

\* \* \* \* \*  
UNLOCKING POTENTIAL: LIFE OF PETER – DISCOVER      Michael B. Beaugh  
Matthew 17:1-13      January 20, 2008  
\* \* \* \* \*

We are talking about discipleship today and for several more Sundays. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? How do we grow in our discipleship?

Those are important questions because what I see, like in the life of the Apostle Peter, is that discipleship is God’s way of unlocking our potential to make a positive impact on the world. Peter went from being a fisherman to being a fisher of people and changed the world, all because he followed Jesus.

I have been to a lot of leadership conferences and what I keep hearing is that the unrealized potential in our churches is just staggering. One-third of the earth’s population claims to be Christian. What if one-third of the earth’s population were to live as disciples of Jesus? What could happen? Take any congregation and you can say the same thing. What if every member, every participant intentionally worked at letting Jesus unlock their potential? Life would be different tomorrow.

Last Sunday we said discipleship begins with deciding to follow Jesus. Today we will see that just deciding is not enough. Some might think that deciding is all that is needed to get their ticket punched for heaven. But it takes far more than that to realize one’s full potential as a disciple. Discipleship is a journey of discovery. It is about discovering and coming to know the One who can unlock our potential.

When I look at the life of Peter, I come away with this aphorism. **You never outgrow the need to know more of Jesus.** The more you study him and the more you learn of him, the more he can do with your life. We stunt our growth and power when we stop learning. Proverbs 1:7 says, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Here’s the deal. God has more for you to do than you are doing right now. God wants to take you out of yourself so you can give yourself to the work of His Kingdom on earth. It takes a lifetime of discovery because you never outgrow the need to know more of Jesus.

**Jesus knew this. That is why he took Peter, James, and John up on the mountain of transfiguration. They needed another lesson.**

Jesus wants to show them something. They are going to learn something about Jesus they haven’t quite internalized yet. They are going to have a small group experience. Jesus is going to show them who he really is.

As they stand there on that mountaintop, he is transfigured before them, light shining from every pore of his body, his garments dazzling white. A teachable moment, wouldn't you say?

Then suddenly two old characters from the past appear with Jesus, Moses of Exodus fame, and Elijah the first great prophet of God. I can imagine Jesus thinking, "If this doesn't get my boys on the right track, then nothing will!" Are you listening? Can you hear me now? A teachable moment, a moment of discovery.

You see, this is a critical element in the growth of disciples, **spending time with Jesus in the company of others**. There is no telling what Jesus might reveal to you about himself or about yourself that you wouldn't get any other way.

Of course, just showing up at a Bible study won't do the trick either. Peter saw Jesus transfigured and immediately jumped to the wrong conclusion. The tape that runs in all our heads started playing. Jesus wanted Peter for a life of service and sacrifice. In Matthew 16, Jesus predicted his death and resurrection and said a disciple is one who takes up his own cross to follow Jesus. *"If any want to become my follower, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."* Peter saw the transfiguration as a moment to escape all that. He wanted to build a retreat center with ashrams for the Big Three, = Moses, Elijah, and Jesus.

"Holy mackerel", as the Backyardigans and my grandson say.

You see what I mean about the importance of hanging with Jesus in the company of others? It takes repetition and reminding about who Jesus is. When the tapes play in our heads, we often forget Jesus. We often forget that he came to be the Lord of our lives so that we might live a God-blessing life.

**To make the point, God responds to Peter's escape plan.** "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" – Matthew 17:5

No listening, no discovery! No discovery, no progress toward potential!

We are getting ready to do some things in our Worship Center to improve the acoustics. A sound and light guy has suggested that I try using a head mic, you know, like a rock star. We want people to be able to hear. We don't want anyone to go away ever again saying they couldn't hear.

But as important as it is to hear with our ears, it is nowhere as important as hearing with our hearts.

I knew a person once who attended Bible studies religiously. How else would you attend? In fact, she was so religious about it that she could sit in the hallway of the church studying away at God's word and never notice that people were swarming all around her trying to get the place ready for worship. It never occurred to her to help. Hello! Anybody home?

What is Jesus trying to tell us? Love your neighbor as yourself. Are you listening? Love your enemies. Are you listening? Go make disciples. Are you listening? Be ready to give the reason for your faith. Are you listening? Repent and believe. Are you listening? Blessed are the peacemakers. Are you listening?

A disciple listens. And I feel like we are beginning to listen a little better here at SBPC. We have wonderful ministries going on, but every time someone new drops by to talk church, there is always a comment about our potential. Our Capital Campaign consultant is drooling over our location. He pastors a church in Flower Mound. He keeps telling how much potential we have here to reach others. If we keep listening, God is going to unlock that potential, and through our ministry many more people are going to come to know Jesus Christ and grow as his disciples to give their lives to make a difference in the world.

**To get there, we must overcome our fear.** As Peter found out, the road to discovery can be frightening. He and the others fell to the ground in fear when God spoke to them. Fear may be the reason many of us avoid that road in the first place. Fear is often the thing that stunts our growth and squashes our potential.

Jesus says to us, "Get up and do not be afraid." How many opportunities have we missed to do a great thing for God because of fear? The Bible says we are to fear God. Not be afraid of God, but to stand in solemn awe of God. But we are not to fear the call of Jesus or fear life. However, when we do, he reaches out and lifts us up. He stands us on the feet of faith again. He shows us a path and promises to be with us always to the ends of the earth. He promises to go before us to prepare the way. Have you discovered that Jesus in your life?

Remember Sean Connery as Indiana Jones's father? He discovers that he must step off a rock ledge seemingly into thin air if he wants to find the holy grail. He steps out, surely he will fall to his death, but in the stepping, a solid path suddenly appears under his foot and he crosses to the other side of a deep chasm to continue the chase.

"Get up and do not be afraid," Jesus said, and when Peter and the others looked, "they saw no one except Jesus himself alone."

**Only Jesus.** Do you think they got the point? Disciples keep their eyes on Jesus alone. There in him they discover who God is and they discover who they are and the potential God has put inside them.

**Adult Discipleship Plan** - Some of you know that Lisa and I have been putting together an Adult Discipleship Plan. We know disciples grow in a lot of different ways and different settings. But we believe our church should provide a means for adults to grow in discipleship. We currently have CORE Groups and Sunday School classes and fellowship groups and mission groups, and all these are good. But we believe there are some fundamental things every disciple should know and that there are fundamental ways that we can spur growth and live into our potential.

The heart of the plan is an expansion of the number of discipleship growth groups with a goal of having 60% of our congregation participating on a regular basis. The plan includes a curriculum of core discipleship studies that will be offered on Sunday mornings and at other times. There will also be advanced courses for those who want to go deeper.

Why do all this? Because discipleship is the path to the peace, purpose, and promise that we experience in Jesus Christ. It is an exciting and life-fulfilling journey that begins with deciding to follow Jesus and always, always leads to deploying in mission and service. It always leads to the unlocking of our potential for making a positive impact on the world.

I believe that is what the world needs today. More disciples like Peter who tried and failed and then finally got it. Stay tuned for more.