



Assembly



## A confident coward

### Aim:

- To consider areas where we lack confidence
- To examine Saint Peter's move from being a coward to being confident
- To reflect on our source of confidence

### Introduction

Use the Word definitions with *If I were Peter . . . , What is Pentecost?* and/or *Coward or confident?* for your introduction.

### Word definitions

A *Coward* is someone who shrinks from danger or who lacks courage.

*Courage* is defined as boldness or bravery, in other words the exact opposite of someone who is a coward.

I guess most of us are a mixture of both.

### If I were Peter . . .

*Peter was a disciple or follower of Jesus, one of the first Christians. Read pupils the following situations from the life of Peter, and ask them to think about how they would have felt if they were in that situation. They can either respond by quietly considering their answer, or, if appropriate, you can ask pupils to give you a 'freeze frame' (e.g., shocked, scared, angry, etc.) using their faces and hands only:*

1. Peter was a close friend of Jesus. Yet, when Jesus was arrested, Peter denies all knowledge of Jesus.
2. Jesus forgives Peter for his failure to stand by him when he was arrested.
3. Jesus tells Peter to step out of his boat in the middle of the sea and walks on the water to meet him.
4. Peter watches Jesus being crucified.
5. Peter discovers the tomb where Jesus' body had been placed, was empty.

### What is Pentecost?

The 'day of Pentecost' is recorded in the Bible in Acts Chapter 2. On that day the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus had promised, turned up in powerful force. Peter, a coward who had denied that he had ever known Jesus was filled with confidence and stood up in the open air and addressed all those gathered, telling them about Jesus. It was a key moment in the beginnings of the Christian church. Christian churches today celebrate Pentecost, sometimes called Whitsuntide.

### Coward or confident?

Ask pupils to indicate by raising their hands whether they would be a coward or confident in each of the following situations:



- You are at the zoo and a lion has just escaped
- You are about to perform your first bungee jump
- Your big brother or sister has just found out that you broke their play station
- You have to walk 2 miles from your friend's house to your own at 11.00pm at night
- You are asked to take an important penalty for your sports team

### Looking Deeper

Use one or both of the looking deeper sections.

#### From coward to confident

**Before:** Jesus had just been arrested (based on Matthew Chapter 26 verses 69-75)

*Peter watched from a distance as the soldiers spat on Jesus and struck him with their fists. He was approached by a girl who seemed to recognise him.*

*"You were with Jesus, weren't you," she said out loud so that everyone within earshot turned and looked.*



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*"I don't know what you're talking about," Peter replied as he flatly denied any connection with Jesus. He walked away from the scene. As he moved, someone else turned and, talking to those around him said, "this man was with that Jesus, I'm sure he was."*

*"I don't know the man," muttered Peter, swearing at him.*

*An awkward silence followed as all eyes were fixed on Peter. After what seemed like forever they closed in on him.*

*"Come on, admit it," they said, "your accent gives you away."*

*Peter stormed out swearing and calling down curses upon himself. "Look, get it into your heads will you," he fumed, "I don't know the man."*

*A cock crowed and Peter remembered that Jesus had predicted his cowardly behavior: "Before the cock crows, you will have denied you know me three times," Jesus had said. A grown adult and a tough seasoned fisherman, Peter went outside to a place by himself and wept bitterly.*

**After:** After the day of Pentecost (Acts Chapter 2 verses 14-32)

*Peter stood up and, raising his voice above the crowd started to speak confidently.*

"Listen to this everyone. Jesus of Nazareth was sent by God and proved it by doing many miracles for you to see. God allowed him to be handed over to evil men, and cruelly killed by being nailed to a cross. But guess what; God raised Jesus from the dead because death had no power over him. I tell you confidently that God has raised Jesus from the dead and both I and the other disciples are eyewitnesses of all that happened. Jesus has returned to heaven and has sent the powerful Holy Spirit just as he promised."

## Still in the Changing Business!

Christians believe that the Holy Spirit, who first came on the day of Pentecost and changed Peter from being a coward to being confident, is still in the changing business today. The following are all real life examples, drawn from Newtown Pentecostal Church (Mid Wales), where such changes have taken place. All names have been altered.



- The Holy Spirit changed Kate by healing her cancer completely.
- The Holy Spirit changed Neil by setting him free from a lifestyle of drink and drugs.
- The Holy Spirit changed Eddie by freeing him from an addiction to gambling.
- The Holy Spirit changed Nola by releasing her from a fear of death.
- The Holy Spirit changed Nicky by turning resentment to forgiveness after her husband's affair.
- The Holy Spirit changed Tom by freeing him from an addiction to pornography.
- The Holy Spirit changed Katherine by helping her to quit smoking.



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## Reflection

Choose the most appropriate reflection to conclude the assembly from the three provided:

### With a little help

Peter's source of strength was in God. Because he had the Spirit of Jesus (also called the Holy Spirit) living inside him, he had help to move from being a coward to being confident. This gave him the inner confidence which he lacked before.

*Ask pupils the following question: 'Peter got his confidence from God. Where do you get your confidence from?'*

### Confidence in God

The writer of the Psalms in the Bible said:  
"From the time I was born through my youth until now, my confidence has been in you, O my God." (*Psalms 71 verses 5-6*)

Who or what do you put your confidence in? *Allow pupils a moment of quiet reflection.*

### Coward or confident?

*Ask pupils whether the word 'coward' or 'confident' would summarise how they currently feel about each of the following areas of their life:*

- My next test or exam
- Talking to members of the opposite sex
- Facing my parents when I've done something wrong
- Going to see the headteacher
- Standing up for something you believe in
- Resisting the temptation to get drawn into something you believe is wrong

*Ask pupils to think about one area where they currently feel a 'coward', and encourage them to talk to someone about it to become more confident. That person could be God!*