

The Worst/Best Recruitment Speech Ever

If you are like me, Jesus's recruitment pitch for Peter in **John 21:18-19** is pretty odd. "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.' (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, 'Follow me'" (ESV). In other words, "Peter, if you follow me, you are going to get executed. So, follow me."

It sounds to me like the worst recruitment speech ever. And yet, Peter signed on. Though he continued to make some mistakes, he was a great teacher and leader in Christ's church. And, according to extra-biblical history, Jesus made good on His promise. Peter was crucified on behalf of Jesus. Tradition states Peter was crucified upside down because he proclaimed he was not worthy to die the same way his Lord did.

But why did this statement work? Why would Peter jump on board when the prospects were not wealth, fame, glory, power, and the like. It is odd to us. However, that is only because we aren't thinking about it from Peter's standpoint.

Do you remember what Peter promised Jesus on the night of His betrayal? In **Matthew 26:30-35**, Jesus explained the apostles would fall away because of Him that night. But Peter responded, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." Jesus then said he would actually deny Jesus three times that very night. To which Peter responded, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" Strong words. Great commitment. And he was even willing to act on that. In Gethsemane, it was Peter who was ready to fight and die with Jesus (cf. **John 18:10**). When Peter thought this was going to be a battle to put Jesus on a throne, he was ready to fight. But when Jesus told him to put his sword away, he was confused and no longer certain. If it meant dying with a sword in hand to enthrone Jesus, he was ready, but if it meant walking meekly to an execution, Peter was lost.

Therefore, when a servant girl asked him if he was a disciple of Jesus, he had a choice. He could either admit it and be dragged into the trial with Jesus, or deny it and live another day. He denied. Then some others asked and finally a servant of the high priest who had seen Peter in the garden with Jesus, and each time Peter denied, even taking oaths. Peter had made his promise and he failed. He went out and wept. What shame.

Why was Jesus's promise of martyrdom for Peter so successful in recruiting him? Not because Peter had a death wish. No. It was successful because Jesus was explaining, "Peter, if you follow me and feed my sheep, I promise you, I will strengthen you to keep your promise. You said you would die with Me and now you think you are a failure. I promise you, follow me, and you will succeed." Wow! That's the best recruitment speech ever.

And he did. Since I don't know what failures you are struggling with, I don't know exactly what success in Christ's service looks like for you. I do know this. If you follow Jesus, you'll get there. Follow Him.