

"Lucidly done and without any dumbing down, these stories pull off the difficult trick of being time-honouring and contemporary." Andrew Motion, Poet Laureate 1999–2009



SIMON PETER

Catching fish. That's what I was doing on the day that changed my life for ever.

Although Simon has no idea why Jesus is beckoning to him from the beach, he agrees to leave his nets and follow him.

A robust, enthusiastic fisherman, Simon makes more mistakes and asks more questions than the other disciples. Why then, he wonders, does Jesus call him Peter, which means 'rock'?

When Jesus is arrested everybody except Simon Peter flees, but is he brave enough to stand by Jesus until the end? After Jesus's death, how will Simon Peter spread Jesus's teachings? Will he make the right decisions? Can he calm the rivalries developing among Jesus's followers?

Is he brave enough to die for his beliefs?



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THE CHARACTERS



Simon Peter

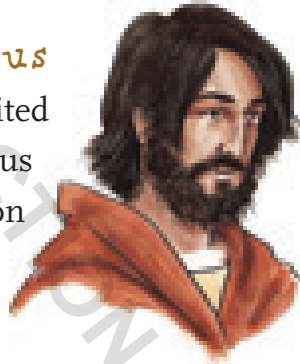
Simon is a simple fisherman.

What qualities does Jesus see in him?

Can Simon learn enough from his weaknesses to be able to do the work that Jesus has in mind for him?

Jesus

Simon's love for Jesus is unlimited and unquestioning. What will Jesus demand of Simon? Will Simon ever let him down?



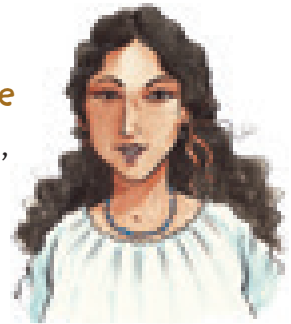
Judas

Judas is one of Jesus's twelve most trusted friends, but can Simon Peter also trust him completely?



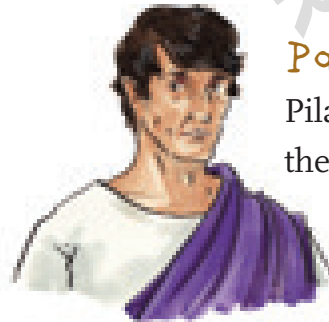
Mary Magdalene

When Jesus heals Mary Magdalene, she becomes an important supporter of his work. What startling news will she bring to Simon Peter?



Pontius Pilate

Pilate is the Roman governor of the province. He offers to release a prisoner, but who will it be?



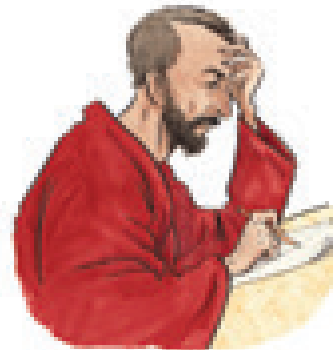
Stephen

Stephen proves himself a brave and virtuous man. Will Simon ever be as brave as him?



Paul

Paul is well known for persecuting Jesus's followers, but now claims to have changed his mind. Should Simon Peter trust him?





SIMON PETER

Catching fish. That's what Andrew and I were doing on the day that changed our lives for ever. That was what we had always done; it was what our father and our grandfather had always done. For generations we had lived as fishermen in the village of Capernaum, by the Sea of Galilee. Until that day, we had no expectation of ever doing anything else.

We were good Jews. We respected the Sabbath, Jewish festivals and Jewish laws. Until that day, we thought this was the way to satisfy God. How wrong we were. He wanted so much more.

The day started like any other. Having cast our nets into the lake, Andrew and I were beginning to relax, drifting just offshore. Waiting.

'Hey!' We looked up. A man was calling, and beckoning to us from the shore.

'Simon, who is that?' asked Andrew. 'Isn't it Jesus?'

I wasn't sure. It looked like Jesus, who we had seen a few times in town, but we were still quite far from the shore. We pulled in our nets, sailed back, and beached the boat.

Jesus looked at us. We looked at him. Though nobody spoke, we didn't feel awkward. I felt a great sense of peace, rather like the period immediately after casting the nets. It was Jesus who broke the silence. 'Come, leave your nets. I will make you fishers of people.'

We must have looked like caught fish ourselves as we stared at him open-mouthed. He seemed amused. 'Follow me,' he invited, turning away.

Looking back, it's hard to remember quite what made us decide to follow him, but we did. Just like that.

Jesus invited our neighbours, James and John, to follow him too. From that day we all stayed together. Jesus taught us and trusted us. Other people joined us. Eventually, from



the growing crowd, Jesus selected eight other men to help him. We were from a range of backgrounds – there were even tax collectors, and one man, Judas, was the son of a priest. He was better educated than most of us, as he often liked to point out. Jesus entrusted Judas with responsibility for our money.

Life in New Testament times

The main events of Simon Peter's life with Jesus took place in Palestine, a long narrow area of land bordered to the west by the Mediterranean Sea and to the east by the Transjordanian Desert. Some parts of Palestine were desert, some were hill country, some rich pasture land, and some uncultivated wilderness.

Although Palestine was Jewish land, it was part of the Roman Empire and under Roman control. The Jews resented paying taxes to Rome. During Simon Peter's lifetime, there was considerable conflict between the Jews and their Roman rulers. This helps to explain why the Romans might have been nervous of the crowds following Jesus.

The Jews considered Palestine to be their 'promised land', promised to them by God. Moses had led them there from slavery in Egypt. The area was mainly Jewish, with synagogues and temples. Nevertheless, it is interesting that

