

CrossWise Living | Bible Study Series

The Life & Letters of
Peter

Dr. Gail Bones

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Dedication

To Val and Bob Wright,
Our dear sister and brother,
who sailed the Sea of Galilee
and walked the ancient paths of Israel with us.
What beautiful fellowship we had as we set out
together on a quest to know and love Jesus more.

*"A generous person will prosper;
whoever refreshes others will be refreshed."*

PROVERBS 11:25

Special thanks to:

- Caleb Weeks, whose creativity and expertise make these resources possible.
- Nali Hilderman, friend, daughter in the Lord, and proofreader par excellence.
- Michael Card, whose songwriting and scholarship have inspired me for decades. Joining him on a life-changing study tour of Israel helped me to know and love Jesus more.
- My Bible study sisters who are devoted to God and his Word.
- Jeff Bones, my loving husband, who always points me to Jesus.

The Life & Letters of Peter

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About the Author

Gail Nelson Bones, Ed.D., is the founder of CrossWise Living, a ministry devoted to helping people at all stages in life navigate change through cross-generational relationships. She has been engaging audiences as a speaker, songwriter, and worship leader for over thirty years. Formerly a professor of education at San Diego Christian College, Dr. Bones is the award-winning author of *Living CrossWise: Hope and Help for Navigating Transition* (2013).

Gail and her husband Jeff have been married for 40 years and together have recorded seven albums of original Christian music. Along with their now-grown children, they spent many years presenting family concerts at churches across the United States. Gail is currently a women's ministry leader at her home church, a worship leader, and doting grandmother.



About the Study

This study in the CrossWise Living series is a bit different from the others in that it is not limited to a single book of the Bible. In examining the life of Peter we will be reading portions from each of the gospels and the book of Acts in order to understand the character and motivations of Jesus' best friend. In doing so, we will learn more about Jesus and discover quite a bit about ourselves in the process. Recalling Peter's biography will help us to gain insights that will enrich our understanding of his epistles, 1 and 2 Peter.

In support of building the habit of spending time with the Lord daily, the homework is divided into 5 lessons to be done on successive days rather than all at once. However, as you do your best to be diligent, at the same time give yourself grace. Don't be discouraged from attending your meeting if you haven't answered every question. If you are doing this study with a group, enjoy the blessing of having accountability partners you will look forward to meeting with once a week. And as you sit down with your lesson each day, don't forget to ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher and to speak to you personally.

After you have read the passage and answered on your own, you may use the notes on your study Bible to supplement your understanding. Be very careful about information you may find online, however. Stick with reliable sources such as biblehub.com or blueletterbible.org for commentaries containing sound doctrine. Make sure you have a good Bible map or atlas because we'll refer to it often.

While you will be meeting with your group primarily to study the Bible together, an important part of your fellowship will be supporting one another in prayer. You'll find a section to record prayer requests at the back of the book. Since time is likely to be limited for this kind of sharing, try to plan ahead as to how you would like your group to pray for you that week—keep your requests succinct so you can devote the last 10-15 minutes of your time to prayer requests. Remember to record your own prayer request on your list so you can recall and record praise for answered prayer.

Here is my blessing for you as you embark on this exciting journey into God's Word. This is one of my favorite passages in Scripture:

"Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name."

Malachi 3:16

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LESSON 1

“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’ ”

MATTHEW 4:18-19

DAY ONE: INTRODUCTION

It has been said that a man is known by the company he keeps.

For the three years of Jesus' public ministry no one kept closer company with our Lord than Simon Peter, the Galilean fisherman whom he'd nicknamed the Rock. As we search the Scriptures in order to know more about the man who was one of Jesus' best friends on earth, we will learn much about our Savior and our own walk with him as well.

Jesus' inner circle was comprised of Peter, James, and John, all fishermen from Capernaum, the seaside town Jesus moved to after being rejected in his hometown of Nazareth. Of the three men, Scripture paints the most vivid portrait of Peter, the disciple whose relationship with Jesus seems as tumultuous as a storm on the Sea of Galilee. He was the only one of the Twelve with faith enough to impulsively walk to Jesus on the water. And yet he sank into the waves just as quickly due to his unbelief. He was the first to proclaim Jesus' identity as the Messiah, the Son of the Living, and yet also the one who infamously denied him three times. This is the cycle of Peter's life—from faith to failure and back to faith again. As we take an honest look into the mirror that the Scriptures hold up, we see that this is our own story too.

A single chapter in Matthew's gospel clearly depicts the complexity of Peter's relationship with Jesus. Take a moment to read through Matthew 16:5-23. What is your first impression of Peter?

In Matthew 16:5-12, we see Jesus reprimanding Peter and the other disciples for their dullness and unbelief. This is followed just a few verses later by Jesus' blessing and commendation for Peter who was first to proclaim Jesus' true identity. By the end of the same chapter, however, we witness Peter shockingly reprimanding the One he'd just identified as the Son of the Living God. We can only imagine how Peter felt when his beloved Lord responded to him with "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me. For your thoughts are not of the things of God, but the things of men" (verse 23).

An in-depth study of the life and letters of this highly flawed, yet highly favored servant of Jesus Christ will have much to teach us about the profound effect Jesus has on the lives of those who become intimately involved with him—those he calls his friends. And this furthers our ultimate goal in studying the entirety of Scripture: to know God more so we can love him more.

Now as we launch out together to study God's Word, we'll take a few private moments to look into our own hearts at the fears and failures, needs and longings we must place at his feet. Read through the list below and mark any that apply.

- I am often discouraged and disheartened by my own failure to live up to God's standards for me. I need reassurance that God can forgive and restore me—time and time again.
- I can be so inconsistent in my walk with the Lord. One minute I feel full of faith, the next moment I am filled with doubt.

- Although I call him Lord, I have been known to resist him and his will for me.
- My emotions can overrule my faith and reason. I feel defeated when I let anger or fear get the best of me. I can be strong, but I can be fragile too.
- I need encouragement in my current painful trial or difficulty. I need help in keeping hope alive.
- Sometimes I feel all alone in my struggles. I have wondered why God would allow pain, suffering, and loneliness if he loves us.
- As I look with alarm at world events, I am increasingly inclined to learn what the Bible says about the end times and Jesus' return.
- God has called me to be a leader. I need to study what Spirit-led leadership looks like.
- I want to know and claim the promises of God.

FOUR PORTRAITS OF JESUS

We'll start our study of the life of Peter by sampling each of gospels. First, complete the chart below. For each of the gospel writers identify briefly who they were, who their audience was, how they primarily depicted Jesus, and then tell whether they personally knew Jesus. (You can find this information easily in a Bible commentary or online).

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Who was he?				
How did he depict Jesus?				
Who was his audience?				
Did he personally know Jesus?				

DAY TWO

1. Read Matthew 4:18-22. List the information you gain from Matthew's account of Peter's call.

2. Read Mark 1:16-20. Is any additional information provided?

3. Read Luke 3:21-22 and Luke 4:1-44. This will give us understanding of the events that occurred prior to those which we read about in Matthew and Mark. Have your map handy so you can locate each area and have a good sense of Jesus' movements from region to region.
 - a. Where did the events in Luke 4: 1-13 occur geographically? Summarize. What is significant about v 13?

 - b. From Luke 4:14-15, where did Jesus go, what did he do, and what was the response of the people?

 - c. From Luke 4:16-30, where did Jesus go, what did he do, and what was the response of the people?

 - d. From Luke 4:31-37, where did Jesus go, what did he do, and what was the response of the people?

 - e. From Luke 4: 38-44, where did Jesus go, what did he do, and what was the response of the people?

 - f. As a resident of Capernaum, what had Peter seen and experienced up to this point regarding Jesus?

DAY THREE

1. Read Luke 5:1-11. What did we learn in Luke 4 that would help us understand Peter's response to Jesus in Luke 5:11?

2. Read John 1:19-42.
 - a. What did John the Baptist understand and declare about Jesus?

 - b. To whom did John address his remark in v. 35? What was their response?

 - c. What was Andrew's testimony to Peter about Jesus?

 - d. Describe what happened when Jesus and Simon Peter first met.

3. How does this exercise in reading the story of Peter's call to follow Jesus in all four gospels help you understand the importance of searching the Scriptures?

4. Having been introduced to Jesus at their initial meeting as the Messiah, what expectations do you think Peter would have brought?

5. Although it is not explicitly stated, the second disciple of John the Baptist who spent the day with Jesus (see John 1:35-41) was likely John (son of Zebedee), the author of this gospel. We know that the pairs of brothers—Simon and Andrew, James and John—were partners in a fishing business in the north of Israel, in Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. (Locate this on your map). No one knows what happened to poor Andrew, but the remaining three would become Jesus' closest friends—his inner circle. According to John 1:28, where was John baptizing? Locate this place on your map.

DAY FOUR

1. Reread John 1:29-32. Unless John, son of Zebedee, the author of this gospel was an eyewitness, how would he have known exactly what John the Baptist had said? Therefore, what did John and Andrew, partners in a fishing business with James and Simon Peter, know about Jesus before they even met him?
2. Why do you imagine that these brothers were down in Judea in the south, rather than in the north in Galilee where they lived? (Note how quickly Andrew was able to bring Simon to meet Jesus; clearly they were both in Judea at that time). What can you therefore infer about the seriousness of their faith and desire to know God?
3. Rather than assuming that Peter was just an illiterate, uneducated fisherman, what can we gather about him from the picture that has been painted thus far?
4. As a Jew who treasured God's Word, Peter would have known the prophecies about the Messiah who was to come. What aspect of Jesus Christ's life and ministry is revealed in each of these Scriptures?

Isaiah 9:6-7

Isaiah 11:1-5

Isaiah 53: 3-11

Micah 5:2-5

Daniel 2:44

Daniel 7:13-14

DAY FIVE

1. Who first told you about Jesus? What do you remember about that event? How was Jesus presented to you (i.e., as the one who would solve the problem you were currently having, the one who would forgive and help you leave behind your sins, the kindly grandfather in the sky who would see to it that you never had a problem again, the angry judge who wanted to punish you, etc.)?

2. What convinced you that that person was telling the truth? What made you believe the claims of the gospel?

3. Have you introduced anyone to the Lord? What motivates or prevents you?

4. What were Jesus' first words to Peter in John 1:42?
 - a. What was the significance of this statement?

 - b. Imagine God giving you a new name that reflects your true identity in Christ. What might that be?

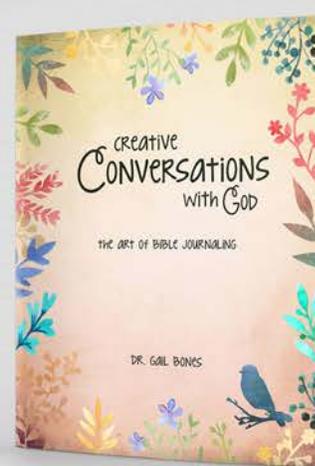
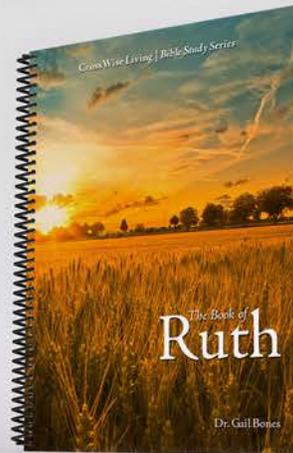
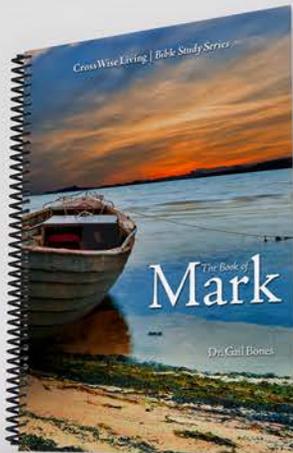
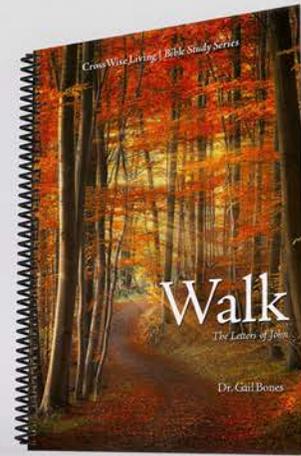
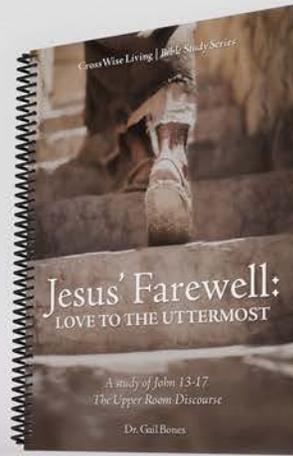
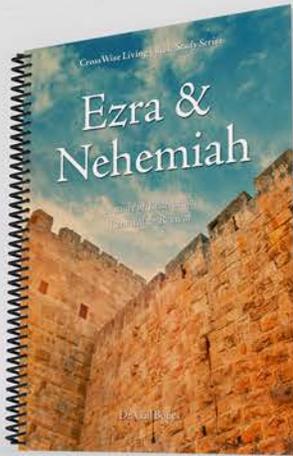
5. Since you have become a Christian, in what ways has the Lord changed you radically?

6. In addition, or in contrast, to your answer to the previous question, in what ways has he “modified” you (i.e. sanctifying your personality traits, using you with your unique temperament and gifts)?

WEEKLY REVIEW

1. What did you learn about the nature and character of God this week?
2. What did you learn about yourself? How have you been able to apply what you learned?
3. What point do you want to remember from your lesson/discussion this week?
4. Do you have any lingering questions?

More Studies from Gail Bones:



Featured Study: Living CrossWise Hope & Help for navigating transition

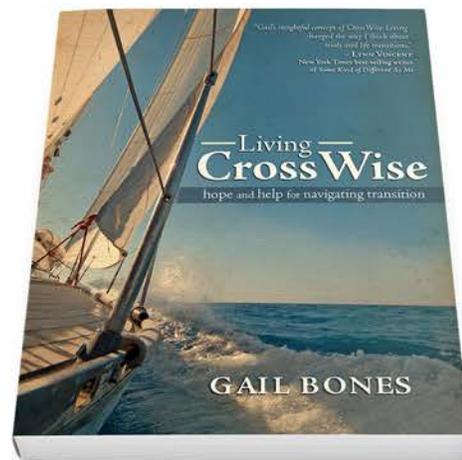
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"Gail's insightful concept of CrossWise Living changed the way I think about trials and difficult life transitions."

— LYNN VINCENT

New York Times best-selling author of *Heaven is for Real* and *Same Kind of Different as Me*



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