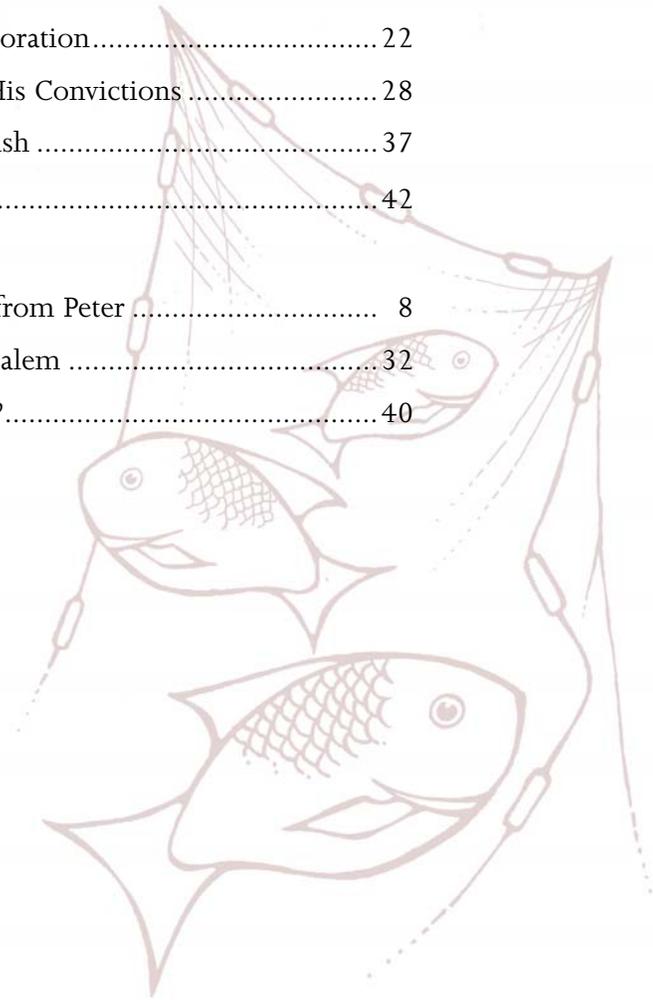


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## FOREWORD

They have been referred to as the saints, the Hebrews, the Israelites, a remnant, and the church. They are God's people—his chosen people. They belong to him; so precious that he would go to impossible lengths to overcome the gulf that separates them from himself. You and I are among them.

The books in this series are a recital of the life and times of some of them—Noah, Jacob, Ruth, David, Jonah, Paul, and others. Their stories involve conflict and resolution, pain and tragedy, despondency and renewal. They present disturbing images from the underbelly of human depravity, and visions of untold glory that transport us to the soaring heights of ultimate conquest. The plots and settings are drawn from the living record of the Bible. Series authors and editors were careful to remain faithful to that record. Yet today's sophisticated reading audiences demand background and description. They relate to narrative. In an effort to make the text come alive, each story in this series is presented in a natural framework designed for this audience.

In these stories we see God's people wrestling with their humanity and struggling to find respite for their souls. Each story is unique in its own right. Yet two common threads run through the fabric of their stories and ours. The first is the thread of the bitter curse of sin. The second is the golden thread of salvation in Christ Jesus. We can readily identify with both, for we share these same two themes with all of God's people. Their stories, like ours, rest forever in God's abiding grace.

Kenneth Kremer, Series Editor

## BOLD DISCIPLE

Outside, trees stood still in the cool morning air. Inside, a sound rushed through the room like a great turbulence. The roar of a violent wind pounded the eardrums of everyone present. Startled, Peter tried to locate the source. He saw only his fellow disciples, as stunned as he was. No breeze brushed his skin. But that sound—it was deafening!

Then he saw the fire. Tongues of fire appeared and came to rest on the heads of every person in the room. The fires of countless burnt sacrifices flickered in his mind. And God's penchant for using fire as an indicator of his presence electrified Peter's spirit. Then Peter understood—this energy had no earthly origin; it was sent from heaven. The force that filled the room wasn't physical. It was spiritual—the Holy Spirit.

Other sounds—foreign sounds—began to fill the air. Excited speech. Exotic words. These were uttered in languages unlike the Aramaic and Greek usually spoken by the small, blue-collar crowd in the room. They sounded like nonsense, yet somehow seemed to make sense.

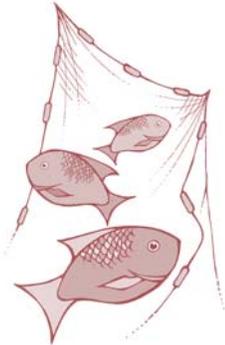
Peter opened his own mouth, and out spilled words from a language previously unknown to him. Instinctively, he knew what he must do. He must speak. Proclaim. Confess. He couldn't help himself. If he didn't, he would burst.

He stood, scanned the room, and with eyes fueled by determination gave a soundless message to the group: it was time to go. Outside. To the growing crowd that was drawn by these supernatural events. Then they would keep going, beyond that crowd . . . to the ends of the earth.

The fisherman walked outside, ready to fulfill his new life

## **BOLD DISCIPLE**

as a fisher-of-men. It was his nature to lead. He was a man on a mission—a man with a message. He, Peter, was the boldest of the Lord's disciples. It was his calling to be a confessor of the faith. A bold confessor of the faith.



“How’d you do last night?” inquired a passerby.

Peter wiped exhaustion from his eyes with one bronzed, weathered hand. With the other he shielded his eyes from the already warm morning sun. “Didn’t catch a thing,” he said. “We were out all night, but the nets came up empty.” Then, with the relentless optimism only fishermen possess, he added, “But we’ll be out again tonight!”

He would have much rather slept. But sleep was a luxury to a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. Even though there were no fish to clean and ready for market, much work needed to be done. The nets needed to be unraveled. The constant throwing and pulling and turning and twisting knotted the twine of the net. While empty of fish, the nets needed to be cleaned. Pebbles, sand, and seaweed clogged them up and weighed them down. Rips and tears threatened the integrity of the nets and needed attention on a daily basis.

Peter paused, stood, and stretched the soreness out of his rugged, muscular frame. He turned his gaze to his little enterprise: two wooden boats, both 15 feet long. Peter and Andrew, his brother, manned one. Their partners, James and John, maintained the other.

The shoreline swarmed with activity. Hundreds of fishermen tended to nets and boats. A few hundred feet from shore, the marketplace for all things sea-related teemed with life. Beyond that lay the landscape of Capernaum, Peter’s current home. Inland residents gathered at the town squares in the center

## CAREER CHANGE

of their towns. Residents of seaside towns like Capernaum were drawn to the water's edge.

Fishing was all Peter knew. Born within sight of the Sea of Galilee at Bethsaida—5 miles east of where he now stood—he had always lived near the sea. Given the nature of his livelihood, it would be accurate to say he lived on it.

Peter and Andrew had learned the fishing trade from their father. From the time they could walk, it seemed, they had had sea legs. The days were long and the nights, longer. They worked in all kinds of weather. Much physical strength was needed to guide the boat and pull the nets. Peter's sharp memory recalled prime locations and conditions for making that great catch. His agile mind processed the information, adapted to ever-changing conditions, and set plans in motion.

Peter gazed out across the lake he loved. Cradled among mountainous regions in every direction and nuzzled by lush, green forests at every shore, Galilee was a seductive companion: beautiful, yet dangerous. The sea was a prolific but fickle fishery. She didn't give up her bounty easily. Notorious for quick-forming storms that caught people off guard, the sea seemed to exact a human toll in exchange for her harvests. Fishing Galilee was a thriving industry—in fact, some did quite well—however, success was never guaranteed.

But Peter couldn't imagine doing anything else. Fishing wasn't just a career choice; it was a way of life.

A sense of commotion behind him shook him out of his daydreaming. A large crowd from town was headed for the seashore. It seemed to be headed right for him.

“What’s this all about?” he asked Andrew.

“It’s Jesus, the teacher from Nazareth. He arrived in town last night.”

Jesus. Peter had met the man. Several times. Peter quickly recalled the first time he was introduced to Jesus. He and Andrew had gone out to the desert to hear John the Baptist. Andrew had become a loyal follower of the fiery preacher of repentance. On that occasion, Jesus had passed nearby. John had pointed him out to two of his disciples: “Look, the Lamb of God!” Those two disciples had then followed Jesus and spent the day with him.

One of them was Andrew. So excited was he at finding Jesus that he immediately ran to Peter and said, “We have found the Messiah.” He then brought Peter to meet Jesus, who immediately gave Peter a nickname: “You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which means “rock”).

It was a brief introduction, but its impact was powerful. Peter had pondered it often during the weeks that had followed. Now, however, Jesus was walking right toward him, surrounded by a large, expectant crowd. “Peter,” Jesus called out. “I’d like to use your boat and put out from shore just a bit. It would be easier for me to speak to this crowd.” Peter agreed and rowed the boat a couple of boat lengths from shore. Jesus then used it as a floating pulpit.

Peter was amazed at the crowd’s attention to Jesus. But his message was even more riveting. Jesus spoke of the Old Testament prophets, of fulfillment, repentance, forgiveness, and the kingdom of heaven. Peter had heard it all before, but

## CAREER CHANGE

no one had put it all together in such a convincing, authoritative way as Jesus did.

When Jesus finished speaking, he said: “How about some fish, Peter? Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” Peter knew how and when and where to fish. Jesus’ instructions contradicted both Peter’s experience and basic fishing technique. Midday was not the best time to fish with nets. Nor was deep water the best place to use the nets.

Peter answered respectfully: “Sir, we worked hard all night and didn’t catch anything. But because you say so, I’ll let down the nets and give it a try.” Even though he knew he wouldn’t catch anything, Peter threw the nets out anyway, out of respect for this religious teacher.

Nothing could have prepared Peter for what happened next. It was the catch of a lifetime. The nets began to break. Another boat came to help, and both boats began to sink under the weight of this miraculous catch. Peter realized that this was no ordinary teacher. This was the Lord himself! Painfully aware of his own unworthiness, he cried out, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”

But Jesus said to Peter and the other stunned fishermen: “Don’t be afraid. Follow me, and I will make you fishers-of-men. Instead of casting out a net of twine, you will now cast out the net of the gospel. Instead of harvesting fish from the sea, you will harvest souls for the kingdom of heaven.”

Impulsive risk-taker that he was, Peter—together with his brother Andrew and their fellow fishermen, James and

John—left everything and immediately followed Jesus. While only a glimpse of the Savior's majesty, this was enough to convince Peter that a career change was in order. He felt that the best was yet to come.