

Respect Is Not Enough (Matthew 16:13-20)

Opening Connection

1. What are some common opinions people have about Jesus today?
2. Which descriptions of Jesus do people usually find easy to accept?
3. Which descriptions of Jesus do people tend to resist?
4. What is the difference between admiring Jesus and confessing Jesus?

Read Matthew 16:13-20

Observe the Text

5. Where does this conversation take place?
6. What first question does Jesus ask his disciples?
7. What answers do the disciples report from the people?
8. What second question does Jesus ask?
9. What does Peter confess about Jesus?
10. According to Jesus, who revealed this truth to Peter?
11. What does Jesus say he will build?
12. What does Jesus give to Peter?
13. What does Jesus command the disciples not to do?

1. Respectful Opinions About Jesus Are Not Enough

Matthew 16:13-14

14. What do the crowd's answers get right about Jesus?
15. What do those answers miss about Jesus?
16. Why is calling Jesus a prophet, teacher, moral example, or inspiring figure still not enough?
17. What are some ways our culture tries to keep Jesus "manageable"?
18. What are some ways church people can respect Jesus while still resisting him?

2. Jesus Will Not Let Us Hide Behind "People Say"

Matthew 16:15-17

19. How does Jesus' second question differ from his first question?
20. Why can discipleship not live forever on borrowed answers about Jesus?

21. What does Peter mean when he calls Jesus “the Christ”?
22. What does “the Son of the living God” tell us about Jesus?
23. What does Jesus mean when he says this was revealed by the Father and not by “flesh and blood”?
24. Who does your life say Jesus is in areas like your calendar, money, family, politics, forgiveness, anger, or obedience?

3. Jesus Builds His Church on This Confession

Matthew 16:18

25. What wordplay is Jesus using with Peter’s name?
26. Why is Peter’s role important, but not the ultimate foundation of the church?
27. What does Jesus mean when he says, “I will build my church”?
28. Why does the word “my” matter so much?
29. How can a church still have buildings, programs, traditions, and memories, but lose its center?
30. What does it mean that the church is “the people Jesus gathers, builds, owns, and sends”?

4. Death Cannot Defeat What Jesus Builds

Matthew 16:18

31. What does Jesus mean when he says “the gates of Hades” will not prevail against his church?
32. Why is it helpful to understand Hades as the realm of the dead, the grave, or death’s domain?
33. Does this promise mean individual Christians will never suffer or die? Why or why not?
34. Does this promise mean every local church will stay open forever? Why or why not?
35. How does Jesus’ own death and resurrection help us understand this promise?
36. What would it look like for our church to live with resurrection hope instead of fear?

5. Jesus Gives His Church Keys, Not Control

Matthew 16:19

37. What do keys represent in this passage?
38. Why is it important to understand keys as stewardship rather than ownership?
39. How does Peter function as a door-opener in the early church?

40. Why should we avoid treating “binding and loosing” like magic words that force heaven to obey our preferences?
41. What does it mean for the church to declare and enact on earth what is true under heaven’s rule?
42. Where are you tempted to want influence without surrender, authority without humility, or Jesus’ name attached to your agenda?

6. The Right Title Must Be Learned in the Way of the Cross

Matthew 16:20

43. Why does Jesus’ command in verse 20 seem surprising?
44. How does the next passage show that Peter knows the title but does not yet understand the way?
45. Why is it dangerous to use the right title for Jesus while misunderstanding his mission?
46. What are some ways Christians today may want glory without cross, victory without suffering, or kingdom without self-giving love?
47. Where might Jesus be correcting your expectations of what it means for him to be Christ?

Pulling It All Together

48. What does this passage reveal about Jesus?
49. What does this passage reveal about the church?
50. What does this passage reveal about discipleship?
51. Why is “Who do you say that I am?” still the central question?
52. What is one specific way this passage is calling you to respond?