

# BIG QUESTIONS



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CHURCH



WHAT'S IT **WORTH?**

DO YOU  
WANT TO  
**GET**  
WELL?

# BIG QUESTIONS

WHO  
WILL  
YOU  
LOVE?

WHAT DO YOU  
**WANT?**

WHO  
DO YOU SAY  
THAT  
**I AM?**

WHY DO YOU  
**WORRY?**

This Book Belongs to:

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Big Questions Study Guide

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# BIG QUESTIONS

So often we want answers. We want to know why, when, what, where, and how. When it comes to our relationship with Jesus, it's no different. We come to Him with questions like:

- *Why* is my life the way it is?
- *When* are You going to answer my prayers?
- *What* do You want me to do in this season?
- *Where* do You want me to go?
- *How* are You going to solve my problems?

Questions are fine, and even good, but the risk is that we can diminish Jesus to a mere answer man. We aren't the first to do this.

As we read the story of Jesus' life, we see person after person hoping that He would give them straightforward, simple answers. But Jesus was never content with providing quick answers.

Instead He would ask questions Himself. In fact, in all four Gospels Jesus only gave three straightforward answers, but asked more than 300 questions!

Questions that made people think. Questions they had never considered. Questions that forced them to look past all their preconceived notions about themselves, God, people, and the world. He asked them **BIG QUESTIONS.**

Over the next six weeks we are going to look at some big questions that Jesus asks of us:

- **What do you want?**
- **Why do you worry?**
- **Who will you love?**
- **Do you want to get well?**
- **What's it worth?**
- **Who do you say that I am?**

I encourage you: don't answer these questions lightly. Think about them. Don't settle for the simple. Ask questions about the questions. Lean into them in your Life Group. Ask them if there is something more that you are not seeing. Learn in community.

My prayer is that as you commit yourself to this journey you will discover something in the pursuit of these Big Questions: a Jesus who is better than you ever realized, and a life that is fuller than you have ever known.



**JASON WEBB**

Senior Pastor | Elmbrook Church



## WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Date:     /     /

Turning around,  
Jesus saw them  
following and asked,

**“WHAT DO YOU  
WANT?”**

JOHN 1:38A

What do you want with Jesus?

It seems like a simple question, but it is the question where all of us must begin.

“What do you want?” This is the question Jesus first asked of those who were considering following Him. It is a question about our motives.

But more than that, it is a question about how devoted we really want to be to Jesus. On the one hand, this may seem like a harsh question. But perhaps it was never meant to be harsh. Maybe, just maybe, it was meant to be an invitation into the life we were always meant to live.

### CONNECT TOGETHER

When you were growing up, what was something that you really wanted?

Why was it so valuable to you?

What do you want most right now in your life? As you think through this question consider different areas of your life (relationships, career, spiritual growth, health, other).

What do you think most people want from Jesus?

**GROW TOGETHER**

READ JOHN 1:35-50

In John 1:38 Jesus asks two disciples who were following him (presumably Andrew and John — the author of the book, not John the Baptist of verse 35) a question: “What do you want?”

Listen to what Chuck Swindoll writes about this moment:

“The phrase ‘they followed Jesus’ is both literal and figurative. Jesus was walking somewhere and the two men trailed after Him. In the ancient world, disciples literally ‘walked after’ a teacher to observe His life as well as listen to His teaching. When Jesus noticed the two men, he asked [‘What do you want?'] which was to ask ‘What are your intentions?’ In other words, ‘Are you here to ask a question or are you indicating a desire to become My disciple?’”

Swindoll, Charles. *Insights on John*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.

As you consider the force behind the question Jesus asked of these disciples, what does this tell you about Jesus and what He calls us to?

How would you answer the question, “What do you want from Jesus?” More specifically, “What are your intentions with Jesus?” (Note: Be honest and realize that you may not even fully know.)

How has the answer to this question changed over the years for you, for better or worse?

Following the difficult question Jesus poses in 1:38, He offers a very intimate relationship with the different disciples. As you read this story, how does Jesus show this intimate relationship with the following disciples, through his words and actions?

Andrew & John (1:39-40) | Simon (1:41-42) | Phillip (1:43-44) | Nathanael (1:45-50)

With which of the above disciples do you identify most in their response to Jesus’ invitation to discipleship? Why?

In this story Jesus indicates that what He is asking of us is not to have all of the answers or perform for Him, or even necessarily believe fully, but to simply be with Him: “Come and see,” “Follow Me”. How is this the same as or different from what you were taught about Jesus in your faith tradition?

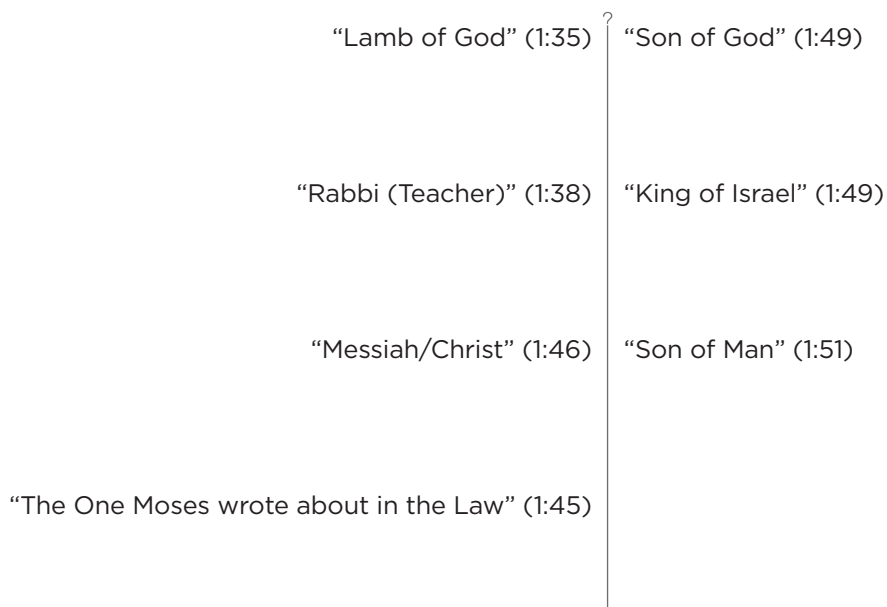
How can this reality be attractive to people far from or skeptical of Jesus (like Nathanael was)?

In this story, Jesus shows that following Him is an ongoing process of us becoming who He originally created us to be. In other words, He not only sees us where we are now (Simon: “You are Simon, son of John” and Nathanael: “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree”). He also sees who we can and will be (Simon: “You will be called”; Nathanael: “You will see heaven open up...”).

How are you moving from who you were to who Jesus says you are? Be specific.

What barriers are in the way of this?

Ultimately John shows in this passage that as you follow Jesus and spend time with Him you will see “heaven open up” and see more and more of who He is (read Jesus’ final words to Nathaniel in verse 51). How do the different titles given to Jesus in this passage expand your view of him?









## WHY DO YOU WORRY?

Date:     /     /

Since you cannot do  
this very little thing,  
**WHY DO YOU  
WORRY**  
about the rest?

LUKE 12:26

We worry. We worry about our jobs ... about our marriages... that we aren't married. We worry about the money we have, or the money we don't have. We worry about what will happen today ... what will come tomorrow ... what we did yesterday. We worry about what we said or didn't say. We even worry that we worry!

The question Jesus asks of each of us is not, "Do you worry?" The question Jesus is more interested in is "Why do you worry?" When you discover the root of your worry, you will discover the remedy to lessen it.

### CONNECT TOGETHER

Describe a time in your life when you were worried about something but then later realized there was nothing to actually worry about.

Take the worry inventory of yourself below and share it with the group. What area was the highest? The lowest? Explain why.

On a scale of 1-10, how much do you worry in the following areas (1 being the least, and 10 being the most)?

Relationships	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Finances	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Health	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**GROW TOGETHER**

READ LUKE 12:22-34

In verse 26, Jesus asks, “Why do you worry?” How would you answer that question about the things you worry about in your life? In other words, what is at the root of your worry?

Read verse 25. How does this give perspective on the futility of worry in your life?

This passage is bookended with discussions on money (see 12:13-21, 12:32-34). Why do you think Jesus puts an admonition not to worry in the middle of a discussion on money? Be specific and refer to the verses.

In verse 32, Jesus moves His focus from worry to fear (“Do not be afraid”). When do you think worry turns into fear? Is there a difference? Explain.

Jesus talks throughout this passage about having a proper view of the Heavenly Father as the remedy to worry. What does Jesus show us about the character of our Heavenly Father and His view of you? Be specific and refer to the verses.

How does a proper view of your Heavenly Father help alleviate worry?

Read verses 31-34. How can living for a different, bigger kingdom that is focused on others instead of yourself keep you from worry? How have you seen this in your own life? Give an example.





## WHO WILL YOU LOVE?

Date:     /     /

**IF YOU LOVE  
THOSE WHO  
LOVE YOU,**

what reward will  
you get?

MATTHEW 5:46

We love people who love us. We love our family (most of the time)...our friends...the people who help us accomplish our goals and dreams. We love people who make us laugh and those who are there for us.

But what about those in our lives who aren't for us...those who seem bent on hurting us again and again? Don't we have a right to stop forgiving at some point?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus asks a loaded question: "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?" He is calling us to something different, something bigger.

He is asking us to extend our circle of love to those who have never shown love to us. He is asking us to love the hard people - the ones who we may consider our enemy, ones who are different than us, the ones who don't love us back. He is looking at each of us and asking, "Who will you love?"

### CONNECT TOGETHER

Describe a time in your life when someone showed you love or forgiveness that you didn't expect. How did that make you feel?

**GROW TOGETHER**

READ MATTHEW 5:38-48.

After reading this teaching from Jesus, what is your gut level, emotional response? Be honest.

Jesus talks about how people will hate us, mistreat us, take from us, demand from us, and even slap us... and yet we are still supposed to love them. But so often we choose one of two options: we flee the relationship or fight the person. Which one of those are you most prone to do? Explain.

Looking at the passage, make a list below of all the commands that Jesus gives us regarding our enemies.

COMMAND	VERSE

Why do you think Jesus is so specific in how we are to treat our enemies?

Which one of these commands is hardest for you to follow?

Read Romans 12:14-21. What does Paul say about loving your enemies?

In Romans 12:18-19, what does Paul say is our role in loving our enemies? What is the role of the person who offended us? What is God's role?



It would be easy to read this passage and assume that we are simply to allow those who hurt us to keep doing so. However, this is not what Jesus was getting at when he told us to turn the other cheek, do not withhold your shirt, and walk the extra mile. He was offering what Paul Penley calls a “peaceful subversion”. Read what Paul Penley, author of “Turn the Other Cheek: Jesus’ Plan to Challenge Injustice,” has to say about the context of Jesus’ words:

In Jesus’ day Roman soldiers strutted arrogantly around Israel. The Jewish land was Roman occupied territory. There was no love lost between the occupying soldiers and the Israelite population. When a soldier decided that he needed a Jew’s goods or services, resistance was futile. The Jewish subject better be quick to fetch water, strong enough to carry a load, and ready to give away his shirt or else. If the subject could not perform the request to the soldier’s liking, then a quick back-hand to the face was not far behind. This was the situation Jesus addressed in the Sermon on the Mount.

“If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other cheek toward him.” The statement seems to imply that one should invite an aggressor to leave no part of the face out of a good beating....

Jesus does not just tell someone who takes a fist to the face to expose the uninjured side. He gives clear instruction to expose the left cheek. This leads to a couple important questions. Why would Jesus indicate that the first blow will come to the right cheek? Why would he instruct someone to offer the left cheek to an attacking Roman soldier?

The answer is simple. Roman soldiers tended to be right-handed. When they struck an equal with a fist, it came from the right and made contact with the left side of the face. When they struck an inferior person, they swung with the back of their right hand making contact with the right cheek. In a Mediterranean culture that made clear distinctions between classes, Roman soldiers backhanded their subjects to make a point. Jews were second-class. No one thought twice about the rectitude of treating lesser people with less respect.

When Jesus tells fellow Jews to expose the left cheek, he is calling for “peaceful subversion.” He does not want them to retaliate in anger nor to shrink in some false sense of meekness. He wants to force the Roman soldiers to treat them like equals. He wants the Jews to stand up and demand respect. He wants to make each attacker stop and think about how they are mistreating another human being. It is the same motivation behind his command to “go an extra mile” after a soldier forced you to carry water for the first mile (Matt 5:41). It is intended to activate the soldier’s conscience.

Jesus’ command to “turn the other cheek” is ultimately a call to peaceful resistance....“Turning the other cheek” is not blanket acceptance of brutality. It is a strategy for motivating others to change. If you meet evil with evil and blow for blow, the cycle of vengeance will never end....

“Peaceful subversion” is one among many of Jesus’ plans for changing the world. You’ll miss it if you misunderstand his cultural context. Jesus didn’t command us to get beat up. He commanded us to activate people’s consciousness of injustice.

Adapted from Penley, Paul. “Turn the Other Cheek: Jesus’ Plan to Challenge Injustice”. 4/18/13.

As you read this understanding of the context of Jesus' statement in Matthew 5, how does that change your understanding of Jesus and how He wants us to interact with those who keep hurting us?

What does a "peaceful subversion" look like in situations where you keep getting hurt?

In his famous sermon on this passage, Martin Luther King Jr. said this: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." (See the "On Your Own" section at the end of this lesson for the entire sermon.)

How do King's words connect with what Jesus is saying here?

How does love propel you to see the good in the person who has hurt you?





## DO YOU WANT TO GET WELL?

Date:     /     /

When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him,

**“DO YOU WANT TO GET WELL?”**

JOHN 5:6

3 BIG QUESTIONS | 20

In John chapter 5, Jesus meets a paralyzed man desperate to get into the healing waters of the pool of Bethesda. As the man continues to struggle to do so, Jesus asks him a question that could seem naïve and even a little offensive: “Do you want to get well?”

This is the same question Jesus asks of us when we are held down by different situations and sin. “Do you want to get well?” While it may seem like an easy question for us to answer, the reality is that it is not. We’ve tried to get well before and

it hasn’t worked. We’ve tried to fix a relationship and it’s only gotten worse. We’ve tried to break free from that sin but we still struggle. We’ve tried to make things better and they have only gotten worse.

So when Jesus asks us this question, we not be sure whether getting well is even possible. Yet Jesus thinks it is. He knows it is. And it begins by seeing Him differently.

### CONNECT TOGETHER

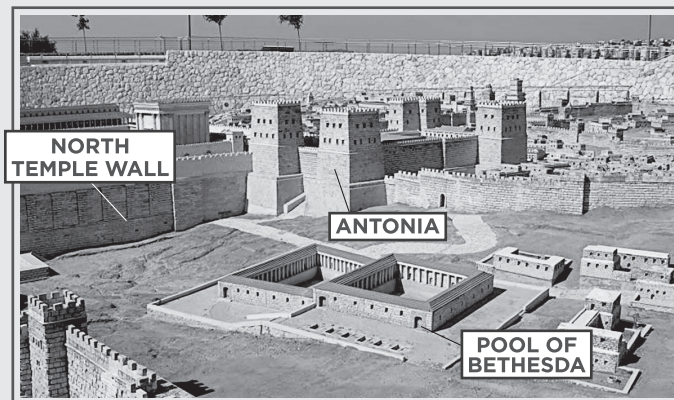
Describe a time in your life when you didn’t think something could change for the better but it did. What caused the change?

## GROW TOGETHER

READ JOHN 5:1-15.

This passage says that Jesus went to a pool called Bethesda. Interestingly, in the 19th century, archeologists discovered the pool (actually two pools) in the shadow of Herod's great temple.

This pool was actually a pagan healing center dedicated to the Greek god of medicine, Asclepius. Asclepius was thought to be a kind, gentle healer and a savior who came to aid human beings. Those in need of healing stayed at the pool hoping to get in the water when the waters were stirred. There was a superstition that an angel stirred the waters and promised healing to the first one in the pool. (In reality there was an underground spring that fed into the pool, causing the movement.)



Since this was a pagan healing center, filled with pagan rituals and superstition, no rabbi or God-fearing Jew would have entered the Pool of Bethesda. The Pharisees and temple authorities would have rebuked anyone who did so.

Yet Jesus did, and on the Sabbath, no less!

With this in mind, what does this tell you about...  
Jesus' view of other religions and gods?

Jesus' compassion for those who are hurting and ignored by society?

Jesus' view of the Jewish religious authorities?

Verses 5-7 give us a picture of a man who had been in a desperate situation for 38 years — more than the average life expectancy of a male during that time!

Read those verses again and write down some words that best describe the man. Share them with the group.

In verse 6, Jesus asks, “Do you want to get well?” Why do you think Jesus asked this question?

Like this man, we all have areas where we feel helpless and in need of healing. It could be physical, or it could be emotional, relational, an addiction or sin issue.

What is one area where you are in need of healing?

How have you unsuccessfully tried to find healing in your own power?

Thinking about the area you just identified. If Jesus were to ask you, “Do you want to get well?” what would you say? Before you answer, consider the following:

*Sometimes we stay in our hurt because it is all we know.*

*Sometimes we stay in our hurt because it is so big and we think healing is impossible.*

*Sometimes we stay in our hurt because we don't think we deserve to be healed.*

Which one of the above statements (or something else) keeps you from answering “yes” to Jesus' question “Do you want to get well?”

In verse 8 Jesus heals the man, but He doesn't tell him to go into the pool to be healed. instead He simply says, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” Why do you think Jesus intentionally did not have the man go into the pool?

What does this say about Jesus' authority over the pagan gods that were being worshipped at the Pool of Bethesda?

In verse 14, Jesus told the man after he had been healed, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” What do you think He meant by this?

How does this show that Jesus' ultimate desire is to heal our hearts and whole selves?

Respond to this statement: "It is only when we have a full picture of Jesus that we will have full healing in our lives."

How did your picture of who Jesus is become fuller through this story?







## WHAT'S IT WORTH?

Date:     /     /

And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?

**IS ANYTHING  
WORTH MORE  
THAN YOUR SOUL?**

MARK 8:36-37 NLT

3 BIG QUESTIONS | 26

In Mark 8 Jesus lays out a very poignant question: “What is the profit, the gain, of gaining the whole world and losing your soul?” And then He asks, “Is anything worth more than your soul?” In other words, Jesus is asking, “What is it all worth?”

The way we live, the way we spend our time, our resources, our energy...when misaligned with the ways of God we may gain everything, we may gain

success, we may gain financial security, but in the end lose our soul. But Jesus says that not only must we deny ourselves, pick up our cross and follow Him, but also that we should lose our life in order to find it.

That’s a tall order! However, when we do that we will realize it is worth it.

### CONNECT TOGETHER

Describe a time in your life when you had to give up something in order to get something better. How were you able to make that decision?

What do you think are some things people are most reluctant to give up in order to fully follow Jesus?

**GROW TOGETHER**

READ MARK 8:31-9:1

In verse 8:31 Jesus predicts His own suffering, death, and resurrection. Why do you think He began this section of teaching with this prediction?

Jesus makes it clear in this passage that He wants fully devoted followers who will give up everything for Him. In fact, many of his disciples gave up their very lives:

- Matthew was killed by a sword in Ethiopia.
- Mark died in Egypt after being dragged through the streets by horses.
- Luke was hanged in Greece.
- Peter was crucified upside down.
- Thomas was stabbed with a spear in India during a missionary trip.
- Jude, the brother of Jesus, was killed with arrows when he refused to deny his faith in Christ.
- James was beheaded in Jerusalem.

How does this level of sacrifice compare to most Christians' understanding of what it takes to follow Jesus?

Read 8:34-9:1 and list all the demands that Jesus makes on his followers.

How do you think these demands correspond with the average Christian's understanding of what it means to follow Jesus?

What does denying yourself and picking up your cross daily look like for you in the following areas? Be specific.

AREA	DENYING MYSELF AND PICKING UP MY CROSS LOOKS LIKE....
Physical Health	
Relationships	
Work	
Service to Church/ Community	
Schedule	
Finances	
Other	

In verse 36, Jesus asks a rhetorical question saying that we can gain the whole world (which literally means “vast wealth”) yet forfeit our souls. Then He goes on to ask, “Is anything worth more than your soul?”

How have you found that chasing the wrong things has come up empty in your own life?

Read Luke 9:57-62. How do these stories connect with what Jesus says in Mark 8?

In verse 35 Jesus says that in order to save our life we have to lose our life. What do you think He means?

What do you need to “lose” in order to find the life that Jesus promises? Be specific.

**PRAY TOGETHER**

Pray together over the things you are each committing to “lose” in order to find the life Jesus calls you to live. End your time by meditating on this prayer of St. Patrick:

Christ with me,  
 Christ before me,  
 Christ behind me,  
 Christ in me,  
 Christ beneath me,  
 Christ above me,  
 Christ on my right,  
 Christ on my left,  
 Christ when I lie down,  
 Christ when I sit down,  
 Christ when I arise,  
 Christ in the heart of every man  
 who thinks of me,  
 Christ in the mouth of everyone  
 who speaks of me,  
 Christ in every eye that sees me,  
 Christ in every ear that hears me.

**ON YOUR OWN**

1. Watch “Big Questions Part 5: What’s It Worth?” on RightNow Media. As you watch the message, think about the following;

What did you learn about Jesus?

What did you learn about yourself?

What next step do you need to take?

2. Watch the YouTube video by Kyle Idleman, “Fan or Follower,” found at [elmbrook.org/bigquestions0501/](http://elmbrook.org/bigquestions0501/)

How did the story connect with what you studied in Mark 8?

How would you describe yourself: as a fan or a follower?



## WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

Date:     /     /

“But what about you?”

he asked.

**“WHO DO YOU SAY  
THAT I AM?”**

MATTHEW 16:15

Of all the questions Jesus asked, “Who do you say that I am?” is the most important. How you answer this question determines what you do with His teachings, how you view His life, and how you live yours.

Yet it is so easy for us to have an incomplete picture of Jesus, or, even worse, a wrong picture

of Jesus. When our picture of Jesus is incorrect or incomplete, our lives follow suit.

Jesus is asking you today, “Who do you say that I am?” How you answer that will make all the difference.

### CONNECT TOGETHER

As you think about each person in your Life Group, what is the one word you would use to describe them? Have the rest of the group take turns sharing their word for each person.

As you heard the words people used of you, how accurate were they?

What is one word would you use to describe Jesus?



**GROW TOGETHER**

READ MARK 16:13-20

In verses 13-14 Jesus asks His disciples who people think He (the Son of man) is. The answers vary. Why do you think people were not fully grasping who Jesus really was?

If Jesus were to ask the same question of you — “Who do people around you say that I am?” — how would you answer? How does our culture miss who Jesus really is?

How do Christians contribute to a misunderstanding of Jesus in today’s culture?

In verse 15 Jesus asks Peter, “But what about you...who do you say that I am?” We have stated that this is the most important question we will ever have to answer. Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not?

If Jesus were to ask you right now, “Who do you say that I am?” how would you answer? In thinking through this, contemplate how Jesus has impacted your life, beliefs, and relationships. If you are still uncertain about Jesus, be honest about why.

How has that answer changed over the last few months or years?

Peter makes a bold answer by saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” He is claiming all power and authority for Jesus. He is saying that Jesus is God.

How do the following passages expand upon Peter’s words? What do they teach you about Jesus?

PASSAGE	WHAT IT TEACHES ME ABOUT JESUS
Colossians 1:15-20	
Philippians 2:5-11	
Hebrews 1:1-4	

In verse 18, Jesus makes the bold proclamation that He “will build the church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” How do you see this happening? Be specific.

People sometimes assume that Jesus is saying that Peter is the rock the church is built upon in verse 18. However, grammatically Jesus is referring back to the confession Peter made of Him as the foundation for the church. Furthermore, Jesus uses a play on words here when he says, “You are Peter (literally “small rock”)” and on “this rock” (different word, “boulder” referring to Jesus), “I will build my church.”

In verse 19, Jesus says to Peter that because Peter understands who He truly is that He will give Peter “the keys to the kingdom”. What do you think it means that you have also been given the “keys to the kingdom”?

“God will answer all our questions in one way and one way only. Namely, by showing us more of His Son.” -- Watchman Nee

What one step will you take this week to see more of Jesus?

To show more of Jesus?

**PRAY TOGETHER**

Gather in groups of 3-4 and share where each of you are at right now in your relationship with Jesus. Share the one step you want to take to follow Jesus in a more intimate way. Pray for each other in this way

If you have never committed your life to Jesus, consider doing that in this time of prayer. Simply tell Him that you believe as Peter did, that He is the “Christ, the Son of the Living God” and that you want to follow Him with your life.

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**ON YOUR OWN**

Watch the sermon “Big Questions Part 6: Who Do You Say That I Am?” on RightNow Media. As you watch the message think about the following;

What did you learn about Jesus?

What did you learn about yourself?

What next step do you need to take?

2. Read Matthew 17:1-13. How does the story of Jesus’ transfiguration correspond with Peter’s declaration in Matthew 16?

Spend the next few weeks reading the book “Who is This Man?” by John Ortberg (Zondervan, 2012).









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