus looked directly at him. Peter was so caught up in doing whatever he needed to do to get himself out of the situation that he didn't think about how his fear and conformity affected his friend. I relate to this feeling. I don't want to hurt my relationship with God, but I also don't know how to overcome the fear that grips me.

- When was a time where you thought you had a conviction or belief, but when put to the test it was just emotion?
- How has your fear or insecurity affected your friendships?

The council members were astonished as they witnessed the bold courage of Peter and John, especially when they discovered that they were just ordinary men who had never had religious training. Then they began to understand the effect Jesus had on them simply by spending time with him.

- Acts 4:13 TPT

Peter became bold and courageous, not from being emotional or charismatic, but "simply by spending time with" Jesus. By having a relationship with God, he developed convictions that no person or pressure could sway. When we spend time with God by reading the Bible and praying, we become capable of being courageous despite our fears. Peter went from denying he knew Jesus for fear of being rejected, to boldly speaking in front of some of the most influential people of their time.

We may think confidence and courage comes from being extroverted or having a certain personality type. But this scripture says that boldness isn't a personality trait, but rather a product of the choice to spend time with God.

- What fears can you overcome simply by spending time with God?

## Keep on Growing

In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, [6] and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, [7] and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. [8] The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

- 2 Peter 1:5-9 NLT

As the author of the book this scripture is in, Peter sums up how he was able to change even when it felt impossible. He says that the moment we stop looking for ways to grow in our relationship with God is the moment we start thinking we are incapable of change. We become shortsighted, too focused on all the sins we've done or mistakes we've made that we forget God has already moved on from them. Rather than focusing on what we can't change, God wants to help us move forward toward what we *can* do, thus propelling us toward the purpose he has for us.

- Which quality in this passage can you choose to grow in today?