

### Amazing Grace Video-how do you see yourself?

Welcome to group session 4 of OVERCOMER Bible Study. Begin by asking for responses to last week's personal study.

What stood out to you in last week's personal study? What truths or answers did Cod reveal?

Share with the group the person who asks you the toughest questions. This may be your spouse, your accountability partner, or your mentor. Who forces you to evaluate who you are, where you're going, and what your journey means?

Discuss the way those relationships initially formed, whether they're formal (planned, set meetings for mentoring and discussion) or informal (living life together and engaging with important topics as they emerged), and the perceived benefit of having that person in your life.

### **WATCH** View the film clip for this session

### SUMMARY

Playing the hand life dealt doesn't mean John automatically embraces the change. At this point in the film, John still laments the loss of his basketball team and the possibility he saw on that path, including a state championship win and a scholarship for Ethan. When Thomas, his unlikely new friend, asks that key question "**Who are you?**" John leads with basketball even though it's gone.

Why do you think Thomas, at this point in his life, can enter this depth of conversation with someone like John, who was so recently a total stranger?

Is it easier or more difficult to hear and consider questions like Thomas's from someone you're close to or from someone new in your life? Explain your response.

Why do you think the question was so difficult for John to answer?

How closely can you relate?

1. Why do you think Thomas, at this point in his life, can enter this depth of conversation with someone like John, who was so recently a total stranger?
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3. Why do you think the question was so difficult for John to answer?  
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#### Peter's Confession of Christ

Matthew 16: 13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." 15 He said\* to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. 19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." 20 Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ

## Read aloud Matthew 16:13-20.

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**Peter** was specifically called **and created to** build the church of **Jesus—not a purpose you would** imagine from a career fisherman. He quickly **adapted to the** role of **disciple, being the first** to proclaim **Christ as** Savior and **also** among the first to **fail** at living out that **confession**. His conversation with Jesus in Matthew **16** shows that it isn't what others claim **about Christ** that **matters**. It's what each of us believes that matters.

According to Jesus, who revealed Peter's revelation to him, and why does that fact matter?

If you had eight floors of elevator conversation with a stranger who asked you, "Why do you believe in Jesus?" how would you respond?

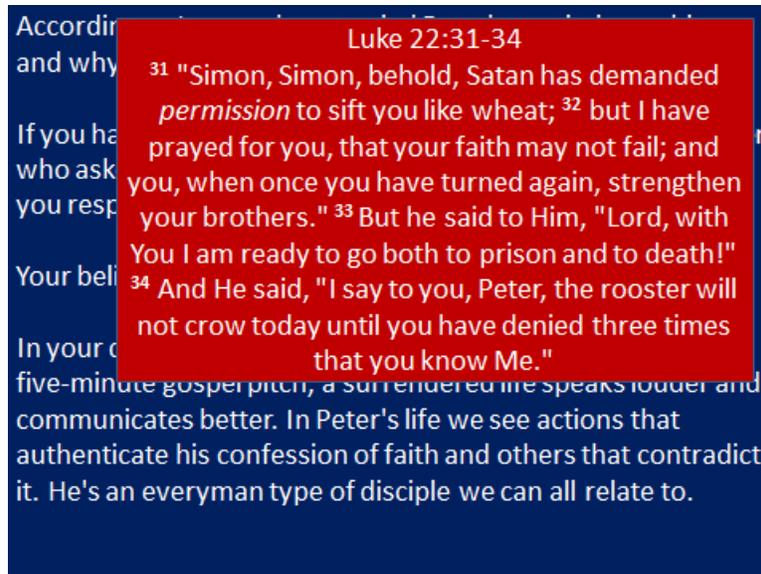
Your belief in or confession of Christ is more than just words.

In your day-to-day relationships and interactions beyond a five-minute gospel pitch, a surrendered life speaks louder and communicates better. In Peter's life we see actions that authenticate his confession of faith and others that contradict it. He's an everyman type of disciple we can all relate to.

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**Read aloud Luke 22:31-34.**

**Why do you think Jesus declared the good Peter would do to build the church after the miserable failure that was coming?**

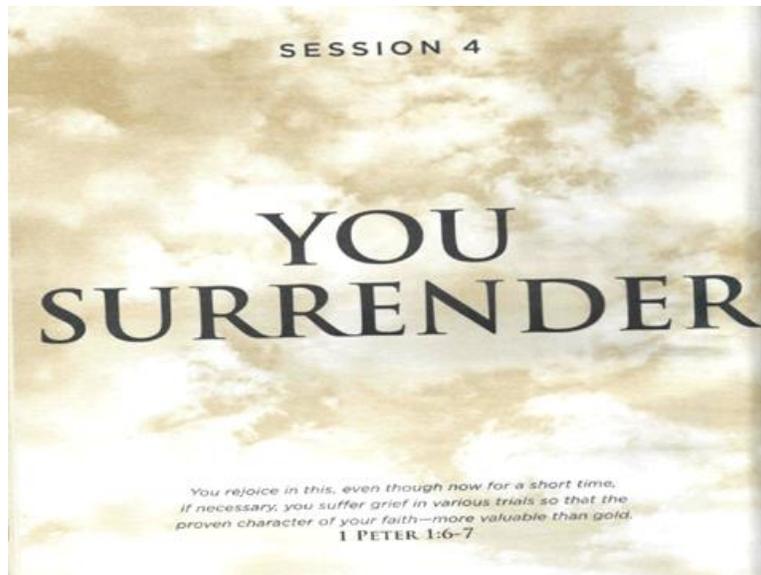
**Have you ever feared you would be disqualified from fulfilling God's purpose in your life because of your mistakes? How do you wrestle with that?**

Peter's later denial of Jesus came each time he was identified as one of Christ's followers (see Luke 22:54-62). Christians should be easily and readily recognized as followers of Jesus. Our allegiance to Him should be the most obvious truth about us. For others to easily identify us as disciples of Jesus, we must walk closely with Him and root our identity in Him. Living out our identity in Christ is

the only way to be fully alive. Otherwise, we're guilty of practical atheism, claiming Jesus with our mouths but living **life** as if He **doesn't** exist.

**In what ways is it obvious that you follow Jesus? In what ways do you hide your commitment to Him?**

When we identify ourselves **first** and foremost as followers of Jesus, we'll live a life of faith that makes our connection to Jesus one of the most prominent features of our lives. Other people will notice.



## DAY 1

### PETER READILY FOLLOWED JESUS

"Because I said so" might be a phrase from your childhood home that you vowed never to repeat to your children. Before you take such a hard turn, let's evaluate it from a different perspective. According to the wisdom of God Almighty and His infallible Word, parents are the divinely appointed authority in a child's life. "Because I said so" can communicate that we know best and lovingly care for our children through limits and instructions.

Read Luke 5:1-11.

Peter's "Because You said so" obedience in verse 5 is a model for us. His repentance in verse 8 is a challenging inspiration to us. His sacrificial decision to follow Jesus in verse 11 is an unparalleled sign of authentic surrender.

## DAY 1

Read the following verses and rewrite them in your own words as confessional declarations to God.

"Master," Simon replied, "we've worked hard all night long and caught nothing. But if you say so, I'll let down the nets." LUKE 5:5

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!" LUKE 5:8

They brought the boats to /and, left everything, and followed him. LUKE 5:11

## CHAPTER 5

1 Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; 2 and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. 3 And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. 4 When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your net for a catch." 5 Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; 7 so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." 11 When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

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Each verse conveys an aspect of surrender. The first is ready-made obedience when the instruction seemed pointless. Peter was a professional. He knew fishing. Yet because Jesus said to lower the nets, he obeyed.

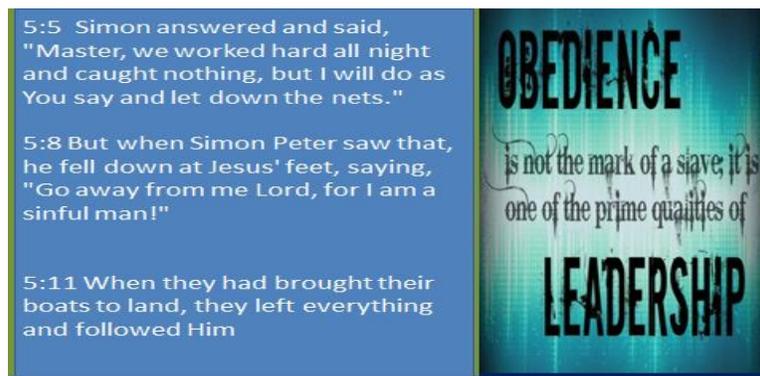
Describe a time when God asked something of you that seemed wild, when you thought you knew better, or when His instruction didn't seem to make practical sense?

It's important to note that Peter didn't question or hesitate. **Remember Moses and Gideon's reluctance?** Peter's ready-made obedience is refreshing and inspirational. That obedience also led to radical repentance—in other words, worship—in verse 8. Finally, the act of obediently following Jesus and going fishing in a moment and a manner that didn't make sense birthed a willingness to leave what was familiar in order to follow. Is each of these responses evident in your life?

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## DAY 2

### PETER BOLDLY PROCLAIMED JESUS

Ultimately, life isn't about us or our own agendas. John the Baptist best summed up the essence of surrender:

*Jesus must increase, but I must decrease.* JOHN 3:30

Jesus must always increase. We must always decrease. Peter had it right when he declared that Jesus was "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). In response to Peter's confession of faith, Jesus said:

*You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*

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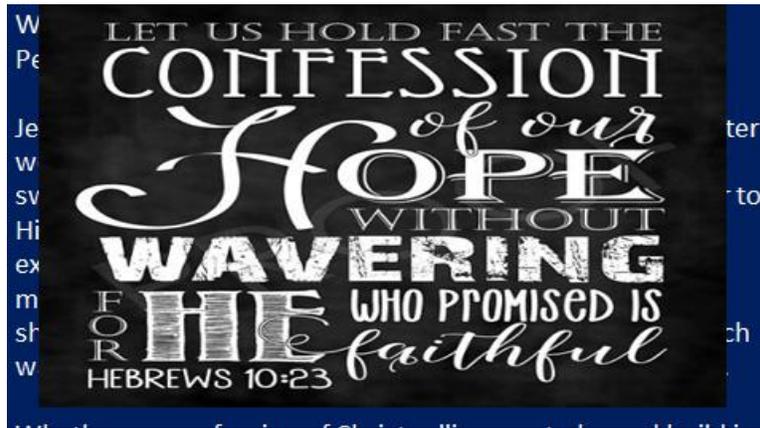
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What if Jesus intent wasn't to build the church on the man Peter but on his confession of faith?

Jesus once explained that the disciples would do even greater works than He did (see John 14:12). That's a hard pill to swallow, but by confessing our trust in Christ, we surrender to His grand plans for our lives and for His kingdom. Peter experienced the fulfillment of Jesus' promise firsthand in a ministry that spanned three decades and included its own share of miracles. In this way Christ's plan to build His church was carried out by a fully chosen, fully surrendered people.

What's your confession of Christ calling you to be and build in His name? It may be something small that He can multiply for His glory or something huge that's far beyond your reach.



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Have you ever felt compelled to boldly declare your connection to Christ or communicate the truth about Jesus, but you shied away from the opportunity? If so, describe that experience.

Have you ever felt compelled to boldly declare your faith, and you shared the gospel truth with someone? If so, describe your experience.

Copy Jesus' words to Peter in Matthew 16:18.

*"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."*

Read Acts 4:1-12. In this defense Peter referred to Jesus as the cornerstone (see v. 11). Considering Jesus' promise to build the church on the rock of Peter's confession, why is it significant that Peter used the word *cornerstone*?

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#### CHAPTER 4:

1 As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, 2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

5 On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.

7 When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, 9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. 11 "He is the **STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED** by you, **THE BUILDERS**, but **WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER** stone. 12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

In a sense Peter was reminding the Sanhedrin of the authority of the words in Psalm 118:22 by connecting Jesus to the great King David and the holy Hebrew Scriptures. He was clearly, unequivocally declaring that Jesus is the One in whom light, life, and salvation are found. And he was making that bold declaration from the dark shadow of a possible prison sentence.

What's the greatest risk you've faced or the greatest loss you've experienced because of Jesus? Was it worth it? Would you do it again? What would you do differently?

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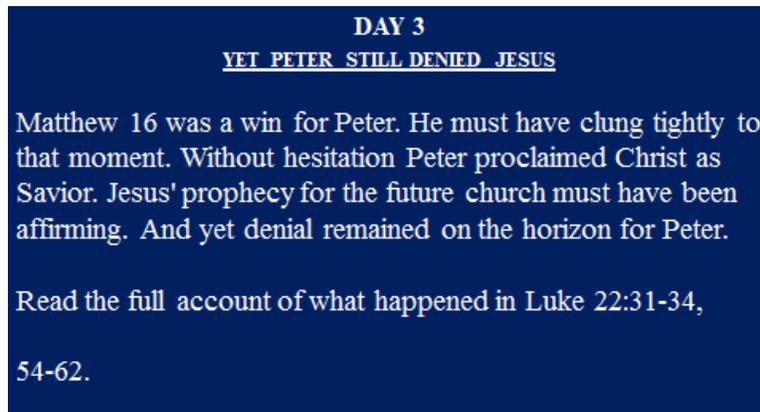
What's the greatest risk you've faced or the greatest loss you've experienced because of Jesus? Was it worth it? Would you do it again? What would you do differently?

To boldly declare Jesus in the face of fear is to believe that the world needs **more of Him and less of you**. It's to believe that any risk you take in confessing Christ will be worth it.

Pray, boldly proclaiming that you want more of Jesus In the world and less of you. Dedicate your life to representing Jesus rather than yourself

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### DAY 3 Yet peter still denied Jesus

Matthew 16 was a win for Peter. He must have clung tightly to that moment. Without hesitation Peter proclaimed Christ as Savior. Jesus' prophecy for the future church must have been affirming. And yet denial remained on the horizon for Peter.

Read the full account of what happened in Luke 22:31-34,

Luke 22:31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." 33 But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" 34 And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."

Luke 22: 54-62. Having arrested Him, they led Him away and brought Him to the house of the high priest; but Peter was following at a distance. 55 After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them. 56 And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, "This man was with Him too." 57 But he denied it,

saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." 58 A little later, another saw him and said, "You are one of them too!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" 59 After about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too." 60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. 61 The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." 62 And he went out and wept bitterly.

Epic fail. If Matthew 16 {You are the Christ} is the episode you never want to forget, Luke 22 {the denial} is one you hope no one remembers. It's easy to get caught up in the pendulum of vacillating faith. While being boldly surrendered in one moment, we know the enemy is ready to attack our weak spots, causing us to deny the most essential truth in our lives. Peter denied Jesus in a moment of weakness and fear but later boldly proclaimed Christ to an audience who had their own reasons to be afraid.

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In his first letter to dispersed Christians, Peter articulated his understanding of fear. Knowing the temptation to deny Jesus would be fierce, he wrote these words:

*You are being guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 PETER 1:5-7*

Paraphrase that passage in your own words. Then read it aloud. Hear the promise of hope offered by someone who knew what it was like to be on top, as well as what it was like to be crushed by anxiety in the moment.

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Perhaps you rewrote the verse something like this...

You are my God and though I may not be strong in every situation, I glory in your abundant love for me, and I thank you for times when I am stronger and can testify of your great love

Which is better for you—a friend who tells you without hesitation that everything is going to be OK or someone who comforts you but understands and verbally recognizes your difficult circumstances?

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In this brief passage Peter did both. Underline the part in which Peter boldly declared, "God's got this." Circle the part in which Peter recognized that the believers would face hardship.

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Consider the final part of this passage, the concept of being refined by fire. Temperatures upwards of one thousand degrees Celsius literally burn the impurities from raw, extracted gold until only purity remains. Peter won in Matthew 16. The pressure was on and the fire was hot in Luke 22. It burned, but it molded Peter more closely into the image of Jesus, fashioning him into the leader he needed to be in order to lead God's church. Is it possible that we need Luke 22 [denial] moments as much as we need Matthew 16 ; [Christ] ones?

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