

Following at a Distance
Learning from Peter's Mistakes
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Intro: Put yourself in Peter's position.

- A. These are Jesus' final hours—He is preparing his disciples for the greatest event in history.
- B. Jesus has just instituted the Lord's Supper at the last Passover meal.
- C. Jesus is about to speak for very frightening words. (**Matt 26:31-32,34**)

I. Peter's Mistakes

A. Overconfidence

- 1. His states twice that he will be faithful, even that he is willing to die with Jesus! (**Matt 26:33,35**) This was blatantly against Christ's words.
- 2. He may have been recalling his past success when many others left Jesus (**John 6:66-69**)
- 3. We must not rely on past successes to continue to sustain us!

B. Failed to take the occasion seriously

- 1. When Jesus comes to His darkest hour, He brings His closest companions with Him, but they sleep through it (**Matt 26:36-46**)
- 2. They are rebuked for this—they did not master their flesh in preparation for temptation. (**v41**)

C. Prepared for the wrong battle

- 1. Peter has prepared for a physical battle and shows it! (**Matt 26:51**)
- 2. When the real battle comes, Peter falls far short.
- 3. God has told us what to prepare for! (**2 Cor 2:11**)

D. Followed, but *at a distance!*

- 1. To his credit, Peter did come back for Christ when all the disciples fled (**Matt 26:56-58**)
- 2. However, Peter kept a distance between himself and the Lord that would prove devastating.

II. The Results of Distance

A. Peter wasn't there to stand for Christ

- 1. When the time came for witnesses, Peter was outside in the courtyard (**Matt 26:59-66,69**)
- 2. When Christ is put on trial today, where do we stand? (**Heb 11:6**)

B. Peter failed to suffer with the Lord

- 1. After promising to die with Him, Peter won't suffer for his Lord (**Matt 26:35,67-68**)
- 2. When it comes down to it, are we willing to suffer by our Lord's side?

C. Peter's associations changed for the worse

- 1. At a distance from Jesus, the people Peter surrounded himself with brought him nothing but temptation (**Matt 26:69-73**)
- 2. Associations have a profound influence on us! (**1 Cor 15:33**)—Do not be deceived!

3. Even Barnabas would be carried away like this (**Gal 2:13**)
- D. Peter ultimately denied the Lord *three times!*
 1. The bold Peter from earlier in the evening is gone—he won't even stand up to a servant girl (**Matt 26:69-75**)
 2. The distance from Jesus took him farther than he ever intended or imagined he would go! "*Sin will always take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you can ever pay.*"
 3. This distance turned the Lord's presence into a heartbreak for Peter. (**Luke 22:61**)

III. The Dangerous Deception of "Comfortable Christianity"

- A. We live in a society of convenience and comfort
 1. It's incredibly easy to let that mindset seep into our lives! (**Psalms 73:12**)
 2. Are we willing to deny our "creature comforts" to follow Christ?
 3. Are we "following at a distance"?
- B. Many desire and practice a more "comfortable" Christianity
 1. People want comfortable doctrine (**2 Tim 4:3-4**)
 2. People want comfortable morals (**1 Peter 4:4**)
 3. People want comfortable fellowship (**1 Cor 5:11**)
 4. This comfort comes at a sacrifice of the *truth*. Do not be deceived!
- C. What are we *really* seeking?
 1. True Christianity is *not* comfortable, but it is the only source of true comfort! (**Matt 10:37-39; 11:28-30**)
 2. Where is your heart?

IV. What to Expect When You Walk with Christ

- A. Associations
 1. Like Peter, we will have to get out of the courtyard and find the disciples (**2 Tim 2:22**)
 2. Yet, God has promised to hold our hand and never leave us alone (**Heb 13:5**)
- B. Christ-likeness
 1. United in Christ's suffering (**1 Peter 4:12-19**)
 - a. Can we walk to the cross with Christ, bearing our own? (**Luke 9:23**)
 2. United in Christ's resurrection (**Romans 6:5**)
 - b. Think of entering heaven, where Christ has gone ahead of us!
- C. Provision
 1. We will be like strangers and exiles—we will be dependent (**Hebrews 11:13**)
 2. God will provide—In His presence there is fullness of joy! (**Psalms 16:11**)

Conclusion: How closely are you following Christ?

- A. If you're following something else, find Him!
- B. If you're following at a distance, catch up!

*Don't try to follow at a distance—Christ's companionship is better than anything this world has to offer if we will **draw near to Him!** (**James 4:8**)*