BookGist Summary

A Fisherman's Tale

by Denn Guptill

Key Takeaways

• Peter’s first-person story turns the familiar Gospel narrative into a comic, intimate account of discipleship, showing a fisherman who is impulsive, skeptical, devoted to his wife Esther, and often slow to understand Jesus.

• Jesus calls ordinary and unlikely people—including fishermen, a tax collector, and a Zealot—and builds a community whose members must learn to trust one another despite their histories and prejudices.

• The Kingdom Jesus announces is not a political revolt against Rome: it is a way of life marked by humility, mercy, forgiveness, integrity, love of enemies, and care for people in need.

• Jesus’ healings and signs reveal compassion as well as authority, but the crowds often focus on what they can receive rather than on the deeper invitation to follow him.

• Peter repeatedly discovers that faith cannot be reduced to confidence in his own strength: whether facing a storm, stepping onto the water, or confronting Jesus’ arrest, he needs to learn dependence and trust.

• Jesus challenges religious leaders who elevate rules and appearances over compassion, arguing that the law is meant to serve people and that inner motives matter more than outward performance.

• The narrative presents forgiveness as a response to the immense mercy God gives: those who have received forgiveness are called to extend it to people who have wronged them.

• Jesus' death seems to shatter the disciples' hopes, but the resurrection restores them and reframes failure; Peter's denial is met not with rejection but with a renewed calling to care for Jesus' followers.

• The disciples' mission continues after Jesus' departure: they are commissioned to teach, baptize, and share his message, relying on the promised Holy Spirit rather than their own ability.

Who Should Read This Book

A Fisherman's Tale is well suited to readers who know the Gospel stories and want to experience them through a warm, humorous, and emotionally accessible fictional voice. Readers interested in Peter's transformation will find a memorable portrait of an impulsive man learning trust, humility, forgiveness, and responsibility. The novel also appeals to readers who enjoy biblical historical fiction centered on relationships and everyday details—family life, work, meals, travel, and the tensions of a close-knit group—rather than formal theological argument. Readers should approach the book as a creative retelling, not a scholarly commentary: the author explicitly presents it as fiction, and the narrator's imagined conversations and scenes are part of that approach. Compared with more analytical works about the Gospels, this story prioritizes character, humor, and emotional identification; compared with more solemn biblical novels, it keeps Peter's comic self-awareness in the foreground. It may especially resonate with Christian readers seeking a fresh perspective on familiar events, as well as book clubs discussing discipleship, failure, forgiveness, and the meaning of service.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1

The novel opens with Peter remembering his three denials of Jesus and the rooster's crow, then rewinds to the beginning of his discipleship. He and his brother Andrew are mending fishing nets after work, and Peter jokes about Andrew's persistent expectation that the Messiah will soon appear. Peter is content with his practical life as a fisherman and longs to get home to Esther. Although he understands why Roman occupation fuels hope for deliverance, he considers talk of the Messiah another distraction from the work and family he loves.

Chapter 2

Peter returns home to Esther, whose affection and steady humor contrast with his rough, self-deprecating manner. Their marriage is loving, and their household also includes Andrew and Esther's widowed mother, Marion; the couple has no children, a quiet sadness Esther manages with care. Over breakfast, Peter complains that Andrew spends so much time pursuing the Messiah. Esther suggests that Andrew's hopes are worth respecting, even if Peter prefers tangible work, and reminds her husband that his grounded nature is one of the things she loves about him.

Chapter 3

Peter is irritated when Andrew misses dinner, worrying that his brother is neglecting their fishing partnership. Andrew bursts in with news that John the Baptist has identified Jesus as the one to follow and that Jesus specifically sent him to bring Peter. Skeptical of another messianic claim, Peter agrees to meet the teacher only after threatening to replace Andrew with Esther's brother Eli if the fishing work suffers. Before leaving, Peter learns from Esther that Marion has been unwell, adding a personal concern to the evening's outing.

Chapter 4

Andrew brings Peter to meet Jesus and a small circle of followers. Jesus already knows who the brothers are, teases the one-eyed Simon—later called the Zealot—about his embellished story of losing an eye, and exposes how anger and political grievance shape the man's identity. Peter insists he has no interest in revolution and is satisfied with his life. Jesus tells him that Rome is not the deepest problem and asks whether he wants merely to catch fish or help change the world. The group spends the evening talking, and Jesus gives Simon the name Peter, though Peter doubts it will catch on.

Chapter 5

Peter tells Esther about meeting Jesus. She is curious about the teacher and amused by Peter's new name, while Peter describes Jesus as an ordinary-looking man with unusually compelling eyes and presence. Although Peter expects the encounter to be a brief episode in Andrew's search for the Messiah, he cannot stop thinking about Jesus' question about changing the world. Days pass without further news, but Jesus remains in Peter's thoughts, and the name Peter gradually becomes part of the brothers' banter.

Chapter 6

After a night's fishing, Peter and Andrew make one last throw-net catch near the shore. Jesus reappears, asks whether Peter is ready to change the world, and invites him to become a fisher of people rather than fish. Peter hesitates, but Eli offers to finish the work and inform Esther. Jesus also calls John and James, whose harsh father protests their departure. Jesus jokingly names them the Sons of Thunder after their father's explosive temper, and the four men set off with him.

Chapter 7

Peter arrives home late and explains to Esther that Jesus spoke about questions he has privately considered: what God wants and how to live amid conflicting expectations. Jesus's answer, Peter says, is simple—to love God and love others. The invitation is not just to listen occasionally: Jesus wants Peter to leave fishing and travel with him. Esther worries about their life apart and how they will manage, but Peter says he feels compelled to go. Her reluctant permission makes clear that discipleship will affect the life they share.

Chapter 8

The new group begins traveling with Jesus, who recounts spending forty days in the wilderness preparing for his ministry. He describes being tempted by Satan to turn stones into bread, test God by leaping from the temple, and gain worldly power by worshiping the Devil. Jesus resists each temptation by relying on Scripture and fidelity to his Father. Peter listens with disbelief and unease, struggling to understand what kind of mission he has joined, while Jesus turns from the story to ask whether the disciples are ready for the adventure ahead.

Chapter 9

Jesus takes the disciples to the synagogue, where Peter expects an ordinary Sabbath service. Instead, Jesus teaches with an authority and clarity that makes familiar Scripture feel alive, and his prayer seems like a direct conversation with God. A disturbed man interrupts, recognizing Jesus as the Holy One from God and asking whether he has come to destroy them. Jesus orders the spirit to leave the man. The man collapses amid frightening convulsions and a strange purple haze, then rises apparently restored, leaving Peter amazed and unsettled.

Chapter 10

After the synagogue encounter, Jesus calmly ends the day and leaves the disciples with many unanswered questions. Peter is still trying to make sense of what he witnessed when he discovers Esther was at the service and wants to know what happened. Jesus meets Esther, thanks her for allowing Peter to travel with him, and promises to send Peter home when possible. Later, Peter recounts the event to Esther, admitting that he does not know who the man was, what had afflicted him, or what the title Holy One meant.

Chapter 11

Esther wakes Peter because Marion has a high fever. Peter is unsure how to help and is sent to fetch water while Esther stays with her mother. The errand, normally handled by the women, proves awkward: Peter spills water, struggles to carry the heavy vessel, and draws amused attention from the women at the well. The episode gives Peter a humbling glimpse of work he has taken for granted. By the time he returns home, soaked and embarrassed, he hears Esther laughing inside and wonders what could possibly be funny.

Chapter 12

Peter discovers that Jesus has arrived at his house and healed Marion simply by touching her forehead. She is now up and helping in the kitchen, while Jesus introduces two new followers, Philip and Nathanael. Nathanael recounts dismissing Jesus because he came from Nazareth, then being astonished when Jesus describes seeing him beneath a fig tree and knowing what he had been thinking. Before the conversation can continue, the Zealot warns that a crowd is on its way, drawn by reports of Jesus' healing.

Chapter 13

A long line of sick people gathers outside Peter's home. Jesus listens, speaks personally to each one, and heals a wide range of ailments without demanding payment or prescribing elaborate rituals; the crowd is left wondering who he is and where his power comes from. When Jesus takes a break for lunch, the people keep pleading for attention. Inside, Esther's friends provide food and ask about Jesus' family and private life, then hear him explain that physical healing is temporary while the deeper gift he offers lasts. He returns to the crowd despite knowing that many may later dismiss their healing.

Chapter 14

Jesus visits Peter's home again, and a crowd soon fills the house. Esther becomes strained by the crush of people, while Peter tries to manage access; among those seeking help are religious leaders who have come to hear Jesus. Four friends break through the roof to lower their paralyzed companion, Caleb, into the room. Jesus first forgives the man's sins, provoking the leaders, then heals him to demonstrate his authority. The man stands and leaves, while Jesus helps arrange repairs to Peter's roof and Esther ensures the house is cleaned.

Chapter 15

After an unproductive night of fishing, Peter lets Jesus use his boat as a platform to teach the crowd. Peter falls asleep in the stern but wakes when Jesus asks him to put out farther and lower the nets, despite Peter's conviction that fishing in daylight is pointless. The net fills with an extraordinary catch, so large that John and James must bring their boat to help. Both boats are nearly overwhelmed as the fishermen haul in the fish. Jesus tells Peter to trust him and connects the catch to the future work of gathering people; afterward, other fishers try the same spot without success.

Chapter 16

Jesus approaches Matthew, a tax collector, at his booth and calls him to become a disciple. Matthew immediately leaves his work, surprising Peter, who sees tax collectors as collaborators who profit from Roman rule. The Zealot angrily challenges Matthew, but Jesus explains that Matthew collects only what is required and has shown compassion. He

emphasizes that he does not demand perfection from those who follow him. The Zealot storms away, while Matthew worries that his presence will divide the group.

Chapter 17

Matthew hosts Jesus and the disciples for a generous meal, inviting other tax collectors as well. On the way, Jesus also invites the Zealot and his friend Judas to join; tensions remain, but the gathering stays mostly civil despite sharp remarks. Afterward, Pharisees question why Jesus eats with tax collectors. Jesus answers that the sick need a doctor more than the healthy do, and that he came to call those who recognize their sin. Peter sees the logic but begins to wonder what Jesus' words imply about his own need.

Chapter 18

At the synagogue, Jesus notices Benjamin, who hides a withered hand. Despite Benjamin's reluctance and the Pharisees' scrutiny, Jesus reaches for the hand and restores it, giving the man movement and feeling he has never known. Later, Pharisees accuse Jesus' disciples of harvesting on the Sabbath because they pick grain. Jesus cites David eating sacred bread when hungry and argues that God's law is meant to protect people, not enslave them. He asks whether God would be grieved or pleased that Benjamin was healed.

Chapter 19

As the crowds around Jesus grow, he gathers a core group of twelve disciples and explains that he wants to invest in them so they can help change the world. Peter doubts the group's ability, noticing its mix of fishermen, merchants, a tax collector, and politically charged men. Jesus gives them authority to heal and cast out demons, emphasizing that the power comes from the Father rather than themselves. He pairs Peter with Matthew, a choice Peter suspects reflects the group's reluctance to partner with the tax collector, but he accepts the assignment.

Chapter 20

After the disciples return from traveling in pairs, Jesus takes them by boat to get away from the crowds. Peter and Matthew recount their partnership: Matthew is lonely because of his former profession but reveals humor, scriptural knowledge, and a sincere effort not to exploit people. The disciples describe healing the sick and confronting evil in Jesus' name. Their excitement is tempered by Jesus' reminder that the power is not theirs. When they land, he tells them that John the Baptist has died, abruptly changing the mood of the gathering.

Chapter 21

Jesus tells the disciples how Herodias pressured Herod to arrest John after John repeatedly criticized Herod's unlawful marriage to his brother's former wife. Herod had respected John in some ways, but he imprisoned him to appease Herodias. At Herod's birthday feast, Herodias's daughter dances and receives an extravagant promise from the drunken ruler. At

her mother's urging, she asks for John's head, and Herod orders the execution rather than break his word. Jesus grieves that his cousin has been killed and mourns not being there for him.

Chapter 22

A large crowd finds Jesus and the disciples in the field. Jesus responds to the people's needs with compassion, healing among them, before teaching about forgiveness and the harm that revenge does to the person who carries it. As evening approaches, Jesus refuses to send the hungry crowd away and asks the disciples to find food. Andrew brings a boy named Jacob, whose lunch consists of five rolls and two small fish. Jesus thanks the boy, organizes the crowd into groups, and prepares to share the modest meal.

Chapter 23

After feeding the crowd, Jesus sends the disciples across the lake and goes up a hill alone. A growing storm makes the crossing dangerous: the boat is overloaded, the sail becomes a liability, and the disciples struggle to control the vessel and bail out water. Jesus appears walking on the water. Peter asks to join him and briefly walks across the waves, but loses confidence when he focuses on the storm and begins to sink. Jesus rescues him, calms the situation, and meets the boat at the shore as promised.

Chapter 24

Jesus leads the group toward Nazareth, where Peter has never been. On the road they encounter Joash, a severely disfigured leper who begs Jesus for help. Peter and the others instinctively recoil, but Jesus touches him, restoring his body and speech. Jesus tells Joash to show himself to the priests and keep the healing quiet, so he can return home without unnecessary complications. He asks him to live well and remind others of God's love. The encounter makes Peter confront his fear and witness the dignity Jesus gives to someone society has rejected.

Chapter 25

The journey to Nazareth proceeds through repeated stops as crowds gather to hear Jesus or seek healing. Peter finds the farming village unfamiliar and misses Galilee's water, but soon sees Jesus warmly welcomed by people who knew him growing up. At the family home, Jesus introduces the disciples to his mother, Mary, who greets them with energy and hospitality despite having had no notice. That evening, Peter meets Jesus' siblings and observes their affectionate family teasing and shared memories of Joseph.

Chapter 26

During the Sabbath service in Nazareth, Jesus is invited to read from Isaiah. He reads a passage about good news for the poor, freedom for captives, sight for the blind, and the

Lord’s favor, then declares that the words are fulfilled that day. The congregation initially remembers him as the carpenter’s son and cannot accept his claim. Their admiration turns to anger, and they force Jesus and his followers out. Jesus calmly tells the disciples that they have worn out their welcome.

Chapter 27

Jesus’ siblings confront him after the synagogue, saying his public declaration has stirred up trouble for the family and left them to endure local gossip. Jesus argues that he only read and explained the passage as requested, but recognizes that the visit has become difficult for them. Mary decides to leave Nazareth and join Jesus in Capernaum, staying with her cousin Naomi. The siblings object that Jesus makes decisions without considering them, but he clarifies that the choice is Mary’s. The family conversation ends in tension, and the group prepares to leave.

Chapter 28

Back in Galilee, Jesus teaches the crowds about the Kingdom of Heaven, offering a vision very different from the hoped-for defeat of Rome. He calls the poor in spirit, mourners, the humble, the merciful, the pure-hearted, and peacemakers blessed, while warning that doing what is right may bring persecution. The Zealot argues that force is the only language Rome understands and invokes the law of retaliation. Jesus replies that revenge perpetuates violence and asks his listeners to go beyond what is demanded: carry a soldier’s equipment an extra mile and respond to coercion with unexpected generosity.

Chapter 29

Jesus expands on the meaning of turning the other cheek, explaining that the law’s limit on retaliation was never meant to justify revenge. He challenges the crowd to love enemies, treat people with respect, and act toward others as they would want God to act toward them. He also moves from external rules to inner motives: hatred can lead toward murder, and adultery begins in the desires people cultivate. His followers must keep their promises and live with integrity. When others mistreat them, Jesus says, they should forgive, remembering how much God has forgiven them.

Chapter 30

Peter asks how many times a person must forgive before forgiveness becomes an invitation to be exploited. Jesus answers with a story about a servant who owes a king an impossible debt and receives complete forgiveness when the king takes pity on him. The forgiven servant then refuses to show mercy to someone who owes him a small amount, having the man imprisoned. When the king learns what happened, he punishes the unmerciful servant. Jesus uses the parable to teach that people who have received God’s immense forgiveness must extend forgiveness to others.

Chapter 31

While the group travels toward Nain, Mary sits with Peter by the fire and asks whether Jesus has told him about his birth. Peter has heard nothing, so Mary begins describing her youth and her betrothal to Joseph. She recalls the angel Gabriel appearing to her and announcing that she would bear a son named Jesus, who would be called the Son of God and inherit David's throne. Mary struggles to understand how this can happen because she is a virgin, but the angel tells her the child will be conceived through the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 32

Mary continues with Joseph's reaction to her pregnancy. He initially believes she has betrayed him and plans to end their engagement, leaving Mary frightened that her future and family life have collapsed. That night, Joseph also receives a message from an angel and learns that Mary's child is conceived by the Holy Spirit. He returns to her, apologizes, and commits to raising Jesus as their son. Peter is shaken by the story: Jesus is not only a remarkable teacher but, as Mary says, the Son of God.

Chapter 33

Religious leaders demand that Jesus prove his authority with a sign. He rebukes them for failing to recognize what God is doing, gives them the sign of Jonah, and warns that they will still try to explain away the truth. He compares their outward righteousness to a decorated tomb hiding decay. Jesus asks the disciples who people say he is. After they mention prophets and John the Baptist, Peter declares that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God. Jesus calls Peter the rock on which he will build his church, but tells the disciples not to reveal his identity yet.

Chapter 34

Jairus, the synagogue leader, begs Jesus to come to his dying daughter. On the way, Jesus stops because he senses that someone has touched him in faith. A woman who has suffered twelve years of bleeding admits that she reached for him, and Jesus restores her health and calls her daughter. News then arrives that Jairus's child has died, but Jesus tells him not to despair. At the house, Jesus enters with Jairus, his wife, and Peter, James, and John, takes the girl by the hand, and brings her back to life. He advises the family to feed her and not publicize what happened.

Chapter 35

Mary tells Peter more about Jesus' infancy. After her pregnancy became known, her parents doubted her account and sent her to stay with Elizabeth, who was expecting John. Mary later returned to Nazareth, where she lived with Joseph's family despite lingering skepticism. When a census required the family to travel to Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to Jesus in a stable after no ordinary lodging was available. Shepherds arrived with news that angels had announced

the Messiah's birth, and later visitors from the East brought gifts. An angel warned Joseph that Herod intended to kill Jesus, prompting the family's flight to Egypt.

Chapter 36

Mary describes the family's escape to Egypt and the terrible news she later heard about Herod's killing of Bethlehem's infant boys. On the journey, robbers try to seize their belongings, but one named Dismas protects Mary, Joseph, and Jesus and lets them go. The family settles in Assiut, where Joseph finds carpentry work and the community welcomes them. They remain in Egypt until an angel tells Joseph that Herod is dead and it is safe to return to Nazareth. Mary reflects on the fear and guilt surrounding their escape and the family's eventual return to ordinary life.

Chapter 37

Peter asks what Jesus was like as a child, and Mary says it was easy to forget his divine identity because he was, in many ways, an ordinary boy. He was kind and well behaved, though his siblings sometimes resented the contrast, and the family regularly traveled to Jerusalem for Passover. When Jesus was twelve, Mary and Joseph mistakenly assumed he was traveling with the other group returning from Jerusalem. They discovered he was missing and went back to search, eventually finding him in the temple discussing Scripture with teachers. Mary remembers being frightened and angry, while Jesus seemed surprised they had not looked there first.

Chapter 38

Peter reflects on Jesus' storytelling and recalls a religious leader asking what he must do to live forever. Jesus leads him through the law's central commands: love God wholeheartedly and love one's neighbor as oneself. When the man asks who counts as a neighbor, Jesus tells the story of a traveler attacked on the road. A priest and a Levite pass the injured man, but a Samaritan stops, treats his wounds, carries him to an inn, and pays for his care. Jesus asks which person acted as a neighbor. The story shifts the question from defining who deserves love to choosing to show practical compassion.

Chapter 39

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus introduces Peter and Andrew to Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, and the group stays at their home. Martha prepares an abundant meal while Mary listens closely to Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom. Martha complains that her sister has left her to manage the work. Jesus praises Martha's hospitality but points out that her worry about making everything perfect is keeping her from what matters. He invites her to pause and join the conversation, and the group later helps clean up.

Chapter 40

A wealthy young man asks Jesus what he must do to live forever. Jesus lists familiar commandments, and the man says he has kept them, but Jesus tells him to sell his possessions, give the money to the poor, and follow him. The young man is devastated because he cannot give up what he owns. Jesus explains that the issue is not inability but unwillingness: the commandments have cost him little, while following God now requires a real sacrifice. The man leaves, and Peter sees how readily people seek spiritual assurance without surrendering what controls them.

Chapter 41

While walking, Jesus reminds Peter of the enormous catch that nearly sank two boats. He compares the Kingdom of God to a net that gathers many kinds of fish, some useful and some unsuitable, which are eventually sorted. Jesus explains that the final separation will reveal people's true choices and loyalties. Some who claim to know God will be rejected, while quiet people who genuinely loved and served him may be overlooked by others. The Kingdom, he says, is ultimately about whom people choose to follow and how they choose to live.

Chapter 42

Jesus increasingly warns the disciples that he will be betrayed and killed, though they struggle to believe it. Peter recalls Jesus helping a Roman officer named Cornelius, a fair-minded God-fearer whose servant is healed at a distance because of the officer's faith. When questioned about taxes, Jesus asks whose image is on a coin and tells the crowd to give Caesar what belongs to Caesar and God what belongs to God. He predicts that religious leaders will arrange his death through Roman authority. Peter protests, and Jesus rebukes him for seeing the situation only from a human perspective.

Chapter 43

Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a mountain. Along the way, he explains that a person is defiled not by food but by the evil thoughts and intentions that emerge from the heart and lead to harmful actions. At the summit, Jesus is transformed in dazzling light and appears with Moses and Elijah. A voice from heaven identifies him as God's Son and tells the disciples to listen to him. Jesus says the experience is meant for the three of them alone for now, then explains that Elijah has already come in the person of John, who was rejected and killed.

Chapter 44

On the road toward Jerusalem, a crowd follows Jesus as people seek healing. Peter is puzzled by the apparent randomness of who receives help, until Jesus stops for a blind beggar calling him the Son of David. Jesus identifies the man as Bartimaeus and asks what he wants. Bartimaeus says he wants to see, and Jesus explains that sight will also require learning how to understand what he sees. At Jesus' direction, Bartimaeus opens his eyes, closes them, and opens them again; this time he recognizes Jesus and delights in the blue

sky.

Chapter 45

As the group approaches Jerusalem, Jesus again speaks of betrayal, arrest, and death, while the disciples struggle to imagine what he means. He sends Thomas and Thaddaeus to Bethphage to retrieve a donkey and its colt, saying that arrangements have been made. Jesus rides the colt into Jerusalem as people lay cloaks and palm branches on the road and shout praise. The scene excites the Zealot and Judas, who hope it signals political change, but Jesus mourns over Jerusalem and returns to Bethany on foot with the disciples.

Chapter 46

The next day Jesus returns to the temple, disturbed by the commerce taking place in its courts. Peter remembers being awed by the temple on earlier visits, though its busy marketplace atmosphere had seemed normal to him. Jesus braids a rope and drives the sacrificial animals out, overturning the money changers' tables. He condemns the leaders for turning a house of prayer into a marketplace and a den of thieves. Peter senses that Jesus has crossed a dangerous line with the powerful priests.

Chapter 47

Jesus and the disciples spend much of the week in Jerusalem, where he teaches in the temple and repeatedly predicts his death and resurrection. The crowds' recent praise makes the disciples doubt that anyone would dare harm him, but Jesus remains convinced that the leaders are plotting against him. He arranges for the Passover meal without explaining where it will be held. He sends Peter and John ahead with an address and instructions, while Peter wonders how the triumphant entry of only days earlier could lead to the grim future Jesus keeps describing.

Chapter 48

Peter and John find the house Jesus described, where Abigail and her son Mark welcome them and show them the upper room. Mark asks eager questions about Jesus, the meal, and what will happen afterward, revealing how strongly he admires the teacher. The two disciples prepare the room, set the tables, and arrange the Passover foods. John says that events are coming to a head: the crowd's response to Jesus' entry seemed to promise something great, but neither man knows whether Jesus or the priests will make the next move.

Chapter 49

Jesus and the other disciples arrive at the house, and Abigail explains that Mark has been devoted to stories about Jesus. Mark asks to help serve and is allowed to stay, an apparently small decision that will matter later. Instead of letting Mark wash their feet, Jesus kneels and washes each disciple's feet himself, demonstrating humble service. During the meal, he

reinterprets the Passover bread and wine as reminders of his body and blood, then announces that one of the disciples will betray him. He tells Judas to go and do what he must.

Chapter 50

After the meal, Jesus leads the disciples through Jerusalem to an olive garden. Peter insists that he will never abandon Jesus, even if he must die with him, but Jesus predicts that Peter will deny knowing him before the rooster crows twice. Jesus asks Peter, John, and James to pray while he speaks privately with his Father. Exhausted, Peter falls asleep. Judas arrives with the high priest's guards and betrays Jesus with a kiss; Peter attacks one of the guards, but Jesus heals the man's severed ear and tells Peter to put away his weapon.

Chapter 51

The guards take Jesus to Caiaphas's house, where Peter follows at a distance and listens near a fire. He hears that the religious leaders are looking for a way to put Jesus to death, but lack the authority to carry out an execution under Roman rule. A servant girl recognizes Peter as one of Jesus' followers, especially as the man who cut off her cousin's ear. Peter denies knowing Jesus and retreats into the shadows. Later, when another person notices his Galilean accent, he denies the connection again as dawn approaches.

Chapter 52

Peter sees the beaten Jesus being taken toward Pilate and realizes that his denial has come true. Jesus reaches toward him, but a guard pushes his hand away; Peter is overwhelmed by shame and imagines returning home to fishing. Peter encounters Judas, who admits that he expected Jesus to use the crowd's enthusiasm—or even angelic power—to seize political rule. He says he only wanted to force Jesus to act and now feels responsible for his death. Judas leaves, and Peter never sees him again.

Chapter 53

Peter makes his way toward Pilate's court, hoping Jesus will be released and that he can help him escape. Pilate announces that he sent Jesus to Herod because he was from Galilee, but Herod has returned the case without resolving it. Jesus is presented to the crowd, and Pilate says he finds no grounds to execute him. He proposes having Jesus flogged and then released. Peter's hope briefly returns, though the hostile crowd and the continued influence of the religious leaders make the situation feel unstable.

Chapter 54

The Roman soldiers flog Jesus brutally with a lead-tipped whip. Peter cannot bear the sight and vomits, then shouts for them to stop, but his voice disappears beneath the crowd's counting and cries. Pilate eventually orders the flogging to end and offers to release Jesus for Passover. The crowd instead demands Barabbas, a convicted killer, and calls for Jesus to be

crucified. Pilate washes his hands publicly and yields to the mob's demand.

Chapter 55

Jesus is forced to carry the crossbeam but collapses after only a few steps. Roman soldiers seize another man, also named Simon, and compel him to carry it the rest of the way to Golgotha. Peter remembers Jesus' teaching about taking up one's cross and feels that he has failed yet again. At the execution site, Jesus is stripped and crowned with thorns. The soldiers attach the crossbeam to the upright post and display Pilate's sign identifying him as King of the Jews. Peter watches the procession and the preparations, powerless to intervene.

Chapter 56

Jesus is nailed to the cross and raised between two condemned men. The religious leaders and others mock him, while Peter keeps away from the small group at the foot of the cross because he is ashamed of having denied him. Jesus suffers for six hours, struggling to breathe, and the sky darkens as the atmosphere grows unnaturally still. He finally says, "It is finished," and dies. Joseph, with permission, wraps the body for burial and carries it away while Mary and the other witnesses follow.

Chapter 57

The disciples gather in the upper room, grieving and trying to understand what has happened. They share fragments of what they witnessed, including the Zealot's account of Judas's apparent attempt to return the betrayal money and reports that Judas has died. Mark admits that he secretly followed the arresting party into the garden, saw Peter cut off the guard's ear and watched Jesus restore it. When a guard grabbed Mark, he escaped by slipping out of his tunic. Thaddaeus tells the humiliating detail, and the group's laughter briefly relieves their grief.

Chapter 58

Peter confesses everything: he followed Jesus at a distance, denied knowing him, and watched the crucifixion without helping. John says he saw Peter nearby but assumed he would come over if he wanted to join them. Mary tells Peter that no one could have stopped what happened and urges him not to make the tragedy all about his own failure. Mary recounts Jesus' words from the cross, including his prayer that the Father forgive those responsible and his promise of paradise to one of the condemned men. She insists that the story is not over: Jesus repeatedly defeated death, and the disciples must wait and believe.

Chapter 59

Before dawn, Mary Magdalene wakes Peter with news that Jesus is alive. She and another Mary found the tomb open and the burial shroud empty, then heard a young man declare that Jesus had risen. Mary says she also saw Jesus, who told her to send the disciples to Galilee

and specifically asked that Peter be told. Peter and John hurry to the tomb. They find it empty and take the shroud with them, though Peter still does not know what to believe. The disciples prepare to leave Jerusalem, both because of Jesus' message and because they fear the authorities will blame them for the missing body.

Chapter 60

Mary and Jesus' aunt return to Nazareth with Mark to tell the family what has happened. The remaining disciples reach Galilee and gather at Jairus's home, where they hear that the Pharisees consider the problem of Jesus solved. The group talks about returning to their old occupations: Peter and Andrew could fish, James and John might rejoin their father, and Matthew wonders whether he can return to tax collecting. Mary argues that Jesus promised to meet them, but the disciples remain divided between her certainty and their doubts.

Chapter 61

Jesus suddenly appears among the disciples in the locked room, greeting them as if he had merely been delayed. His body looks restored, though the wounds in his wrists and ankles remain visible, providing evidence that it is truly him. He reassures Thomas, then explains that he will soon leave the disciples and travel to visit other followers. He says his presence will continue through the Holy Spirit, who will be with all of them wherever they go. Peter struggles to understand how Jesus can be present while also being gone.

Chapter 62

A month passes with little change, and Peter grows impatient waiting for the promised next step. One day he decides to return to fishing, and six other disciples join him. They work through the night without catching anything. At dawn, a voice from shore tells them to cast on the other side. The net fills with fish, and John recognizes Jesus. Peter jumps into the lake and swims to shore, where Jesus has prepared a fire and breakfast. After the meal, Jesus tells Peter that they need to talk.

Chapter 63

Jesus walks alone with Peter along the beach and asks whether Peter loves him more than the life he had—his boat, the lake, and his independence. Peter answers that he loves Jesus, though he initially objects that he has already given up everything. Jesus asks again and gives Peter a responsibility: care for the lambs and feed the sheep, meaning the people who will follow Jesus. He tells Peter that this calling will eventually cost him dearly, then asks him to follow. Peter worries about John's future, but Jesus tells him to attend to his own calling.

Chapter 64

Jesus meets the eleven disciples on a hill near Bethany and tells them this is his last day with them. When the Zealot asks whether the time has come to free Israel politically, Jesus says

the timetable belongs to the Father and directs the disciples toward their actual mission. They are to tell people everywhere about Jesus, teach them what he taught, and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will give them courage and power, and that he will remain with them. He tells them to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit, then disappears.

Notable Quotes

> *"“All God wants is that you love him and love others. It’s just that simple.”"*

> *"“If being perfect is what I required for someone to follow me, then I’m afraid it would be a lonely journey.”"*

> *"“You need to treat other people the same way you’d want them to treat you.”"*

> *"“It’s not that you can’t. It’s that you won’t. And there is a world of difference between the two words.”"*

> *"“Father forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”"*

> *"“I want you to tell people about me. Everywhere there are people.”"*

Full Summary

Stupid, stupid, stupid! He said I would do it, and I did it. Then, to add insult to injury, the rooster crowed. I turned and looked Jesus straight in the eyes, and my world fell apart. It seemed I had known him forever, but had I ever known him at all?

It had started three years earlier, when Andrew and I were mending nets on the shore of Gennesaret. We’d had an ordinary night’s fishing, and all I wanted was to get home to Esther. My family had worked these waters for generations; fishing was in my blood, even if it meant sleeping while my wife began her day. Andrew, my younger brother and business partner, caught me staring at the same patch of net and asked whether I was weaving a blanket for Esther. Then he brought up the Messiah again.

Andrew believed the signs pointed to the Messiah’s arrival. I teased him: people had been saying the time was right for three hundred years, and this time everyone seemed to think John the Baptizer was the one. But John himself said someone greater was coming. Andrew could keep chasing his hopes; I had a boat to mend, a wife to see, and sleep to catch up on. Rome ruled Israel, as one foreign power had after another for centuries, but I wasn’t convinced a Messiah would solve anything.

At home, Esther welcomed me with breakfast and affection. We shared our house with Andrew and Esther's mother, Marion, whom we had taken in after her father died. Children had not come for us, and caring for Marion gave Esther something to do with the ache of that. She understood why Andrew sought a purpose beyond fishing, even if I complained that a partner ought to pull his share. When Andrew failed to come home for dinner, I was ready to send Esther's brother Eli to find him. Instead, Andrew burst in with news: he had found the Messiah, and the man wanted to meet me.

Andrew told how he and Philip had been listening to John preach repentance. John suddenly called Jesus the Lamb of God and urged them to follow him. Jesus had then told Andrew to fetch his brother, though Andrew hadn't mentioned having one. I figured the whole town knew we were brothers, and I doubted a carpenter from Nazareth could be the Messiah. Still, I agreed to meet him, warning Andrew that if he kept neglecting the boat, Eli might replace him.

Jesus greeted us as if he had expected us, though I had only decided to come moments earlier. In the room was another Simon, who wore a patch over one eye and told a stirring story about losing it fighting the Romans. The truth was that he had blinded himself as a boy in a stick-sword game. He preferred the heroic version because it stirred people against Rome. Jesus called him the Zealot, and challenged him: if he followed Jesus, "kind of true" was not good enough. The Zealot wanted rebellion; I wanted no part of it. I was a fisherman who loved his life and his wife.

Jesus said the problem went deeper than Rome and that his movement would change the world without swords or bloodshed. He asked whether I was content to catch fish or wanted to change the world. I didn't know what to make of him, though his confidence and his way of speaking held my attention. We talked and laughed for hours. At the door, he said he would call me Peter, partly to distinguish me from the other Simon, and partly because the name suited me. I thought changing a man's name after one evening was peculiar.

Esther was curious about Jesus, and I tried to reassure her that I probably wouldn't see him again. Yet the thought of him stayed with me. Andrew kept calling me Peter, and weeks passed without any word from the carpenter. Then, after a night's fishing, Andrew spotted a school of fish close to shore. We waded in with our nets. As we finished, Jesus appeared, looking thinner and sunburned, his hair and beard grown long. He asked if I was ready to catch people instead of fish. When I asked what that meant, he simply told me to let Eli finish up and follow him.

John and James were nearby with their father, Zebedee, a sour-tempered man who seemed to demand more from his sons than from his hired workers. Jesus called them too. Zebedee warned them not to leave, but they went anyway, saying the hired men could manage. Jesus joked that their nickname, the Sons of Thunder, suited them, given their father's stream of curses. Then we cooked fish and talked. Jesus spoke about things I had never really

discussed aloud: what God wanted from me, and how impossible it seemed to satisfy everyone's demands. His answer was simple: love God and love others. I told him it couldn't be that easy. He only smiled.

He wanted me to leave fishing and travel with him as a disciple. I explained this to Esther: we might be gone for days, but Jesus said we should trust God, and Eli could manage the business. Esther asked how we would survive, and whether I truly meant to leave home. I couldn't say where this path led, only that I had to take it. She told me to do what I wanted, the words every married man knows are not quite permission.

The next day Andrew arrived, still imagining that Jesus would free us from Rome. Instead, Jesus told us about the wilderness where he had spent forty days preparing for his ministry. He said he had fasted, without food or water, and that the Devil had come to tempt him. I wondered whether hunger and heat had made him hallucinate, but Jesus insisted the encounter was real.

First, the Devil urged him to turn stones into bread, challenging him to prove he was God's Son. Jesus resisted, answering that people do not live by bread alone, but by God's word. Then the Devil took him to the temple's highest point and urged him to throw himself down, twisting Scripture into a promise of protection. Jesus replied that God must not be tested. Finally, the Devil showed him the kingdoms of the world and offered them in exchange for worship. Jesus refused: he would worship God alone. The Devil, he said, was still the same schemer he had always been, and still believed he could win. Then Jesus looked at us and asked whether we were ready for an adventure.

The news of John's death had barely settled when the crowd found us in the field. One moment we were alone with Jesus; the next, people were streaming in from every direction, pressing close to be healed. Jesus moved among them, opening blind eyes, straightening twisted limbs, and giving a child who had never spoken the words to ask for a drink. Then, as the numbers grew too great for him to reach everyone, he climbed to the highest point in the field and began to teach. Thousands settled down to listen.

His message was about forgiving those who had wronged us, and refusing to seek revenge. He spoke of the burden that resentment places on a person, and how forgiveness makes room for grace and love. I wondered whether he was preaching to himself as much as to the crowd. The day passed quickly, and as the sun began to set, Andrew pointed out that people were getting hungry. I expected Jesus to send everyone home. Instead, he said we should feed them.

There were thousands of men, not counting the women and children. I told Andrew to search the crowd for food, although I couldn't imagine there was enough to matter. He came back with a boy named Jacob, whose mother had packed him five rolls and two small fish. Jacob

offered his lunch to Jesus, explaining that his mother always packed too much because she was afraid he would go hungry. Jesus thanked him and asked if he might share it. Thomas pointed out that the food would barely feed Jesus, let alone the rest of us.

Jesus told us to find baskets and have the crowd sit in groups. As people settled among neighbours and strangers, he reminded them that God loved them and would care for their needs. Then he thanked his Father for the food. I watched him take an empty basket, and when he handed it to me, it was full. The food kept coming. We carried baskets from group to group until everyone had eaten, and when we gathered what remained, all twelve baskets were full again. Jesus sent Jacob home with a basket so his mother could see he had eaten, and asked us to take the rest to the poor.

That evening, Jesus stayed behind to be alone, while I took the others across the lake. The water had seemed calm when we set out, but darkness fell, the wind rose, and the waves began to batter the boat. The sail threatened to tear loose, and we worked desperately to keep the boat facing into the wind. Matthew got everyone bailing water, giving the frightened men something useful to do. I kept hold of the rudder and wondered whether I would ever see Esther again.

Then the wind began to die. A strange glow appeared on the water, and I thought it might be the ghost of a sailor drowned there. Before long we realized it was Jesus, walking toward us across the lake. He called out that everything would be fine, and I shouted to ask if I could walk on the water too. He said I could. I climbed out of the boat and took several steps toward him, amazed at what I was doing. But when I noticed the storm still raging around us, I started thinking about how impossible it was, and the water became water beneath my feet. Jesus grabbed me before I sank. He told me I had started well, but needed to trust instead of thinking my way out of faith. Then he walked me back to the boat, and we continued across the lake.

Not long afterward, Jesus announced that we were going to Nazareth, the town where he had grown up. I had never been far from Capernaum, and as we travelled away from the lake, the countryside seemed to lose its colour. Along the road, a leper came toward us, his body badly damaged by disease. I was frightened and wanted to keep my distance, as did the others. Jesus reached out and touched him. The man, Joash, had not been touched in years. He told Jesus he wanted his life back: to embrace his wife and hold his children. Jesus said his faith had made him well, and before our eyes Joash’s twisted fingers straightened, his face was restored, and his voice became clear. Jesus knew his name and urged him to go to the priests, be declared clean, and return home to his family. He asked Joash not to tell people what had happened, but simply to live well and remind them how much God loved them.

Nazareth was a small village surrounded by vineyards, olive groves, and wheat fields. Jesus seemed to know everyone there. His mother, Mary, welcomed us into her home, though she

had not expected a crowd of guests. That evening, we met Jesus' brothers and sisters and listened as they laughed over memories from their childhood.

Our welcome changed after the Sabbath service. The synagogue leader asked Jesus to read from Isaiah. He read the promise that God's Spirit would empower someone to bring good news to the poor, freedom to captives, sight to the blind, and release to the oppressed. Then Jesus said that the Scripture had been fulfilled that very day. At first the people listened with approval. Then someone objected that Jesus was only the carpenter's son, a local boy they had watched grow up. Their admiration turned to anger, and they pushed us toward the door. Jesus said a prophet was not honoured in his hometown, and led us away.

His brothers and sister were angry too. They feared the talk his words would stir up and worried about what the villagers would say about their mother. Jesus explained that he had not meant to make their lives harder, and said we would leave after lunch. Mary, however, decided to go with him to Capernaum, where she could stay with her cousin Naomi. Jesus pointed out that this was her decision, not his, and that his brother Jude, already living in the family home, would have to learn to cook and clean.

Back in Galilee, Jesus taught the crowd what life in God's Kingdom would look like. He said God blessed those who knew their need of him, those who mourned, and those who were humble. Those who longed for justice would find it in God; the merciful would receive mercy, and the pure in heart would see God. Peacemakers would be called God's children, though following this way could bring persecution. This was not the kingdom the Zealot and Judas had imagined. They expected justice to come through defeating Rome. Jesus warned that violence only breeds more violence. If a Roman soldier forced someone to carry his equipment for a mile, Jesus said, they should go a second mile. If he demanded a cloak, they should offer their shirt as well.

People objected that Romans would slap them for the smallest offense. Jesus told them to turn the other cheek. The law's command of "an eye for an eye" had been given to limit revenge, he explained, not to excuse it. Loving one's neighbour was not enough if it meant loving only those who loved us; God's people were called to love their enemies too, treating others with the respect and kindness they themselves would want.

Then Jesus pressed the point beyond outward behaviour. Murder began in hatred and contempt; adultery began in the thoughts that treated another person as a substitute for one's spouse. Those who followed him must be people of integrity, keeping their promises without excuses. When others lied, cheated, or hated them, they were to forgive. God had forgiven them far more than anyone else could owe them, Jesus said, and they were to offer that same forgiveness in return.

When Jesus said he intended to be in Jerusalem for Passover, the rest of us warned him it was dangerous. I kept quiet. We set out for Bethany, where we could stay and travel into the city for the feast, and stopped in Jericho for the Sabbath. The next morning, a crowd followed us out, eager for Jesus to heal them. At the back, a blind beggar kept calling, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me,” while people tried to silence him. Jesus stopped and asked us to bring him forward. His name was Bartimaeus, and Jesus knew that his father, Timaeus, had recently died, leaving his son alone.

When Jesus asked what he wanted, Bartimaeus said he wanted to see. Jesus warned him that seeing would not immediately mean understanding: he had spent his life imagining what things looked like, and a new world would be strange. Bartimaeus opened his eyes and saw, but confusion and fear crossed his face. Jesus told him to close them and open them again. This time, the man recognized Jesus and looked up at the blue sky, delighted by its beauty. It was another gift that reached beyond the miracle itself.

On the road toward Bethany, Jesus again spoke of betrayal and arrest, though none of us could imagine what the coming days would bring. He sent Thomas and Thaddaeus ahead to Bethphage to find a donkey and its colt. If anyone questioned them, they were to say that the Lord needed the animals. When they returned with them, Jesus mounted the young colt. As we entered Jerusalem, people spread cloaks and palm branches along the road, shouting, “Hosanna, blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” For once, the crowd seemed to recognize who Jesus was, rather than simply seeking what he could do for them. Pharisees demanded that he quiet them, but he said that if the people were silent, the rocks would cry out. At the temple gates, however, his mood changed. “Oh, Jerusalem,” he said, wishing the story did not have to end this way.

The next day, Jesus returned to the temple, troubled by the marketplace that had taken over its courtyards. He braided pieces of rope into a whip, then drove the animals toward the gates and overturned the merchants’ tables. Coins scattered as people scrambled to contain the animals and recover their money. Priests rushed in, protesting that the sellers had a right to be there. Jesus answered that the temple was meant to be a holy house of prayer, not a marketplace and den of thieves. Watching him confront the priests, I felt certain he had crossed a line they could not ignore.

We spent the next several days in Jerusalem, with Jesus teaching at the temple by day and returning to Bethany at night. He kept telling us that the chief priests were plotting his death. It seemed impossible: the crowds who had welcomed him would surely protect him. Near the end of the week, Jesus told the others to remain in Bethany while he took the twelve into the city for Passover. He sent John and me ahead to prepare the meal at a house where the owner would meet us. We found Abigail and her teenage son, Mark, waiting. Mark led us upstairs to a large room and answered our questions about the arrangements with a stream of

questions of his own. He was so eager to meet Jesus that he asked his mother to let him help serve, rather than go to another family celebration.

When Jesus arrived with the others, the meal began in a way none of us expected. He asked Mark for a basin and water, then knelt to wash our feet. I protested that washing feet was not his place, but he told me I did not yet understand. He was showing that we belonged to him, though accepting the gesture was our choice. Afterward, we argued over who should wash his feet, each of us suddenly wanting to serve him. Jesus gave that honor to Mark, who was beaming.

At the table, Jesus blessed the Passover bread and told us that from then on we should remember him whenever we ate it. The bread, he said, represented his body, which would be broken for us. He spoke of the cup in the same way: it represented his blood, soon to be shed for our salvation. The celebration had become an announcement of his death. Then he said that one of us would betray him before morning. We protested all at once that none of us would do such a thing. Jesus looked toward Judas Iscariot and told him to go and do what he had to do. I assumed Judas was going to pay Abigail for the meal, and followed the others into the night.

As we walked toward the garden, I tried to persuade Jesus that it did not have to end this way. He said that soon I would be alone, but I insisted that I would stay with him even if it meant dying. Jesus answered that he did not need me to die for him; he needed me to live for him. Before the rooster crowed twice, he said, I would deny him three times. In the garden, he took John, James, and me farther in and asked us to pray while he sought his Father. Exhausted, I leaned against a tree and fell asleep. When Jesus woke me, Judas had arrived with guards from the high priest. He identified Jesus with a kiss.

I reacted without thinking, drawing my short sword and striking at the nearest guard. I cut off the man’s ear, then realized I might have killed him and ruined my life. Jesus told me to put the weapon away. He picked up the ear and restored it, stopping the bleeding and the man’s cries. Then the guards tied Jesus’ hands and led him away. I looked around for the others, but they had scattered. I followed at a distance.

They took Jesus to Caiaphas’s house, where priests, elders, and religious leaders had gathered. By the fire, I heard that they wanted Jesus dead but needed a charge Rome would act on. People were twisting his words and searching for witnesses. A servant girl recognized me as one of Jesus’ followers. I denied knowing what she meant, then slipped into the shadows. Later, another man noticed my Galilean accent and challenged me again. I swore I did not know Jesus personally, then turned away as dawn began to break. The night had brought me face to face with the fear Jesus had predicted, and I had answered it by disowning the man I loved and followed.

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