



Bible Drama Scripts

presents

PETER THE PERPLEXED

Monologue by Peter after Jesus' arrest

By Patricia Souder

SYNOPSIS: In a first-person account of what happened the night Jesus was arrested and condemned to die, Peter shares his confusion at what occurred. Peter's honesty captures many of our own questions about the perplexing ways in which God works and draws us to Jesus Christ, the one who offers forgiveness, redemption, and restoration.

SETTING: Simple contemporary setting with a tall stool downstage center and a large cross upstage right.

CHARACTER: Peter, a big, brawny fisherman in sandals and a simple tunic or work clothes.

PERFORMANCE TIME: 15 minutes

TOPICS: Faith. Betrayal. Confusion. Failure. Guilt. Injustice. Trials. Crucifixion. Atonement. Redemption. Forgiveness. Restoration.

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES: Holy Week. Lent. Maundy Thursday. Good Friday. Easter programs. Small group Bible studies. Youth groups.

PROPS: Large fishing net.

BIBLE REFERENCES: Matthew 26: 17-74, 28: 1-10; Mark 14: 10-72, 16: 1-8; Luke 22:1-62, 24: 1-14; John 13: 1-38, 20: 1-10, 21: 1-23.

(Peter enters stage left, dragging a large fishing net behind him.)

I'm Peter. Peter the perplexed.

You've probably heard about me. I'm the big, brawny, outspoken fisherman that ministers love to preach about to warn people of the hazards of being brash, jumping to conclusions, or acting impulsively.

(Sits on stool. Checks and mends the net as he talks.)

They're right, of course. I managed to specialize in saying or doing the wrong thing at the wrong moment. Even though I was one of Jesus' closest disciples.

I'm not here to justify myself. No. *(Shakes head.)* There's no honest way to do that. I'm guilty as charged. And especially on the most perplexing night of my life when I told a few whoppers at the worst possible time.

Now, I don't really like talking about that night. *(Shifts around on the stool uneasily.)*

But since you've probably already heard the story, maybe it will help to know that I didn't know what was happening. *(Stops mending and looks at audience.)* I just got caught *(Drapes net around him as if caught in it.)* in an unbelievable drama playing out in real time. *(Sighs.)* But who knows? Maybe someday you'll think of me if you get caught in a perplexing situation.

The day started out great. Jesus asked John and me to get things ready for Passover. That worked out amazingly well. We found a man carrying a pitcher of water who took us to an upstairs room he'd prepared for us. Just like Jesus said.

That evening, as Jesus broke the bread and served the wine, he personalized Passover by saying, "This is my body . . . this is my blood."

I was perplexed by that! But I was even more perplexed when Jesus picked up a basin and towel and started going around the table washing our feet. *(Lifts his feet and shows them to audience.)* Our feet, mind you! *(Starts to take off one sandal.)* Our dirty, grimy feet! *(Holds nose and refastens sandal.)*

Now, that was all wrong! John and I should have hired a servant to wash our feet as we arrived.

(Stands.) But Jesus . . . No! He shouldn't wash feet. Especially our feet. That was unthinkable! He was the Rabbi, the Teacher, the Leader, the One we followed!

So, when he came to me, I protested. *(Gestures as he speaks.)* "Lord, you will never wash my feet."

I thought he'd thank me. Instead, he said, "Peter, if I don't wash you, you won't belong to me."

What? I wouldn't belong to Jesus? "Well, then, Lord," I said. "Wash my hands and head as well as my feet."

Jesus shook his head and said gently, "He who has bathed just needs to wash his feet to be clean."

Obviously, no matter what I said, it was wrong. So I let him wash my feet. But I was perplexed.

Jesus washed everyone's feet. Then he said we were to follow his example. (*Looks puzzled.*) Really? We were to start washing feet? (*Sighs.*)

"After all, a servant is not greater than his master . . ." he said.

Precisely. That's why I had objected to his washing my feet in the first place.

But then, he said something even more disturbing. "One of you is going to betray me." (*Looks troubled and begins to pace.*)

One of us? His disciples? How could that be? We'd been hand-picked. By him. We'd traveled with him for three years. We'd heard his teaching and witnessed his miracles. He was God's Son, the promised Messiah. Surely none of us would betray him!

(*Stops pacing. Faces audience with troubled expression.*) Alarmed, we asked, "Lord, is it I?" in a frantic effort to clear ourselves.

Jesus dipped a piece of bread in the dish in front of him and handed it to Judas as if he was the one.

Judas? (*Looks as if he can't believe it.*) Judas was our treasurer.

"What you do, do quickly," Jesus said, looking directly at Judas.

Oh. Apparently, they both knew what was going on. (*Looks relieved.*) Perhaps Jesus was sending Judas to get something else for Passover. Or to give money to the poor. (*Sits down on stool. Resumes mending net.*)

And yet, Jesus became unusually somber and preoccupied. He told us he was going somewhere we couldn't come.

"Lord," I said, trying to cheer him up, "What do you mean by that? I'll go anywhere you go. I'll never desert you. In fact, I'll die for you."

Jesus looked at me. "Really?" Then he shook his head sadly. "No, Peter, you'll deny me three times before the rooster crows."

(Shakes head and crumples net in his hands.) I was dumbfounded. And upset. How could Jesus have so little faith in me after all we'd been through together? *(Throws net on floor. Gets up.)*

Jesus continued talking for a while. Then we sang a hymn and headed across the Kidron Valley to the Garden of Gethsemane, a place where ancient olive trees provided a sense of serenity.

Jesus was strangely distant, even distraught. He asked James, John, and me to come with him, but told the rest of the disciples to wait at the edge of the garden while we went to pray.

(Looks up in anguished prayer.) "My soul is crushed with grief . . . even to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me," he told us and then ventured farther into the garden.

I watched him fall face down on the ground and heard him cry, "Abba, Father! If it's possible, please take this cup of suffering away from me."

I heard agony in his voice, but I have no idea how long he prayed because I fell asleep. *(Hangs his head in shame.)*

(Lifts head slowly.) I woke up as he said, "Couldn't you stay awake to watch with me for one hour? Keep alert and pray. Otherwise, temptation will overcome you."

Then he sighed. "I know: the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," and he left us to pray again. *(Shakes head sadly.)* I heard a few of his anguished cries and groans: "Oh, Father . . . If this cup cannot be taken away without my drinking it . . . Your will be done."

Three times, he left us to pray. Three times, he came back to find us sleeping. *(Closes his eyes and shakes his head in despair.)* I'll never forget how drained he looked. His face was streaked with bloody tear lines. His voice drooped with profound disappointment as he asked, "Still sleeping? Look, the time has come. Let's go. My betrayer is here."

(Sighs and takes a deep breath.) We had no idea what was ahead.

(Walks stage left as if rejoining the other disciples, then stops as if facing mob.) As we retraced our steps to where the other disciples waited, a mob of people carrying lanterns, clubs, and swords marched toward us.

Judas walked straight to Jesus. "My friend," Jesus said, "Do what you have come to do."

Judas said, "Greetings, teacher," and kissed Jesus on the cheek.

Jesus turned to the crowd: "Who is it you want?"

They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus said, "I am he."

(Shakes his head in disbelief and smiles briefly.) They were so shocked, they fell to the ground. He could have run away . . . but instead, Jesus repeated that he was the one they wanted and told them to let the rest of us go.

(Becomes agitated.) Clearly, this was all wrong! As they came forward to arrest Jesus, I grabbed my sword and slashed off the high priest's servant's ear.

Jesus shook his head sadly and said, "Put away your sword, Peter." Then he touched the servant's head and gave him a new ear, saying, "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

And with that, the soldiers bound him and took him away. *(Sighs deeply, shakes his head sadly, and paces.)*

I was stunned! Why did Jesus let them do that? He'd helped so many people, done so many miracles! Surely, he could have called a battalion of angels to deliver him. But no. He'd rebuked me for trying to help and then handed himself over to his captors. What sense did that make?

I felt confused. Perplexed. Scared.

Yes, scared. A big, brawny fisherman like me! *(Returns to stool to mend his net.)*

All right, you know the end of the story. But remember: I didn't. And that night it looked like it was all over. For Jesus. And for his followers. *(Shakes his head.)*

You know, I was a good fisherman. And that night, I had to wonder why I'd left something I enjoyed to end up like this. *(Sighs and walks stage right.)*

I followed John to the courtyard. Seeing me on the outside, John asked the gatekeeper to let me in. As she did, she asked, "Aren't you one of Jesus' disciples?"

"No," I said, "I'm not." *(Moves stage left.)*

Needing a place to blend in, I joined the guards and servants huddled around a charcoal fire. *(Squats down.)* I hoped I would hear what was going on while I warmed up, *(Rubs hands as if warming them.)* but I'd hardly gotten seated when a servant girl who worked for the high priest looked at me and said, "You were one of those with Jesus, the Nazarene."

"No!" I said, shaking my head. "I don't even know what you're talking about."

I was trying to decide what to do next when a servant related to the man whose ear I'd cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?"

"No, no, not me!" I said vehemently, my heart now pounding so fast I thought it might jump right out of my chest. How could so many people know who I was? *(Stands up.)*

In the distance, a rooster crowed.

My soul shattered in a thousand pieces. (*Buries face in hands as if crying.*)

I'd denied my Lord! The One I'd promised to defend. Anguish flooded me. Heartbroken sobs convulsed me. How could I have lied about knowing Jesus in his greatest hour of need?

I felt so full of shame and grief that I was only faintly aware of the evening's events spiraling into a kangaroo court with an illegal trial in the middle of the night. (*Shakes head sadly walks to stool.*)

When they crucified Jesus the next day, I felt like the biggest failure who'd ever lived. I wallowed in a pit of despair, essentially useless to everyone. (*Sits on stool and buries face in his hands.*)

I'd still be in that pit if Jesus hadn't sent Mary Magdalene to find me after the resurrection. Or if Jesus hadn't recommissioned me on the beach after I'd given up and gone back to fishing. (*Casts net as if fishing.*)

Oh, what outrageous acts of grace and restoration! (*Smiles. Raises hands in praise.*) I didn't deserve them. But Jesus loved me and called me back to himself, despite all my blunders. (*Stands and points to the cross.*)

Somehow, on that cross, he paid the debt for all my sins and shortcomings so that I could be forgiven, redeemed, and released to know and serve God in a whole new way. Talk about miracles!

(*Faces audience and speaks sincerely.*) You know, I'm just as perplexed about the miracle of redemption as I am about the hard times in life. But it's a pleasant perplexity. And it's one God wants you to experience.

After all, why would Jesus have drained the bitter cup of God's wrath for sin unless he was passionate about setting us free?

And if God accepted Jesus' sacrifice so I can be forgiven for my many blunderings, don't you think he'll do the same for you?

(*Picks up net and lays it at the foot of the cross.*) There's room . . . lots of room . . . for all of us at the foot of the cross. (*Exits stage left.*)

End with "Come to Jesus" by Chris Rice.