



## Get set

Make use of the retelling of Peter's life as it is found in **The Barnabas Children's Bible** and in particular:

Story 257 The four fishermen

Story 271 Another visit to Capernaum

Story 276 Walking on water

Story 278 On the mountain

Story 302 Jesus, the servant

Story 306 The next morning

Story 311 The empty tomb

Story 316 Peter's task

In addition, there is a whole section of the Barnabas book Year-round Assemblies devoted to the life of Peter, with songs, suggestions for storytelling and drama; and John Hardwick's The Starship Discovery Holiday Club has five sessions based around the life of Peter with plenty of support material, including songs, quizzes, drama ideas and activity sheets.

## Go!

1. Peter never forgot his first encounter with Jesus. Peter was the experienced fisherman but on this occasion it was the carpenter's son who knew more about fish than he did. The story is recorded in Luke 5:1-11.

In a circle, mime the actions of this story:

- rowing out to sea at night
- casting the nets over the side, again and again
- checking the nets but discovering no fish
- becoming tired
- eventually rowing home
- mending nets on the shore
- looking sad because there had been no fish that night
- puzzled looks when Jesus appears with a crowd, wanting to borrow your boat
- rowing Jesus out
- amazed looks as you hear him talk to the crowds on the shore

- objections when Jesus suggests casting the net on the other side
- surprise and shock at the size of the catch
- pulling the catch on board
- feeling very humble and sorry before Jesus
- laughter and joy with the other fishermen
- excitement at the new job Jesus gives you to do

2. It would not have been unusual for a young Rabbi in those days to gather some close followers. Peter and the other fishermen may well have felt very privileged to be invited to join Jesus' band of disciples. But they were in for more than they expected. Their lives would be turned upside down. Deciding to follow Jesus would have been a big step. There were arguments for and against.

Use the drama technique choice circus, in which half the class tries to convince someone who is Peter to stay in his job, while the other half persuades him to go. Arguments might include:

You'll be leaving your close family/it will be a great adventure; you are giving up a good job/you will see the world; you will lose the respect of your friends/you will be meeting new people.

3. It was Peter's brother Andrew who first introduced Jesus to him. It was a strange encounter, in which Jesus gave Peter his new nickname. He had been called Simon and 'Peter' was actually the name Jesus gave him. It means 'rock' - see John 1:42.

Why do the children think Jesus gave Simon a new name?

What did Simon (now Peter) think about it?

Are nicknames important/special? Why?

I wonder what Andrew felt about this? Could he maybe have been jealous?

Christians believe that names are important. It is by name that God calls them and it can be a name that says something special about them.

Do the children in your group know what their names mean? What nickname might they decide to give to their best friend that sums up the sort of person they are? What nicknames might they like to be given?

4. Peter went on to witness many amazing miracles - in some cases he was one of the few people who saw them happen.

For example, read story 271 (including the healing of Jairus' daughter) and story 278 (where Peter was on the mountain when Jesus was filled with light) from The Barnabas Children's Bible.

These special experiences must have made a deep impression on Peter.



Ask the group to imagine what Peter might have said or written about these times afterwards.

Did they change his mind about Jesus?

Did he think he was dreaming?

Was he excited or perhaps just a bit frightened by it all?

What did he think Jesus was planning to do next?

All this came to a head when Jesus asked his disciples, 'Who do you think I am?' It was Peter who had worked it out. 'You're God's special one (Messiah)', he said. However, he didn't really know what that meant - see Matthew 16:13-17.

Read this story together and talk about what the children think it all means.

Look on the Internet for the special symbol for the apostle/disciple Peter. It includes the keys mentioned in this passage.

Print off a picture of this and then let children write beneath it, in their own words, what they think Jesus meant.

5. Perhaps Peter's most infamous moment was when he tried to walk on water - see story 276 in *The Barnabas Children's Bible*.

There is a great version of this in **The Gospels Unplugged** from Barnabas. It is written from the point of view of the fish!

(N.B. There many other poems, stories and raps in this book, which could be used as part of an exploration of the life of Peter)

Christian's often say that this story is very helpful to them as they try to put their faith in Jesus. Can the children work out why?

6. The all-too-human side of Peter is very much in evidence during the story of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Peter doesn't like the sorts of things Jesus is saying about himself (predicting his death and so on) and so Peter makes all sorts of promises never to let Jesus down and even to fight for him.

Read what happens at the last meal (story 302) and the next morning (story 306) from *The Barnabas Children's Bible*.

What must Peter have felt after these failures? He had run away; he had let his best friend down; his life was in ruins; his master was dead. Arguably this was the lowest point in Peter's life.

Talk about the stories and then ask various children in turn to sit in a chair for **hot seating** to



become Peter and try to express what he was feeling. Other children should ask questions to help them all to 'step into' the story of Peter.

Have the children ever felt like this? What helped them? What might help Peter?

N.B. There is a craft activity in Barnabas Make & Do Bible Crafts from Barnabas linked to Peter's denial.

7. The discovery of the empty tomb on Easter morning was such a shock. No one expected Jesus to be alive again, least of all Peter.

I wonder how he felt? Ask the group to explore this by completing the following sentence from Peter:

*'People say they've seen Jesus alive again and it makes me feel...'*

As a reflection on the life of Peter, read about the last time they met by the lake in story 316 from The Barnabas Children's Bible. You can also find it in John 21:15-17.

Peter was given a new job to do. It was like starting all over again.

Ask the children:

Which part of Peter's story did they like best?

Which part of Peter's story did they think was the most important?

Which part of Peter's story was like something they, too, have experienced?

Was there any part of the story that they would like to leave out?

Finally, if the children were trying to tell Peter's story to someone who had never heard it before, what symbols, objects or pictures would they choose?

Suggestions might include: a net, a boat, a fish, some keys, a sword, a towel, a cockerel.

Use these pictures to create a mosaic about the life of Peter the disciple.