

Chapter Seven

Peter, A Friend of Jesus

Friends are important! It has been said that friends are like the sugar in Kool-Aid, the icing on cake, and the shine in sunshine. We can live without them, but friends make it fun to live, don't they? When you are happy, having a friend around to share the happiness with you makes it that much more fun, doesn't it? When you are sad, a friend is there to give a hug and to tell you things will get better.

Well, we are going to be studying about a man who was a good friend, but he was the very good friend of Jesus. That is special, isn't it? Can you imagine being able to say that you were Jesus' best friend? We can say that we are the friends of Jesus when we obey His commands. There are some people who say they are friends of Jesus who do not obey His commands. They are not very good friends, though.

When Jesus began His ministry on earth, He began to call disciples (followers) to go with Him as He preached the gospel (good news) to others. Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 4:18), and He saw two brothers, Peter (also called Simon) and Andrew who were fishermen. He told them to follow Him. We learn in John 1:35-37 that they were first disciples of John the Baptist, who was Jesus' cousin. Do you remember what John the Baptist was preaching? He preached that people should repent (change) and be baptized because Jesus was coming soon. So, we know that Andrew and Peter were believers in God, and they believed that a Savior was coming. When they realized that Jesus was the one, Andrew said to Peter, "We have found the Messiah (the Christ)."



Both Peter and Andrew were fishermen, and they lived in Bethsaida on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee.¹ People who lived in this area had a very different way of speaking. We know that Peter had this accent. In Mark 14:67-70, when Jesus was being accused by the Sanhedrin council, Peter was standing outside the Judgment Hall. Those standing with Peter accused him of being with Jesus because of his accent.

The Bible tells us much about Peter. He was married and had a large home where he and his wife lived, along with his mother-in-law and Andrew, his brother. Andrew is not mentioned as often in the Bible. He was one of the apostles but did not seem to be in the inner circle of Jesus.

Peter is the apostle that most people feel is most like us today because Peter made mistakes, many mistakes, but he learned from them and moved on. He never gave up following Jesus. Have you ever heard anyone say, "Open mouth, insert foot"? Well, Peter was one who seemed to do that often. What that means is that he often spoke with-

out thinking about what he was about to say. This can lead to trouble, and on several occasions, Jesus had to correct Peter for his words. In fact, Jesus spoke more sternly to Peter than to the other disciples.

Jesus had been telling the disciples about all the things He was going to suffer, that He would die and be raised again on the third day. Peter rebuked Jesus (Mark 8:32). Jesus turned around and looked at His disciples. Don't you know they were scared? Think about it. This is the same Jesus who spoke the words and evil spirits left people. He raised the dead and healed many people and they had all witnessed it. I am sure they could tell that Jesus was angry with Peter and they probably thought, "Why on earth did Peter do that?"

Jesus said, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:23). In other words, Peter was not thinking about what God wanted but what Peter wanted. Peter loved Jesus and was upset to think that all these things would happen to Him. Peter spoke out because of his love, but he did not understand that it was God's plan for Jesus to die and to be raised up again in order to save the world.

Peter forsook his way of life to follow Jesus and do His will (Mark 10:28). He still made mistakes, but he never quit following Jesus. Peter seemed to be the leader of the disciples. He was the one usually to speak when they were asked anything as a group (Mark 8:29). We get a picture of Peter from the Bible that he was a man who put all his strength into everything that he did. Following Jesus was no different.

Jesus was celebrating the Passover, a Jewish holiday, with the disciples. He told them that they would be made to stumble because of Him (Mark 14:27). Again, Peter spoke, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be" (Mark 14:29). Don't you think that Peter had every intention of keeping that promise? He knew that he loved his Lord. He was Jesus' dear friend! Peter had given up everything to be a disciple, but he was still human. Peter did not know how scared he would be when they came and took Jesus away to put Him on trial. Imagine yourself in Peter's place. How would you feel if your best friend was to be put on trial and killed because of the jealousy of others? You would probably wonder if you were next.

Then Jesus told Peter that "today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice" (early morning time) Peter would betray Him three times (Mark 14:30). Peter

was even more upset now, and he said, "Even if I have to die with You. I will not deny You!" (Matthew 26:35)



After this, Jesus took Peter, James and John to the Garden of Gethsemane. John 18:1 tells us that this garden was across the Brook Kidron. Scholars believe that the Garden of Gethsemane was at the foot of Mount Olive where Jesus went many times with His disciples.² Jesus wanted to be alone with the three that were closest to Him, and He wanted time to

pray. He left the three to watch and went out little further into the garden to pray to God. Jesus knew that the time was near when He would be taken and crucified.

When Jesus returned, He found Peter, James and John asleep. He said to Peter, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:40-41). We can learn different things about this event from the different gospels. Later, Judas came with the chief priests, the captains of the temple and the elders to capture Jesus (Luke 22:52). Matthew 26:47-56 tells us that Judas, the chief priests and elders came out with clubs and swords to capture Jesus. This account also tells us that Judas kissed Jesus as a sign to the chief priests and elders that this was the one to capture (verse 49). Mark 14:43 tells us there was a multitude of people who came to take Jesus. John 18:10 tells us that Peter drew a sword and cut off the ear of the servant named Malchus, who served the High Priest. In Luke 22:50-51, we learn that Jesus then healed the servant's ear.

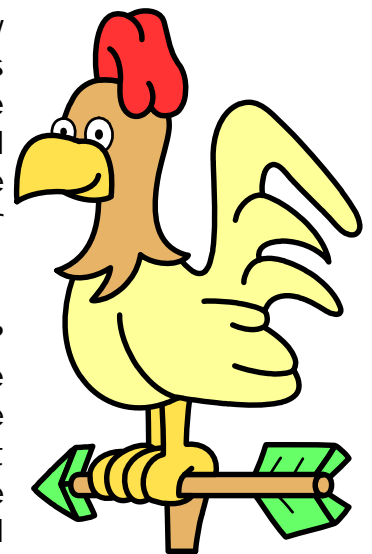
Jesus rebuked Peter for this. Peter acted out of love for Jesus, but he did not think before he acted. Jesus told him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?" (Matthew 26:52-54). So Jesus was basically saying to Peter, "I know that you want to protect Me, but it is God's will that this happens. If I wanted to be protected, I could have God bring down a large number of angels to do it." Peter was trying to be helpful, but he was standing in the way of God's will.

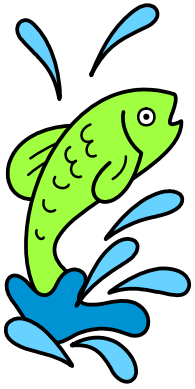
Remember the prediction that Jesus made about Peter? We know that Peter denied Him just as Jesus said he would. He left Jesus when the soldiers came to get Him. He followed and stood outside while Jesus was being tried. He told those around him that he did not know Jesus three times, and he even cursed. He heard the rooster crow, and he remembered what Jesus had said. Peter wept when he realized what he had done!

Have you ever done something wrong and felt horrible after it? Well, then you know how Peter felt. Only Peter had betrayed the Lord. The Lord that he had sworn to stand beside even to the point of dying! Here is where we see what Peter is made of. A lot of people would have quit right then and there. They would have gone home, gone back to fishing and tried to forget how awful they felt. Peter still felt bad about it, but he did not quit.

This is a quality of a great leader. What Peter did was wrong, but he was determined to make it right. Remember, Judas betrayed the Lord, too, for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15). What did Judas do after he betrayed the Lord? He killed himself. That did not solve anything did it? Peter faced what he had done, and he changed.

How do we know that Peter changed? John 20:14 tells us that when Jesus was raised up after He had been crucified and buried, He appeared to Mary Magdalene from whom





He had removed seven demons (John 20:14-16). She went to the disciples and told them that she had seen Him, and He had talked to her. That evening, Jesus appeared to the disciples where they were hidden because they were afraid of the Jews (who had just killed Jesus). He said to them, "Peace be with you." They were glad when they saw the Lord!

The Bible does not say it, but don't you think that Peter was worried? After all, he had forsaken Jesus! John chapter 21 tells us that Peter told Thomas, Nathanael, James, John and two other disciples that he was going fishing. Remember, fishing was something Peter was good at. He wanted to feel good again. His heart was sad over all that he had done.

Imagine how he felt as he fished during the night. When morning came, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not know it was Jesus. He asked if they had food, and they said no. He told them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat. Then there were so many fish that they could not raise the net!



John (who was called the disciple that Jesus loved) was sitting beside Peter. He told Peter, "It is the Lord!" (John 21:7). When Peter heard this, he put on his outer garment (probably a coat) and jumped into the sea. The other disciples dragged the net alongside their boat. When they got there, they noticed that Jesus had a fire going and had a fish and bread cooking on it. Peter dragged the net onto land, and the Bible says there were one hundred and fifty-three fish in the net. Jesus told them to come and eat breakfast. The disciples didn't dare ask Him who He was, because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus took the bread and the fish and gave it to them to eat.

It is plain to see the love between Jesus and His good friend Peter, when we read John 21:15-22. When they had eaten, Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" Peter said, "Yes Lord; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My lambs." Twice more Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. Each time Peter said, "Yes Lord; You know that I love You." Jesus answered him the last two times, "Tend My sheep," and then "Feed My sheep."

Jesus was telling Peter that he was forgiven, but he would be required to do something for it. Peter had a second chance! He would be required to "feed Jesus' lambs or sheep" which are everyone who obeys Jesus' commands.

Jesus told Peter he would die for preaching the gospel, but he was to follow Him. Peter then looked at John, who was the disciple that Jesus loved. John was following them. Peter wanted to know how John would die, too. It seems like he might have been a little jealous of John, but they were still very good friends. Jesus told Peter, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me" (John 21:22). In other words, "Peter, you just do what I tell you to do."

Peter was never the same again. He made a huge mistake, but he changed his ways and had courage like never before. When Jesus went up to heaven, Peter was the first disciple to preach the gospel (Acts 2:14-39). He was the first disciple to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10:24-48) when he converted Cornelius and his household. In Acts chapter 12, Herod the king started persecuting the church, and he killed James the brother of John with a sword. He had Peter put in prison, but an angel of the Lord came and let him go. Peter went on to preach the gospel all of his life, and tradition says he was killed for the cause of Christ.

So, what can we learn about leadership from Peter?

- Peter was a seeker of the truth. He believed in God, and he trusted the scriptures that told of Christ's coming. He was a leader who looked to God and His Word for answers.
- Peter was a leader who was not afraid to give all he had for the cause of Christ. Peter gave up much, but he understood that it was worth the cost.
- Peter was a leader who was not afraid to show his love. He was passionate about the cause of Christ, and he loved Him enough to try to stop His death with a sword.
- Peter was a leader who made a terrible mistake. A mistake that caused him great pain because he forsook the Lord. Peter did not allow that mistake to cause him to make another one. Peter did not give up on following Christ. A good leader never gives up!
- Peter realized that he would need courage to do the work that the Lord had given him, and being forgiven helped him to find that courage. A good leader has courage to do what is right, even when it is hard to do.

¹ Easton's Bible Dictionary

² Ibid

Questions

1. What is another word for good news?
2. What were the jobs of Peter and Andrew?
3. What were Peter and Andrew to each other?
4. Where did Peter and Andrew live?
5. Jesus told Peter that, "today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice" Peter would betray Him. Peter did just as Jesus said he would. How did Peter betray Jesus?
6. What does the Bible tell us Peter did after he heard the rooster crow?
7. Someone else in the Bible betrayed Jesus. His name was Judas. What did Judas do after he betrayed the Lord?
8. What side of the boat were the disciples to cast their nets on so that they could catch some fish?

9. How many fish were in Peter's net when he dragged it to shore?
10. What meal did Jesus and His disciples eat?

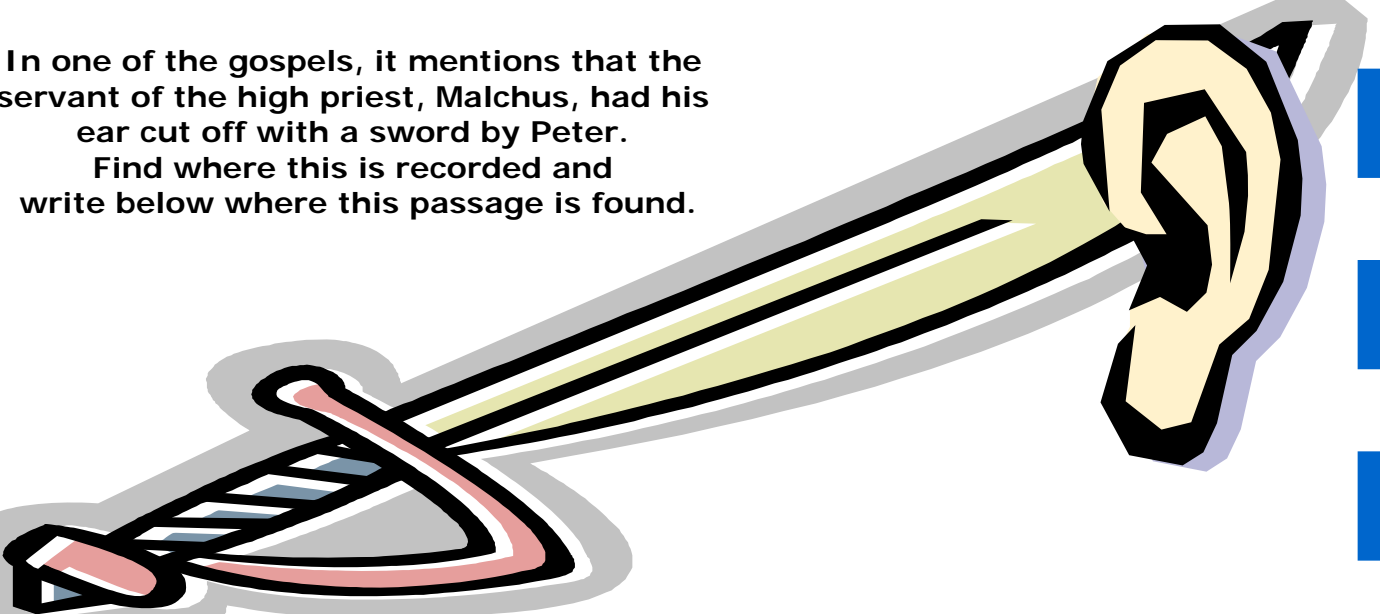
True/False

1. Jesus told Peter he would die for preaching the gospel, but he was to follow Him.
2. When Jesus went up to heaven, James was the first one to preach the gospel.
3. Herod the king started persecuting the church, and he killed John, the brother of James, with a sword.
4. John the Baptist is Jesus' cousin.
5. Peter lived with his wife, mother-in-law and his brother, Andrew.
6. The rooster crowed twice after Peter denied Jesus.
7. Jesus had once removed one demon from Mary Magdalene.
8. Jesus appeared to the disciples who were hiding from the Jews.

Activities

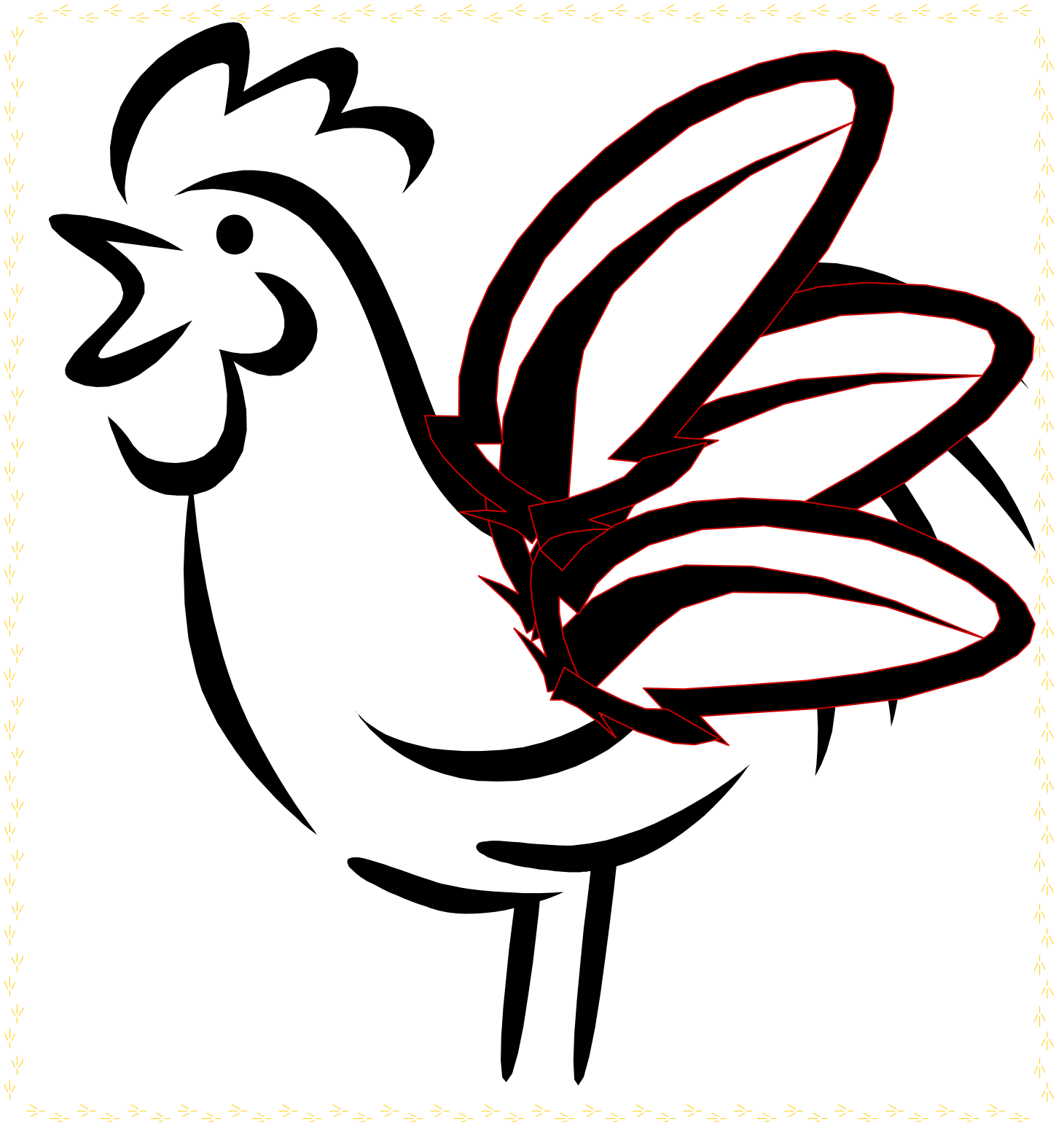
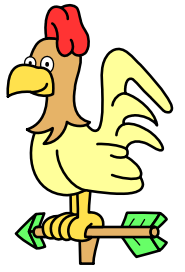
Malchus Loses an Ear

In one of the gospels, it mentions that the servant of the high priest, Malchus, had his ear cut off with a sword by Peter. Find where this is recorded and write below where this passage is found.



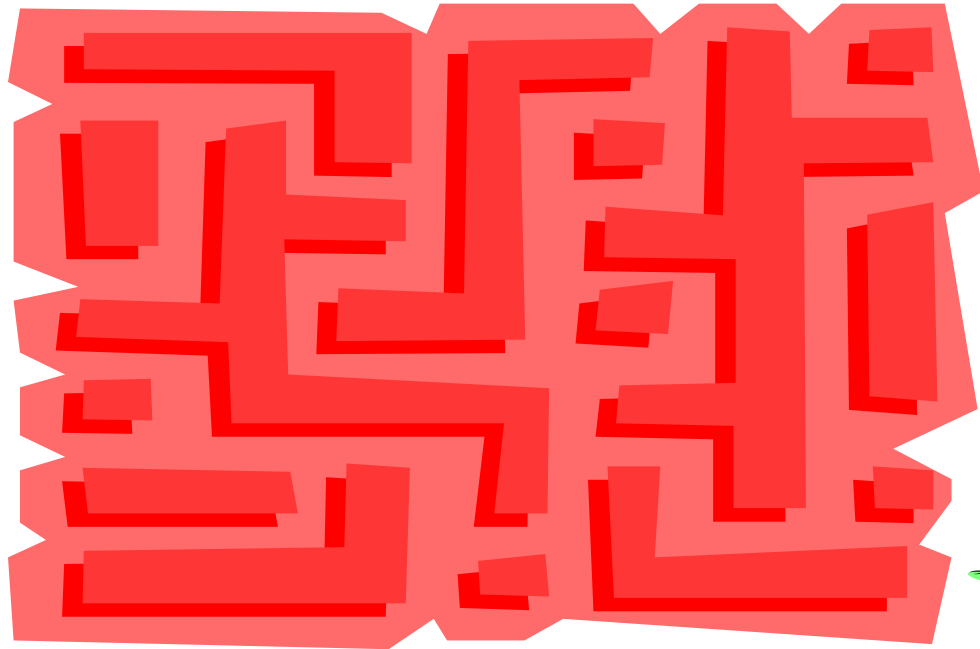
The Rooster Crowed Twice! 🖐️ 🖐️

Jesus told Peter that "today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice you will deny Me three times." We know that Peter did just as Jesus said he would. 1. He left Jesus when the soldiers came to get Him. 2. He followed and stood outside while Jesus was being tried. 3. He told those around him that he did not know Jesus, and he even cursed. He heard the rooster crow, and he remembered what Jesus had said. Write one of Peter's denials on each feather. Color the rooster and feathers.



"Amazing" Peter 

Help Peter reach Jesus.



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