

The Passion-Driven Life

SS. Peter & Paul as Models for Living a Christian Lifestyle

Purpose

This is an interactive session is for high school youth. With slight adaptation it can work well with both small and large groups or can be incorporated into a longer session of the saints as role models or what it takes to be a follower of Jesus. The session is designed to be an opportunity to reflect on SS. Peter and Paul as models of Christian living—to examine how God gives second chances, chooses who's qualified, and calls us to passionately live out our faith.

Session at a Glance

7:00 p.m.	Welcome and Introductions
7:05 p.m.	Community Builder: Simile Bag
7:20 p.m.	Opening Prayer: Second Chances
7:30 p.m.	Focus Activity: Balancing the Feather
7:40 p.m.	A Look at the lives of SS. Peter & Paul
8:00 p.m.	The Passion Driven Life
8:20 p.m.	Closing Prayer: Passionate for Your Faith
8:30 p.m.	Good Night

Materials Needed

- Nametags
- Markers
- A small bag with a variety of small items inside (see #1 in Prepare in Advance)
- Peacock feathers, one per participant (see #2 in Prepare in Advance for possible sources)
- CDs or iPod with selected songs for prayers
- CD player or iPod dock (extension cords if needed)
- Handout 1, Opening Prayer: Second Chances, one for each participant
- Handout 2, Closing Prayer: Passion Driven, one for each participant
- Resource 3, Bookmarks (see #3 in Prepare in Advance)
- Sticky notes or Scotch Removable Tape and index cards
- Two large posters (with outline of a person on each) or 2 large cut-outs of a person
- Copies for leader(s) of Resource 1, St. Peter? St. Paul? or Both? and Resource 2, Correctly Identified
- Pens or pencils for each participant
- Bible
- Candle & matches or lighter

Prepare in Advance

1. Collect a variety of small items from your desk and home “junk drawer” and place in a small bag or sack. Use items such as paper clip, barrette, safety pin, pencil, comb, pocket rosary, inexpensive jewelry, eraser, votive candle, keychain, small bottle of aspirin, etc. There should be at least 10 more items in the bag than there are expected participants.

Note to Leader: If you are expecting a large group and you plan to divide the participants into smaller groups for the evening, prepare a separate bag for each small group. The bags do not have to contain the same identical items.

2. Purchase enough peacock feathers for each participant to have one. If you cannot find them at your local hobby or craft store, try these online sources (feathers range in price from 25-35 cents apiece)

Note to Leader: If the group is large and you are going to divide participants into small groups, you can choose to have each small group have 2-3 feathers and for participants to take turns. If so, purchase the number of feathers you think you will need.

3. Using cardstock paper, copy Resource 3, Bookmarks, and cut into thirds. Make one bookmark for each participant.

4. Make two large posters with outlines of “gingerbread-style” men drawn on the paper (or make large cut-outs of these outlines).

Note to Leader: If you choose to do this activity in small groups, you would need a set of posters for each small group.

5. Prepare TWO SETS of sticky notes or file cards with characteristics listed on Resource 1, St. Peter? St. Paul? or Both? (one characteristic per sticky note).

Note to Leader: If the participants are divided into smaller groups and you choose to do this activity as a small group activity, you will need one set for each small group.

6. Practice balancing the peacock feather before the session. (See the Focus Activity in the Outline for more details.)

7. Set up a prayer table with a Bible, candle and symbols of SS. Peter & Paul (keys, sword, statues or holy cards of the saints). Have CDs or iPod with songs readily available for prayers.

8. Set up tables for refreshments and sign-in. Have one or two people at the sign-in table with a check-in sheet and name tags. Hospitality is important: As the facilitator, do not use the gathering time before the session begins to take care of last minute preparations. Spend the time moving among the participants, greeting and speaking with them.

Session Outline

Note to Leader: This outline is written presuming that all the activities are done in one large group. If your group is over 35-40 participants you may choose to do several of the activities in small groups, with each small group doing the activity simultaneously. When a group is large, doing activities in small groups helps keep participants interested and focused and allows everyone a better chance to participate.

Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)

Welcome the participants as they arrive, and make sure everyone gets a nametag. Introduce yourself

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Community Builder: Simile Bag (15 minutes)

Show the participants the Simile Bag. Explain that there are a variety of small items in the bag. Tell them that each participant should, without looking, select an item from the bag. When they get their item, they should think of how that item is in some way like him/her and how the item is in some way like what a Christian should be. Select an item yourself and then begin passing the bag around so each participant can take an item. When everyone has something, you should begin by modeling how to share by filling in the statements below. After you have shared, invite someone else to share and then simply move around the room / table.

My name is: _____.

This [item] is like me because: _____.

This [item] is like what a Christian should be because: _____.

Opening Prayer: Second Chances (10 minutes)

Introduce the opening prayer by telling participants that this evening is about living your Christian faith and looking at the great saints, Peter & Paul, as examples of how to do that. Distribute copies of the Handout 1, Opening Prayer Service: Second Chances, and direct participants attention to the prayer table. Light the candle and say:

As we pray this prayer together, let us remember that God's love is infinitely patient and our God is a God of Second Chances.

Focus Activity: Balancing the Feather (10 minutes)

Give each participant a peacock feather. Invite them to stand and extend their index (pointer) finger and try to balance the quill end of the feather on their finger so that the feather stands straight up in the air. Let them make several attempts and see how long they might be able to do it.

Note to Leader: If the group is large and you have divided participants into small groups, you can choose to give each small group only 2-3 feathers and have participants take turns trying to balance the feather.

After they have tried a few times point out the "eye" on the top of the feather. Tell them to keep their eye on the "eye" (don't take it off) and move their finger as they need to keep the feather balanced. They should be able to balance the feather for a significantly longer period of time.

Note to Leader: It might be a good idea to demonstrate "Keeping your eye on the 'eye'" and balancing the feather. You may want to practice this a bit before the session!

Say something like:

Unless you knew the "trick" it wasn't easy to balance the feather. Most of you were not very successful at it when you first tried. But, once you knew what to keep your eye on, your chances of success were far greater. Our heroes this evening, St. Peter and St. Paul, often were misguided or failed in their attempts to lead what they thought were faith-filled lives. But when they kept their eye on Jesus, no matter what the challenges and obstacles they encountered, they could persevere.

A Look at the Lives of SS. Peter & Paul (20 minutes)

Distribute the sets of sticky notes you prepared ahead of time from Resource 1, St. Peter? St. Paul? or Both? to participants.

Note to Leader: If the group is large, not everyone may get one. Those who do get one should have BOTH copies (i.e., the person who gets the card that says "Fisherman" should have both copies of that card.) If you have chosen to do this in small groups, participants will each get more than one set. Also, if you choose to use cards or strips of paper for these characteristics, use Scotch removable tape to hang them on the posters.

Hang up the posters with the outlines. Mark one of them St. Peter and the other St. Paul. Invite a person who has one of the sets of sticky notes to read it out loud and decide whether it belongs to St. Peter, St. Paul, or both of them. Tell him/her to place the sticky note on the outline(s) they have selected. After each person has made his/her choice and posted it, use Resource 2, Correctly Identified, to make appropriate comments. If the participant was incorrect, remove and/or place the sticky note on the correct figure.

Invite participants to repeat the process until all the sticky notes are used. Continue using Resource 2 to make appropriate comments.

Conclude by saying something like:

Once again we see that these great men were far from perfect or far from who we might have thought would be most qualified to have such important roles in Jesus' Church. Yet, God called them, with all their strengths and weaknesses, to heroic faith. While they were alive, they didn't even always agree with each other and had some pretty heated arguments about those disagreements. Can you think of what they had in common, beside what's already up here, that would make us eventually call them "saints"?

Write down any appropriate answers on both posters. The one word that you are eventually looking for is something like PASSION (or FERVOR). Continue by saying:

As you know, Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta received the Nobel Peace Prize. At the press conference afterwards a reporter asked her what it felt like to be called a "living saint." She replied that it was no big deal, "we are ALL called to be saints."

If we are to look to SS. Peter and Paul as examples of how we can live our faith, then we begin by realizing that it is important to live it with PASSION! Inspired by the love of God and aided by the Holy Spirit, St. Peter and St. Paul knew that meant something to their lives and they lived that out with great passion.

The Passion-Driven Life (20 minutes)

Say something like:

Some of you are blessed to have a great passion for something in your lives already. Perhaps you are passionate about a particular sport (football, hockey, volleyball), or you are passionate about some form of art (like music, dance or drawing). Some of you are passionate about certain social justice issues (like the right to life, finding a cure for cancer, or ending racism). It is our passions that give great meaning to our lives. If we profess to be Christians, followers of Christ, then we are called to be passionate about our faith—because our leader, Jesus, was passionate about it!

We have spent a little time during this session recognizing that what made SS. Peter & Paul great was not any special qualifications, but their great passion for what they believed. It's nice to say that we should follow their examples and live our faith with great passion. But what exactly does that mean?

If we look to their lives, we can see that there were three things they were called to and to which we are also called. Like SS. Peter & Paul we are called to discipleship, to relationship, and to apostolic action. As Christians, we must say "yes" to each of these calls. And we should be passionate about our "yes"!

Distribute the bookmarks you made to each participant. Make sure that they also have pens.

Continue by saying something like:

A disciple is an apprentice—someone who learns from a teacher, a coach, or a mentor. A disciple is called to learn and to study. Just as any apprentice, a disciple tries to imitate their teacher, coach, or mentor.

We know that St. Peter spent three years with Jesus learning what he had to teach him. Besides just watching and listening to what Jesus did, there are many stories in the gospels where Jesus takes the apostles aside and instructs them.

After his conversion, St. Paul spent nearly fourteen years with the apostles around Jerusalem learning from them what they had learned from Jesus.

As a Christian, you are called to continually learn.

Invite participants to give some specific suggestions on how they might learn more about their faith (i.e., reading, taking classes, talking to a sponsor or mentor). After several suggestions have been made, invite participants to turn over their bookmark and write a specific way they can learn about their faith and for which they are willing to make a commitment to do. (Caution them that they should write small, as they will be writing more on the back.)

Continue by saying something like:

There is a big difference between knowing about someone and knowing him or her. We are also called to know Jesus, to grow in our personal relationship with Him.

St. Peter was blessed with being able to spend three whole years walking and talking with Jesus. But, in order to have the kind of passion that eventually let St. Peter die for his faith, he had to continue that relationship even after Jesus ascended into heaven.

St. Paul never had the chance to meet Jesus of Nazareth. He first encountered Jesus in a vision as the Risen Lord. Yet it is very evident from reading any of his letters (to the Hebrews, to the Romans, to the Corinthians, etc.) that he had a strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

How did they do it? They did it the same way that each of us build any relationship— by talking with each other and by spending time together.

Invite participants to give some specific suggestions on how they might be able to spend time with Jesus and to get to know him better. After at least the three major ways (reading Scripture, praying, participating in the sacraments—especially Eucharist) are mentioned, invite participants to make a commitment to do AT LEAST one of these things and write their commitment on the back of the bookmark.

Continue:

You have probably heard such slogans as “Actions speak louder than words” or “Walk the Talk.” There is no way someone can be passionate about something and not do something about it. We are called to action.

There is no question that both St. Peter and Paul did something about what they believed. When you get a chance, read the Acts of the Apostles and see some of the amazing adventures they had in living out their faith. Among the many things they did, St. Peter was the first leader of the church (what we might call the first pope) and St. Paul traveled all over the Roman Empire leading thousands to Christ (which is why he is often called the “great evangelist”). They both ended up in Rome where they eventually died for their faith.

You cannot say you are a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, and not act like one. That doesn't mean just not doing bad things—it also means making a commitment to doing good things—helping the poor, working for justice, being a peacemaker, treating all people with dignity and respect.

Invite participants to give some specific suggestions on some action they can commit to do (other than the kinds suggested in the other two times) and then invite participants to write down a specific action that they themselves will commit to doing in the near future.

Remind participants that these three calls: to discipleship, to relationship, and to apostolic action are calls that they need to commit to doing throughout their lives. Invite participants to place their bookmark with their personal commitments someplace where they will see it daily and be reminded of what they are called to be.

Closing Prayer: Passion Driven (10 minutes)

Distribute copies of Handout 3, Closing Prayer—Passion Driven. Say something like:

As we conclude this session, let us pray together to be able to be passionate for our faith.

Conclude the evening by saying the closing prayer together.

Resource 1

St. Peter? St. Paul? or Both?

At Pentecost

Apostle to the Gentiles

Considered Holy by the People of His Time

Criticized for Having Little Faith

Cut Off a Man's Ear

Denied Jesus

Died for His Faith

Fanatical

First Leader of the Church

Fisherman

Greatest Evangelizer

Had a Physical Affliction

Helped by Angels

Helped Kill the First Martyr

Impetuous

Jesus Once Called Him "Satan"

Known by Two Names

Little Education

Loved God

Met Jesus Through His Brother

Never Married

Once When He Spoke, He Baptized Thousands

Once When He Spoke So Long, Someone Fell Asleep and Died

Performed Miracles

Pharisee

Roman Citizen

Shipwrecked

Spent Time in Jail

Spoke Several Languages

Symbolized by Keys

Symbolized by a Sword

Sunk in the Water

Tentmaker

Thought Only Jews Could be Christians

Wrote Letters to the Early Church

Temporarily Blind

Resource 2

Correctly Identified?

At Pentecost: St. Peter.

Apostle to the Gentiles: St. Paul.

Considered Holy by the People of His Time: Both.

Criticized for Having Little Faith: St. Peter.

Cut Off a Man's Ear: St. Peter. In the Garden of Gethsemane when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, Peter cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest, Malchus (John 18:10).

Denied Jesus: St. Peter. After Jesus was arrested, Peter followed him to the courtyard of the high priest where various persons accused him of being one of Jesus' followers. Peter denied it three times (just as Jesus had foretold) (Luke 22:54-62).

Died for His Faith: Both. Tradition has it that St. Peter was crucified upside down and St. Paul was beheaded.

Fanatical: St. Paul. Prior to his conversion Paul was a true religious fanatic, persecuting Jews who did not follow his version of Judaism.

First Leader of the Church: St. Peter. Jesus said "You are rock and upon this Rock I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:17-19).

Fisherman: St. Peter.

Greatest Evangelizer: St. Paul was called the greatest evangelizer because of his contribution to the spread of Christianity throughout the Mediterranean world.

Had a Physical Affliction: St. Paul. We don't know exactly what it was, but he refers to his affliction several times.

Helped by Angels: Both.

Resource 2 (continued)

Helped Kill the First Martyr: St. Paul was at the stoning of St. Stephen and approved it. (Acts 7:58-60)

Impetuous: Is a good word to describe St. Peter. There are many stories where he spoke or acted before he thought.

Jesus Once Called Him "Satan": St. Peter. Jesus told him "Get behind me Satan" when Peter tried to talk Jesus out of going to Jerusalem where he knew he was destined to die. (Mark 8:32-33)

Knew Several Languages: St. Paul knew Latin, Greek and Hebrew. St. Peter spoke Aramaic. (St. Peter was heard in each person's language at Pentecost, however.)

Known By Two Names: Both. Simon / Peter and Saul/Paul.

Little Education: St. Peter was a simple fisherman with little education. Paul, however, was highly educated.

Loved God: Both. And both spoke of it often as recorded in Acts of the Apostles and their various letters

Met Jesus Through His Brother: St. Peter. St. John's Gospel version of the call of Peter has Andrew hearing Jesus first and bringing Peter to Jesus. (John 1:40-42)

Never Married: St. Paul was a bachelor. St. Peter was married (his mother-in-law is mentioned in Matthew 8:14 when Jesus cures her) before he met Jesus and his wife worked with him in the early church.

Once When He Spoke He Baptized Thousands: St. Peter. The story in Acts of the Apostles says that three thousand were baptized after hearing Peter's sermon on Pentecost. (Acts 2:41)

Once When He Spoke So Long Someone Fell Asleep and Died: St. Paul. You could honestly say that St. Paul bored someone to death. The story goes that he talked "on and on" to well after midnight and a young man named Eutychus fell asleep, fell out the window and died. The good news is that Paul restored him to life. (Acts 20:7-12)

Resource 2 (continued)

Performed Miracles: Both. Many recorded in the Acts of the Apostles including raising the dead.

Pharisee: St. Paul.

Roman Citizen: St. Paul.

Shipwrecked: St. Paul. The whole story is in Acts 27:6-44.

Spent Time in Jail: Both.

Symbolized by Keyes: St. Peter. Jesus told him he gave him the "keys to the kingdom."

Symbolized by a Sword: St. Paul symbolized by a two-edged sword.

Sunk in the Water: St. Peter when he tried to walk on the water after Jesus did (Matthew 14: 27-33).

Temporarily Blind: St. Paul was temporarily blinded by his vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus. He was cured by a miracle (Acts 9:8-19).

Tentmaker: St. Paul. He continued to support himself that way while on his missionary trips. He did not want anyone to accuse him of converting and preaching to make money.

Thought Only Jews Could be Christians: St. Peter believed that converts should become Jews before becoming Christians. St. Paul argued that Gentiles did not have to become Jews first. It was a heated argument. St. Peter changed his mind after a vision (Acts 10:9-49 is the story of Peter's vision and the conversion of Cornelius' household). This was finally decided at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-21).

Wrote Letters to the Early Church: Both. Though St. Peter only wrote two that are included in our New Testament and St. Paul, or his followers, wrote many.

Handout 1
SECOND CHANCES

Gather

Sing "Lift Up Your Hearts" (verses 1 & 4) by Roc O'Connor SJ (Spirit & Song, OCP)

Prayer Leader:

Peter, the Rock, named by Jesus himself as the head of the church, was also told by Jesus that, in his fear at Jesus' arrest, he would deny even knowing the Lord. St. John tells us the story...

Listen and Respond

Reader 1: John 18:25-27

Prayer Leader:

But Jesus appears to the apostles after the Resurrection on a beach, frying fish for them for their breakfast. Jesus knows of Peter's denial and his need to set things right. St. John also tells us...

Reader 2: John 21:15-19

All: Our God is a God of Second Chances! Thanks be to God!

Prayer Leader:

After Jesus' Ascension into heaven we hear the story of the early followers in the Acts of the Apostles written by St. Luke. It is in these stories that we first hear of Saul of Tarsus, whose Hebrew name is Paul. Paul is a Jewish Pharisee who saw it as his personal mission to persecute the early Church. Acts also tells the story of St. Stephen, the first martyr for the Christian faith. We know that Paul helped with the arrest and was present at the stoning of St. Stephen...

Reader 3: Acts 7:58, 60

Prayer Leader:

St. Luke continues the story of Paul's mission of persecution as he sets out on a journey from Jerusalem to Damascus with the authority and a warrant to take prisoner any Jew in Damascus who has become a follower of Jesus. It is on the way to Damascus that Paul encounters the Risen Lord in a vision...

Reader 4: Acts 9:1-9, 19b-22

All: Our God is a God of Second Chances. Thanks be to God!

Go Forth

Prayer Leader:

It seems, that at least in our limited understanding, God does not often choose those we might think qualified; BUT God always qualifies those he chooses! So let us begin our evening together calling on both these men who denied, persecuted and made mistakes BUT who were brave enough to change, to help us to grow ever stronger in our faith with the help of the Love of God and the Holy Spirit.

All: Saints Peter & Paul, co-founders of the church, we ask you to pray for us as we strive to learn more about Jesus, to grow ever closer to him and to have the courage to live out our faith in our daily lives. Amen.

Prayer Leader:

We Praise you God of Second Chances!

All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Resource 3

Passion Driven

CALLED TO:

Discipleship (To Learn & Study)

Relationship (To Spend Time with Jesus)

Apostolic Action (To Spread the Good News by Word AND deeds)

Passion Driven

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Passion Driven

CALLED TO:

Discipleship (To Learn & Study)

Relationship (To Spend Time with Jesus)

Apostolic Action (To Spread the Good News by Word AND deeds)

Handout 2

Passion Driven

Gather

Sing "Cry the Gospel" by Tom Booth (Spirit & Song, OCP).

Prayer Leader:

Loving God, you have called us to a living faith, to be passionate about what we stand for and what we believe. You have called us to be disciples, to apprentice ourselves to your Son, Jesus. You have called us to presence, to be in contact with your Son daily through Your Word in Scripture and through prayer. You have called us to action, to be more than words, but to act on what we stand for and what we believe. You have called us to live our faith passionately. We ask for your continued patience and love as we strive to answer these calls with the help of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Listen

Invite the reader to proclaim John 15:7-12; 16-17. Allow a few moments of quiet after the reading.

Respond

Prayer Leader:

God is always giving us another chance to be all he calls us to be. Jesus taught us to pray "...Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And he has promised us that if we love each other and ask, it will happen. But prayer alone doesn't change things. Prayer changes people and people change things. We only have to look at the two men whose feast day we will be

celebrating this week, SS. Peter & Paul, to recognize what one passionate person, with God in control, can do to change the world.

Let us offer our prayers of petition and intercession to our loving God, focusing on our call to discipleship, our call to relationship, and our call to action. Our response is pray together: Guide us in your ways, O God.

Go Forth

Prayer Leader:

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord and one another.

All: Thanks be to God!