

## ***How To Get UnStuck In Your Faith***

UnStuck- Part 1

January 8, 2012

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Main Text: John 21 (pgs. 652-653 in the Bible beneath your seat)

### **Introduction:**

Today we are kicking off a brand new series called “Unstuck”. *How many of you have been stuck in your life?* I know I have. I won’t ask you to respond visibly to this—just think about it personally—**how many of you are stuck right now?**

I’ll be honest—there are some areas in my life, right now, that I feel stuck in.

- Family...challenges over the holidays. Things didn’t go as I would have liked them to. I feel stuck in some relationships.
- Financially... car and house. We’ve faced challenges this year. Stuff keeps breaking... Can’t seem to get ahead... Sometimes I feel stuck financially.
- Sometimes these personal ditches leave me feeling stuck in my faith...*Lord, why do you allow all these things to keep happening?* Sometimes my trails lead to doubts. Sometimes I don’t handle my frustration well and it comes out on the people I love...then I get more stuck.

But you know the truth is, we all feel stuck from time to time. In fact, maybe you came here today, because you feel stuck. I have good news for you today. **God loves to get us unstuck.** The Bible is full of stories of people who became unstuck.

I want us to look at one of the disciples today. This guy was stuck. This was a follower of Jesus that was passionate about His Lord. He was zealous for God’s work. He was dedicated. He wanted to learn. He wanted to do. He wanted to please God.

But, he got stuck...*and Jesus got him unstuck.* This morning, we want to look at Peter. You know Peter? Peter happens to be one of my favorite disciples because I can relate to Peter. Peter was pretty brash. Peter loved Jesus, but he was also human. Peter messed up. Peter had highs and lows in his faith. And, from one low in particular, we can learn from Peter how Jesus gets us unstuck.

- Peter radically followed Jesus. He jumped out of a boat and walked on water to get to Jesus.
- Peter promised Jesus he would never deny Him.  
Once, in John 13, Jesus said—one of you is going to deny me. And Peter said it may be one of these other losers, but it’s not going to be me. I’ll never deny you.
- Jesus promised to build His church on Peter.  
And at that moment, you will recall that Jesus gave Peter his nickname. You know what his nickname was? The rock. Peter became the rock. And Peter, the rock, was the person that Jesus said—Peter it is upon your profession that I am Lord that I will build the church.

- Peter denied Jesus under pressure. But then Peter finds himself on the night of Jesus' arrest, denying his Lord three times. Peter, who said, I never will deny you, caves under pressure, and denies Jesus three times.
- Peter was stuck...

Here's the interesting thing after that. We don't really know where Peter was at when Jesus died on the cross. He isn't mentioned. He deserted Jesus. He's somewhere in hiding. I picture Peter having what you and I might call *a dark night of the soul*. Can you put yourself in his position? I mean he feels stuck. The One that he left everything to follow just died on the cross and Peter had denied him.

Where do we find Peter next? A few days after Jesus' death, Peter gets up on Sunday morning and he goes back to his old ways. Peter goes out fishing.

*I want you to think about Peter. On Saturday night, Peter is asking himself, how could this happen to me? Why has God forsaken me? Is there any hope? Have you ever asked those questions of God? Have you ever come to that point in your life where you feel stuck?*

John 21 is the story of Jesus getting Peter unstuck. What we're going to see is that Jesus can do the same thing for you and me. God can help us get unstuck. This is the central story of Jesus' resurrection. The power of the resurrection says that Christ was raised from the dead and so you and I can get unstuck. .

Punch the person beside you. Make sure they are awake. Take a deep breath and let's read Romans 6:4 with *UnStuck* enthusiasm.

### **Romans 6:4**

*For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.*

Because Jesus was raised from the dead by God's incredible power- *I can live a new life*. Because Jesus was raised—I have hope for change. I have hope for a new day. I have hope to get unstuck.

This morning, I want to extract three lessons from the life of Peter. I hope you'll plug in with me... because-- here's what I know. *Even if you aren't stuck right now, you are going to get stuck*. Life is full of sticky situations. What I love about this series that we are going to be in over the next five weeks, that even if you don't need it now, you are going to need it eventually. We all get stuck... Here's how to get unstuck.

**To get unstuck in my faith** (3 lessons from Peter's story in John 21):

#### **1. I have to admit that I'm stuck. (John 21:1-4)**

Sounds simple, right? But, this is where it all starts. I have to admit that I'm stuck. Practicing admitting we are stuck is not easy. It is not easy, because it requires is something very powerful. It requires humility. We have to humble ourselves to admit we are stuck.

You may have heard the old saying. It says something like this—*if you find yourself in a hole, the first rule is to stop digging*. If you find yourself stuck, the first rule is to admit that you are stuck. You have to say—*Look, I'm stuck*. This is hard to say to other people, especially if you are a guy. It's hard to admit to your spouse, or it's hard to admit to your friends that you are stuck, but I'll tell you who it's especially hard to admit to. It's hard to admit it to God.

It's hard to say—*God, I'm stuck*. That's hard to say. In fact, let's practice it right now. Say it with me—*God, I'm stuck*. Go. *God, I'm stuck*. One more time. *God, I'm stuck*. That's hard to say.

I think Peter found himself in a similar situation. He was stuck...but it was hard for him to admit it. He didn't want to just go to God and say—*God, I'm stuck*.

So, Peter did what any red-blooded male would do. Peter went fishing. And Peter said—***I'm going to get myself unstuck.***

Remember, fishing was natural for him. He had been a fisherman before he became a follower of Jesus, so he goes fishing. So here we are, it's Sunday morning, it's early and here's what happens.

#### **John 21:1-4:**

<sup>1</sup> *Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened.* <sup>2</sup> *Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.*

<sup>3</sup> *Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing."*

*"We'll come, too," they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.*

<sup>4</sup> *At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was.*

Put yourself in the shoes of the disciples. They had lost their leader. They were wondering about their future. What should they believe—they had followed Jesus, but now He was dead. Could they really trust that He would rise again as He had said He would? What were they to do with what they were taught. Keep in mind- they were out all night- they hadn't heard about the resurrection. *They were stuck.*

So, they did the only thing they knew to do. They went back to work. John says several of them were together- Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel and a few unnamed others. Peter said, *"I'm going fishing..."* and they all went. This would be our natural response as well. When we're stuck, it is natural to try and handle it ourselves. It is natural to go back to our old ways. Instead of admitting we are stuck and asking God for help- we try and handle it on our own.

But, not only were they stuck without their leader...they got stuck going it on their own as well. Look at what verse 3 says—they went fishing, *but they caught nothing all night*. Talk about a fisherman being stuck. Tried all night. Stuck. Throwing the nets out, bringing them in. Throwing them out, bringing them in. Nothing all night. And too full of pride to admit that they were stuck.

Have you ever been there? Have you ever had your fishing pole in the back of your truck and had Sinatra's "I did it my way" blaring on the radio, and you're heading anywhere but toward God?

*Ever stayed up all night thinking that you would get yourself unstuck? All alone? Only to find the next morning that you, like Peter, had caught nothing all night? Dark night of the soul is what it is called. Many times, we ignore the brutal fact that we are stuck instead of humbling ourselves to admit that you need God's help to get unstuck. But there is an alternative. There is a better way to live. **James 4:10: Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.***

God wants us to bow down before Him. He wants us to humble ourselves and admit our need for Him. Then- this beautiful promise... *He will lift us up*. The way to get back on our feet...the way to get unstuck... is to humble ourselves before the Lord.

*Have you ever wondered why God will allow us to get stuck in the first place? I mean, why isn't every day Easter? Why do we have to go through crucifixion Fridays and dark Saturdays? I mean, **could it be that God allows crucifixion Fridays in our lives so that once again, we will reaffirm our dependence on Him?***

*Maybe it's the only way that some of us will ever humble ourselves so that we can hear from God, and get back into God's plan. I mean, after all, would we really be able to celebrate the glory of intimacy with Jesus and seeing God's power at work in our lives, if it weren't for some of the trials that God allows us to go through and helps to get unstuck from?*

So, the first step in getting unstuck is not to go fishing...to try and handle it on our own...but it's to admit that you are stuck.

## **2. I have to listen to God's voice. (John 21:4-6)**

Peter's first reaction was to default to his old way of living. He used to be a fisherman, so he said—I'm stuck, I don't know what else to do, he turned his face from God, and he went fishing, but then something great happened.

<sup>4</sup> *At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was.*

<sup>5</sup> *He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?"*

*"No," they replied.*

<sup>6</sup> *Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.*

So, the disciples had been fishing all night and Jesus appears on the beach. But His friends couldn't see who He was. I love this. Jesus called out, "Friends, have you caught any fish? They replied back, 'No.'"

Fishermen are never proud to admit that they haven't caught anything. So, what does Jesus do? He tells them to switch sides. They've been fishing all night. Surely they must have been trying everything they could think of to catch fish. But, here is this stranger that shows up on the beach and tells them all they have to do is throw their nets on the other side of the boat.

Now, right there between the exclamation point at the end of verse 5 and "so" at the start of verse six, I picture a great conversation among the fishermen. I mean, they probably said—*This guy is crazy. He doesn't know what he's talking about. I mean, who is this guy to tell us to throw our nets out. We are the professional fishermen...*

But, sometimes when you get stuck for so long...and what you've tried on your own proves frivolous... sometimes then we are finally open to hearing God's voice. So, they said—*Okay. We'll do it.*

Look what happened. "They couldn't draw in the net because there were so many fish in it." They went *from empty nets to a full catch. From stuck to unstuck. From a hopeless night to a hopeful morning.* For the first time in days, the rock, that is Peter, is given hope because he realizes maybe I'm not stuck for good. Maybe this situation isn't going to last forever. There was hope on the horizon because there were fish in the nets.

But listen, **he could have ignored the voice from the shore.** It would have been easy to do. **Proverbs 16:25:** *There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.*

Here's where a lot of people end up when they are stuck. They go their own way, they try and fix it on their own. They do what feels right to them... We see it all around us:

- My marriage isn't right... I'm just going to let it go. I deserve to be happy.
- My wife...or husband isn't satisfying my emotional or physical needs... so I'm going to satisfy them on my own... I'm going to have an affair or I'm going to look at porn.
- I don't really have the money for this...but I want it now...so let's just take a loan I'll probably never be able to repay or put it on a credit card...
- I'm really struggling with this person... I will not forgive them. I'm just going to not speak to them again.
- Or... I have a problem with this person at church... or I don't really like this or that about my church...so I'm going to leave my spiritual family and go somewhere else...
- Here's one I struggle with... I feel really frustrated about this or that right now and I'm going to handle that on my own... so I'm going to overeat to find satisfaction.

Many of us have things we turn to for comfort or satisfaction...and what we're doing is we're trying to get ourselves (or at least feel like we are) unstuck.

It seemed right to Peter to keep casting his nets on the wrong side of the boat. But when you start listening to God, reading your Bible, listening to Godly counsel and say—*Okay, God, I'm going to humble myself. I'm stuck. I need to hear from you.* Look at what God says, **Isaiah 55:8:** *"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.*

God says, *"My thoughts are completely different from yours..."* Peter was fishing on the wrong side of the boat. God had other thoughts. And *"My ways are far beyond anything you could imagine."*

Listen, ***what is God trying to say to you today?*** What is God trying to say to you today? Is there a voice that you need to hear from the shore? Is there a rescuer from the sky that you need to listen to? Are you listening to God's voice today?

Maybe for some of you, He's saying—I brought you here today because you need to trust Me for the first time. Maybe He's saying to some of you—you know what? You were once on the right path, but you've gotten off track over the last few years, or last few months.

Today's your day to surrender. And get back on track. Maybe God is inviting you to take some other steps this morning.

Look at your program under "My Next Steps":

- Bible reading plan for 2012...this is the best way to hear from God.

*"Some people like to read so many [Bible] chapters every day. I would not dissuade them from the practice, but I would rather lay my soul asoak in half a dozen verses all day than rinse my hand in several chapters. Oh, to be bathed in a text of Scripture, and to let it be sucked up in your very soul, till it saturates your heart!"-Charles Haddon Spurgeon*

- Commit to being at this message series for every lesson...

I'm excited about these next five weeks, because we have this series called "Unstuck" that's going to be going on. It's going to last between now and February 12. Next week we are going to talk about how to get unstuck in your finances. In future weeks, we're going to look at getting unstuck in relationships/ friendships/ family. And we are going to talk about how to get unstuck in our field or in our career. And finally, we are going to wrap this up by talking about how to get unstuck in the future. And live unstuck for the rest of our lives.

So maybe God is saying to you, commit to a Bible reading plan..... commit to this series. In fact, grab your Connection Card. I would like you to write down there a commitment that God is leading you to this morning. Write it down and turn your card in through the offering plate or basket on the welcome table. *Because what I am challenging you to do is to be open, to listen to God's voice.* We have to admit we are stuck. We must listen to God's voice, and then... number three:

### 3. I must commit to God's plan (John 21:7-12)

The challenge when we are stuck is to admit we are stuck, listen to God's plan, and then commit to follow God's direction. You obey. It's obedience. To get unstuck you can't just admit. *Okay, God, I'm stuck.* That's not enough. You can't just listen. *Okay God, I hear You.* You have to take action in order to get unstuck.

So let's go back to Peter's story and let's see how Peter committed. Because if there is one thing that Peter is good at, he's good at making big commitments, and he shows it right here at John 21.

The nets have come up. They are full of fish. Please look at verse 7.

*<sup>7</sup> Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore.*

I'm not sure what the custom was at the time... but Peter is fishing naked all night, so before he decides to run to the shore to be with the resurrected Jesus, he puts his tunic on. Good advice whenever you come to church. But, he doesn't slow down much because he jumped into the water and he swam ashore. Don't you love Peter? Everybody else stayed in the boat. Peter said—I'm swimming to the Lord.

*<sup>8</sup> The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards<sup>[d]</sup> from shore. <sup>9</sup> When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.*

*<sup>10</sup> "Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus said. <sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn't torn.*

*<sup>12</sup> "Now come and have some breakfast!" Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.*

Jesus said, "Come and have some breakfast." Don't you love it? Peter finds his heart again. With passion, he jumps almost naked from the boat and swims to shore. His Lord who was crucified, is now resurrected. The One who he thought had deserted him, was now on shore cooking breakfast for him, from famine with the fish all night, to feasting with the Savior on the shore. *From empty nets, to full stomachs. From helpless to hopeful. From being separated from God to having breakfast with God sitting on the shore. **That's the process of becoming unstuck.*** That's the power of the resurrection. That's what living for God and the Bible is all about. Unstuck. It's the only way to live.

Jeremiah 29:11

*For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.*

This verse captures God's heart so well. He has good plans...that lead to hope.

And that leads us to our working definition of unstuck. ***Unstuck is simply moving forward in my life because I'm willing to give God complete control.*** Moving forward in my life because I am willing to give God complete control.

Picture this. In essence, every person in this room is in one of three situations when it comes to your relationship with God. You fall into one of three categories.

Picture three circles. Circle one. Circle two. Circle three. These three circles represent three different kinds of lifestyles. People that live like the first and the last one are both stuck. People that live in the way of the middle circle are UnStuck.

Here's how this works. In our lives there is a seat of control. Every person here has a seat of control in their life. Think of it as the throne of your life. ***And the question is, who is on the throne of our life? Who is king of your life?***

Those living in circle number one live like they are the king of their lives. They rule their own universe. And God, the cross, is outside of their lives. So, if you are in circle #1, you are on the throne and the cross is outside of your life.

Now, picture, circle #3. In this case, you are still on the throne, calling the shots of your life..., but the cross is inside of your life...it's just not where it should be. *So God is in your life, but God is not on the throne of your life.*

To be real honest, we would say the person in circle #1 is not a Christian. They are in control of their life, but they have not yet made the decision to become a Christian. Circle #3 person we would say here is a Christian, *but there are areas of their life where they have not fully surrendered to God.*

Whenever we get stuck, it could be a sign that you've not given God complete control of your life. You say—why does God allow me to get stuck? *He allows you to get stuck, because He wants you to know that's an area where He's not in control of.*

Here's where the person in circle #2 is different. In circle number two, this person has gotten off the seat of control in their lives. They have given up control and turned it over to Jesus. They take a back seat to God's direction in their lives. Following God is more important than following their own desires. This person has surrendered...and that is the key to living an unstuck life.

Let me ask—*which one of these circles represents you?* Would say—*God is in control of my life? God is first in my life.* I'm growing closer to God each day?

Some others of us might say—*You know what? There was a time when I invited God into my life, and I know He's still there, He hasn't left me, but He's not first in my life.* You're living in circle #3. The action that you need to take today is one of surrender. You don't need to get saved again to use the colloquial language, but you need to surrender to recommit your life and say—*God, come back on the throne of my life.*

It could be that some of us are living in circle #1. Maybe you'd be willing to say: *I've been going my own way, but I've been keeping God out of my life.* If this is you: What you need is you need salvation. You need to invite Jesus Christ to come into your life. To acknowledge what Jesus did for you on the cross, to acknowledge that Jesus died for your sins, so that you could be forgiven. To acknowledge that Jesus was raised again from the dead so that you, too, can have new life in Heaven.

Most of the time, *getting stuck starts with taking control of an area of our lives that should be in God's control.*

Here is a key passage for this series. A Next Step for you today might be to memorize this verse.

**Romans 12:1-2**

*<sup>1</sup> And so, dear brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>2</sup> Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

You can know God's will today. God's will is for you to get unstuck.