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# LifeChange

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*A life-changing  
encounter with  
God's Word*

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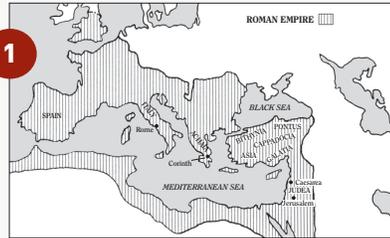
A NAVPRESS BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Designed to draw out Scripture's life-transforming truths

## BACKGROUND

Peter and His Readers

Map of the Roman Empire



### Simon Peter

Simon was a common name, the Greek version of the Hebrew name *Simeon* (see Acts 15:14). Simon was born in Bethsaida (see John 1:44), near the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. His family were Jewish fishermen, like many of their neighbors, although many Samaritans and Greek-speaking Gentiles also lived in Galilee. Simon probably received "the normal elementary education of a Jewish boy in a small town"—that is, he learned to read a little Hebrew and enough Greek to do business, and he spoke Aramaic and common Greek fluently. He was not trained in the Jewish Scriptures and law as a rabbi, nor in literary Greek (see Acts 4:13). Before meeting Jesus, Simon may have followed John the Baptist (see John 1:35–42).

- 1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, MAPS, AND CHARTS at the front of each book
- 2 STUDY SKILLS SIDEBARS to help readers uncover the purpose of the text
- 3 CROSS-REFERENCES for further study and greater context
- 4 DEFINITIONS AND NOTES about words, locations, people, and culture
- 5 SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION as a result of reflection
- 6 OPTIONAL APPLICATIONS to put additional activities into practice
- 7 THOUGHTFUL PROGRESSION OF QUESTIONS—observe, interpret, apply
- 8 ORGANIZED FOR FLEXIBILITY—go as quick or as deep as you like

Lesson Nine

JOHN 7:1–52

**For Thought Discussion:** Verse 24 is a key to understanding the debate in chapter 7. The focus of the chapter, as well as of the book, is "Who is Jesus?" Notice how reading individual verses in the context of the whole chapter and book can help you follow what is going on.

**For Thought and Discussion:** Why is 7:30 important? (Compare 10:37–38.)

**Study Skill—Context**  
Verse 24 is a key to understanding the debate in chapter 7. The focus of the chapter, as well as of the book, is "Who is Jesus?" Notice how reading individual verses in the context of the whole chapter and book can help you follow what is going on.

**No one will know** (7:27). There was discontent and uncertainty about the Messiah's origins. Because of Matt 12:2, some thought He would come from Bethlehem (see Matthew 2:4–6, John 7:42). Others believed that the Messiah would remain hidden until He suddenly appeared to His people.<sup>10</sup>

**Pharisees** (7:52). They "would have their finger on the public pulse more than the chief priests who were more remote." Also, in their role as the nation's spiritual teachers, the Pharisees were more interested in and actively opposed to Jesus' words and deeds. "But the chief priests were in the place of power. More effective action was possible by combining with them."<sup>11</sup>

7. In 7:23–34, Jesus changes the topic from where He is from to where He is going. What do you think He means?

**Scattered among the Greeks** (7:35). "The dispersion" (basic Greek: *diaporesis*) was "a technical term for the large number of Jews who at this time were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire and beyond."<sup>12</sup> Jews had been spreading

through the known world since the Babylonians exiled them from Palestine six hundred years earlier. Ironically, Jesus, despite later launching their intercommunal rivalry among precisely this group (see the book of Acts).

**Cried out . . . said in a loud voice** (7:28, 37). The Gospels rarely record Jesus raising His voice. A rabbi normally sat to teach, but in 7:37 Jesus stood to proclaim His message like a prophet.<sup>13</sup>

**Study Skill—Personalizing the Verbs**  
To help yourself see how a passage is personally relevant, read it with an eye to the verbs. Ask yourself, "What does it mean for me to do that?" or "How can I tell when I'm doing that?" Questions 8 and 9 personalize 7:37–39 in this way.

8. Read what Jesus promises to those who come to Him (7:37–39). What does it mean for you to come to Jesus and drink (7:37)?

9. How can you tell when streams of living water are flowing from within you?

**Further Study:** How were you celebrating that Jesus might be planning to go and teach the Greeks—Gentiles (7:35)? How does this compare with what happens in the book of Acts?

**For Further Study:** Compare John 7:37–39 to Isaiah 55:1–2.

Lesson Six

PRAYERS OF RENEWAL AND RESTORATION

**For Thought and Discussion:** How have you seen the goodness and love of God evident in every day of your life, even the bad ones? Why is it sometimes easier to see the influence of God in hardship than in the middle of a difficult time?

**Psalm 23:6**  
I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

10. Surely your goodness and love will follow me forever. How long does it usually take for the blessing of God (for example, the good in a seemingly bad situation) to catch up with you after a difficult experience?

11. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. In what sense do we dwell in God's house now, today? What does the word *dwell* mean to you?

12. What is it about connecting with God that brings about a sense of renewal and restoration?

13. How can you tell when streams of living water are flowing from within you?

**Dwelling.** To be given privileges in the king's house was considered a great honor. This honor was given to Nehemiah, the crippled son of Jonathan, his best friend, Nehemiah's son given a place at the king's table, and all of his

grandfather Saul's lands were restored to him. Perhaps David had this mercy in mind he wrote about dwelling in the Lord's house.

**For the group**  
Warm-up: Psalm 23 is often read at funerals. Although memorial services are typically sad experiences, some of them can be celebratory events of a life well lived and honoring to God. Ask group members if any of them have attended such a funeral and why it was special. What about the sentiments in Psalm 23 ministered to the loved ones at that funeral?

**Questions.** Many of today's questions focus on the renewing aspect of prayer. Often when we talk with God, a sense of peace and comfort comes upon us that is not just a passing emotion. It is often this need for renewal that drives us to pray as we try to sustain ourselves through the weary battles of life.

**Prayer.** During group prayer, focus on the specific ways in which God has renewed your soul and spirit through prayer. Give thanks for the ways in which the people in your class have brought joy and a sense of renewal to you. It's important to model the types of prayers you're discussing.

**For Further Study:** Fast-forward to Jesus' promise to His disciples: "My Father's house has many rooms. If that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?" (John 14:2). Why do you think Jesus describes our reward as a "house" in what ways will we finally feel "home" when we get to heaven? Explain.

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**Application:** "Dwell in the house of the Lord" (Psalm 23:6). What will it include? What do these things you listed reflect about the healthy aspects of your spiritual walk?

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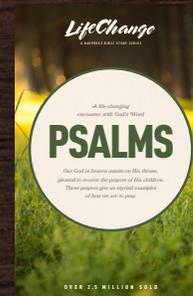
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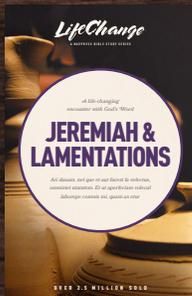
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