



Bible Study on St Peter

Before you begin make sure everyone has a Bible or that each person has a printed copy of the passages below

For the prayer time at the end you will need a selection of items such as: a sheep, shepherd's crook, keys, cockerel, model boat, fishing net, Bible, picture of Pope's fisherman's ring and the Papal tiara, 2 crosses-1 upright and 1 inverted. If you can't find some of the items use pictures of them. You will need enough items for everyone to hold one so you may need more than 1 of some items. Don't put the items out before the prayer session begins! Do read through the prayer activity before you begin the whole session.

Useful background information:

Peter's name was Simon until Jesus gave him the name Peter. He is often referred to as Simon Peter. He was a fisherman and had a brother called Andrew. It was Andrew who introduced his brother to Jesus (John 1:39-41)

Peter never actually bore the title 'Pope'. In these passages Jesus calls him a 'rock' and the feeder of his sheep – shepherd.

In these passages Jesus appoints Peter as the leader of the church and the Apostles. The church teaches (Lumen Gentium) that the Apostles were succeeded by Bishops. The Pope is the head of the Bishops and as such the successor of St Peter who was head of the Apostles.

In religious art, St Peter is depicted as an old man holding a key and a book. His symbols are an inverted cross (he is believed to have been crucified but said he was unworthy to die the same way as Jesus had died, and asked for his cross to be turned around and suffered an even more painful death) a boat (he was a humble fisherman who was told he would become a fisher of men) and a cockerel (for the 3 times he denied Jesus during his trial before the crucifixion).

The story of Peter's denial of Jesus can be found in John 18 – the group may like to look at this passage if the discussion covers this area.





There are suggested discussion questions after the texts. When asking the questions try to allow the young people to discover the meanings for themselves rather than telling them the answer you think they should give. They may have other ideas of their own- rather than telling them they are wrong, encourage them to share their ideas and make them feel you welcome their points of view. Discovering faith together in a safe and uncritical group is vital.

Matthew 4:18-22 (New International Version)

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Matthew 16:18-20 (New International Version)

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. 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." Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

John 21:16-18 (New International Version)

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

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. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."





Questions for discussion

1. Who were the fishermen in the story?
2. What did Jesus mean when he said they would be 'fishers of men'?
3. Why do you think the Pope wears a ring called a fisherman's ring?
4. Why do you think Jesus gave Simon the name Peter or Cephas (it means 'rock')
5. Did you take a new name at your Confirmation-what was it?
6. What new name did the Pope take when he was enthroned?
7. What picture does the title 'rock' give to you?
8. Do you know anyone you could call a rock?
9. Jesus said he would give Peter the keys to the kingdom. What do you think he meant by that?
10. What do you think is meant by 'whatever you bind...or loose on earth'
11. What did Jesus mean by 'feed my sheep/lambs'?
12. Why did he ask Peter the same thing 3 times? (3x times cock crowed and 3 times Jesus was forgiving him)
13. Bishops carry a crozier or crook, why do you think that is?
14. The papal tiara has crossed keys on it. Why do you think that is?
15. Which of the passages do you think applies best to the Pope's role?
16. Which of these passages speaks most to you?

Prayer to finish

In the centre of the group, either on a table or on the floor, spread out some material. Put a candle in the middle and light it.

Then tell the group you are going to spend some time praying for the Pope. Say you will be putting out various symbols connected to the things you have talked about and ask them to remember in their minds, what they were about.

Take each of the items you have ready and add them one at a time onto the material. This needs to be unhurried so take your time. When all the items are there sit down and tell the group that they may choose one thing that they think is important to them in the Pope's work. They can pick it up and then pray for the Pope in his work in that area. (this may be silent or aloud in turn- if you choose the later then be sure to go first to model how to do it, and keep your prayer short and simple – something such as: (sheep) 'Lord we pray for the Pope who leads his people like a shepherd leading his sheep'. Or (keys) 'God we pray for the Pope to have your wisdom to rule your kingdom here on earth'.

