

"Think about that popular TV show, 'Undercover Boss.'

- "A CEO goes undercover, working beside employees who don't realize they're standing next to the one who owns the company. But when the disguise comes off, everything changes—their understanding shifts, and the relationship is redefined.
- In a similar way, Jesus walked among His disciples as a teacher and healer, yet He was leading them toward a moment when His true divine identity would be revealed, forever transforming their understanding and their mission."

"That profound moment of revelation, when true identity is unveiled and everything shifts, is precisely what Jesus orchestrated in a pivotal conversation with His disciples, which brings us to our text today in Matthew chapter 16."

Jesus take his disciples on a Mission Trip: Caesarea Philippi

- Physically it was 120 Miles North of Jerusalem –
- Spiritually, It was a one of the darkest places on the planet

Caesarea Philippi was a prominent center for pagan worship and idolatry.

- It was not only the Center for Baal Worship: It was near CP that a cave was dedicated to the Greek god Pan, where various immoral and idolatrous rituals took place, including child sacrifices.
- The city was also a hub for the worship of Caesar, with a grand temple dedicated to Caesar Augustus.
- This fusion of Greek and Roman paganism made it a place saturated with spiritual darkness and opposition to the one true God.

Let me set the Stage:

Matthew 16:13-15 - ¹³ When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" ¹⁴ So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

This is the most important question you will every answer –

- ***You will have to answer – Every man, woman, boy, or girl, will answer this question***
- ***Notice how Peter answered the question...***

Matthew 16:16 - ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

- "Friends, there are many questions in life we can debate, many opinions we can hold, and many paths we can walk. But Jesus didn't come to earth to offer us another philosophy or a mere set of moral guidelines. He came to present us with one defining, non-negotiable question that every human being, at some point, must answer: 'Who do *you* say that I am?'
- It's not a question of what others say, or what you've heard, or even what you think about His miracles. It is deeply personal, and it demands an answer that will shape your eternity. Peter, guided by divine revelation, gave *the* answer, declaring, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'

Matthew 16:17 - ¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Revelation: Jesus' Identity

Matthew 16:16-17 - ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

"**C. S. Lewis**, the renowned author and apologist, articulated Jesus' identity through what he famously called the 'Trilemma.'[\(C.S. Lewis's trilemma, Picture Link\)](#)

Lewis Argued that Jesus Christ's claims to divinity leave only three logical possibilities: he was either lying, insane, or actually God.

1. **Liar** – Jesus claimed to be God – "I Am" equating Himself with God – Either he was or he was lying
2. **Lunatic** – *Jesus believed his claims to be true, but was actually suffering from delusions.* When we hear about people claiming to be God / claiming to be Jesus Reincarnated, what's our immediate response – Crazy
3. **Lord** – Lord: Jesus is who he claimed to be—the Son of God.

Philippians 2:10-11 - that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is a First Tier Doctrine: Baptist Faith & Message: Christ is the eternal Son of God.

- This is Top Tier: First Order Doctrine – If you don't get this right, you cannot be saved.
- This separates Biblical Christianity from other religious like Jehovah's Witness, Mormons, Islam, and Eastern Religious such as Hinduism and Buddhism
- Most of these religious acknowledge a Historical Jesus, but
- "Many religions in the world today will acknowledge Jesus as a wise teacher, a revered prophet, or even an inspiring moral leader, but they all ultimately stop short of Peter's crucial confession: that He is 'the Christ, the Son of the living God.'"

Notice what Jesus said to Peter

Matthew 16:17 - ¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, **for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**

John 6:44 - No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

You did not come to this conclusion on your own – No One Does – The Father Draws - Father Reveals...

Revealed through Scripture

John 1:1-3 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

John 1:14 - And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Colossians 1:15-18 - He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

Colossians 2:9 - For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

Hebrews 1:1-3 - God, in times past spoke by prophets, ² has spoken to us by *His Son*, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; ³ who being **the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person**, and upholding all things by the word of His

power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Revealed through the Spirit

The Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment: John 16:7-11

- **John 16:7-11** - And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:
- The Spirit of God convicts (convinces) humanity of their sin, and their need of a Savior, demonstrating God's standard of righteousness, and revealing the consequences of rejecting Christ.
- This conviction is a drawing process, making people aware of their spiritual state.

The Spirit gives spiritual life and new birth (regeneration) = John 3:5-8

- **John 3:5** - Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.
- **John 3:8** - The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."
- Here, Jesus makes it clear that spiritual birth, essential for entering God's kingdom, is a work of the Holy Spirit. It's the Spirit who enables a person to respond to God and experience new life in Christ.

The Spirit enables spiritual understanding and reveals truth – I Cor. 2:9-13

I Corinthians 2:9-16 - But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

¹⁰ But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

I Corinthians 2:13 - ¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

This is why we should Pray...

Psalms 119:36 - Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness.

Psalms 119:18 - Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.

Psalms 86:11 - Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.

Psalms 90:14 - Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, That we may rejoice and be glad all our days!

Declaration: Disciples' Authority

Matthew 16:18 - ¹⁸ **And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church**, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

This verse has created a lot of confusion for centuries

- Some believe Jesus is talking about Peter being the foundation
- But the NT is clear – Jesus is the Foundation of the Church – Acts 4:11; I Cor. 3:11
- Peter himself said, I Peter 2:6-7 – Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone!

This is a Play on Words:

- Peter means "Petros: Small Stone" – The word translate "Rock is Petra: Foundational Boulder"
- This may be best understood that Jesus saying that Peter's Declaration: "Thou art the Christ:" is the Rock – His Lordship is the Foundation for the Church.

- We know Peter plays a vital role in the formation of the Early Church – We learned that from Acts
- Rock is the Confession of Faith!

Matthew 16:18 - ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, **and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.**

- This is Jewish Idiom for *powers of death*...Death cannot stop this Messiah
- This is a powerful promise about His Church.
 - **"The gates of hell"** refers to the full power and strength of spiritual darkness, evil, and death itself. In ancient times, city gates were where power was exercised and defenses were mounted. So, this means the combined might of everything opposed to God and His kingdom.
 - **"Shall not prevail against it"** is Jesus' guarantee that these forces, no matter how strong or aggressive, will *never* be able to overcome, defeat, or destroy His Church.
 - **Essentially, Jesus is promising that His Church is not a fragile entity**, but an unstoppable force. It's not just enduring attacks, but actively advancing against the strongholds of evil. The Church, built by Christ, is divinely invincible and will ultimately be victorious against all spiritual opposition.

J. C. Ryle, a Renown 19th Century Pastor and Author said,

- "Nothing can altogether overthrow and destroy [the church]. Its members may be persecuted, oppressed, imprisoned, beaten, beheaded, burned. But the true Church is never altogether extinguished: it rises again from its afflictions; it lives on through fire and water.
- When crushed in one land, it springs up in another. The Pharaohs, the Herods, the Neros . . . have laboured in vain to put down this Church. They slay their thousands, and then pass away and go to their own place.
- The true Church outlives them all, and sees them buried each in his turn. [The Church] is an anvil that has broken many a hammer in this world, and will break many a hammer still. [The Church] is a bush which is often burning, and yet is not consumed. (Ryle, Principles for Churchmen, 118) (Quoted by Platt, *Exalting Jesus: Mt. KL 4097*)

"Jesus was building His church, and Peter played a key role throughout the early chapters of Acts.

- Yet he was not the sole foundation, for Paul states in Ephesians 2:20 that the church is built on all the apostles. Peter himself was imperfect—as seen when Jesus rebuked him just verses later.
- Martin Luther noted that all who share Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16 participate in laying this same foundation. In proclaiming the gospel today, we continue to build on that original confession made two thousand years ago." (Thought from David Platt, *Exalting Jesus: Mt. KL 4085*)

1. **"The foundation isn't Peter himself—it's the faith he confessed."**
2. **"Every believer who shares Peter's confession shares in Christ's foundation."**

Matthew 16:19 - ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

This is another passage that has been Misinterpretation:

- The Prosperity Gospel often uses "bind and loose" to mean believers can command God for personal wealth or bind evil forces through human declaration, essentially dictating to heaven.
- "'Keys of the kingdom' refers 'A Badge of Authority'"
- Jesus gave His apostles to open the door of faith through the proclamation of the gospel.
 - Peter was given the privilege of opening the "door of faith"...
 - First to the Jews and Pentecost (Acts 2), the Samaritans (Acts 8), and the Gentiles (Acts 10).
 - Scripture never assigns Peter or his successors a unique supremacy; Peter himself identifies as simply an apostle, elder, and servant of Christ.
 - The terms 'binding and loosing' were common Jewish expressions
 - "And whatever you bind on earth [forbid to be done], shall have been already bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth [permit to be done], shall have already been loosed in heaven."
 - What Jesus is teaching is that the church declares on earth what God has already willed in heaven – This is not to command heaven, but to obey it!
 - Jesus taught in the model prayer – Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven!"(Thoughts from Wiersbe, *Be Loyal: Mt.* p. 145-146)

"When Peter, the other apostles, or any believer proclaims the gospel, they do so under the authority of Jesus Himself.

- His authority allows us to declare with confidence that those who turn from sin and trust in Christ are forgiven, and those who refuse remain bound in their sin. This responsibility is entrusted to the church, giving weight to our message about who is—or is not—in God's kingdom.
- This connects directly to Jesus' teaching on church discipline in Matthew 18:15–20. Being part of the church is not like joining a club; it carries eternal significance. Because we speak with Christ's authority, the urgency of evangelism becomes unmistakably clear." (Thought from David Platt, *Exalting Jesus: Mt.* KL 4108)

"Christ empowers His Church with His authority."

"Christ has conferred His authority upon the Church."

Matthew 16:20-28 - ²⁰ Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.²¹ From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

This would have been a shock to their system – Die, what are you talking about

- **From this point on, Jesus is focused on the Cross – preparing the disciples for the mission ahead.**

²² Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"²³ But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

This following is an Invitation ...

Invitation to Believers' Fidelity (Faithfulness)

Take Up the Cross and Follow Him

Matthew 16:24²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

To Follow Jesus...If anyone desires to come after me...here is what that looks like

To "deny himself"

- to surrender one's own will, desires, ambitions, and self-centered living to God's will. It is a complete reorientation of life, putting Christ first above all else.
- This isn't about self-improvement but about self-renunciation for the sake of Christ.

To "take up his cross"

- in that culture, to be condemned to death and to carry the instrument of one's own execution. It symbolized a willingness to suffer, to face rejection, persecution, and even death for following Jesus.
- For us today, it means a readiness to die to our selfish desires, to endure hardship, and to embrace the sacrifices that come with living a life devoted to Christ and His gospel. It signifies a radical commitment to Christ, putting His mission and His ways above our comfort and safety.

To "follow me" is an active call to obedience,

- to walk in Jesus's footsteps, to live as He lived, and to proclaim the truth that He proclaimed.
- It is a life lived in constant alignment with His teachings and His purpose.

This passage is a clear call for every believer to count the cost of following Jesus. It reminds us that salvation is a free gift by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), but true discipleship involves a costly commitment of self-denial and cross-bearing. It is through this surrender to Christ and His plan, even when it involves suffering, that we find true life (Matthew 16:25). God, in His infinite love, offers grace and forgiveness to all who repent of their sin and turn to Him in faith, promising eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ (John 3:16).

Target – 5G Life – This is what we are aiming for...

- Abide – Connect – Share
- God Time – How often are you in the Word (4 or more)
- Gather Time – How Faithful are you to Worship
- Group – Are you connected to a Community of believers for mutual edification and accountability
- Give – Leveraging your time, talent, and treasure to build up the body to further God's Kingdom
- Go – With whom / how often do you share your faith? Who are your praying for

Matthew 16:25-28 - ²⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. ²⁸ Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

During the 2004 Olympics, archer Matt Emmons was one shot away from a gold medal.

- He was competing in the 50-meter three-position-rifle event was in perfect position to claim victory.
- He didn't even need a bulls-eye; all he needed to do was hit the target to win the gold.
- A sportswriter named Rick Reilly said it like this: "With one shot to go in Athens, Emmons was on his way to a laughter of a win. . . . In fact, all he had to do was hit the target. It'd be like telling Picasso all he had to do was hit the canvas.
- Standing in lane two, Matt took a shot...His shot was dead on, the only problem, it hit the wrong target. He received no points fell out of Medal Contention altogether

Let me illustrate it this way: "How many of you, if I offered you \$100 million in cold, hard cash to let me cut off your pinky, would take that deal?"

- Some may take that deal.
- But what if it's not just your pinky, but I require your left arm up to your elbow?"
- A few less hands. "Not just up your arm to your elbow but all the way up to your shoulder?" Fewer still. Finally, I say, "Okay, not just your left arm but both arms, both legs, poke out your eyes, cut out your tongue and stop up your ears?" No hands.
- Except for one ninth-grade boy near the back. There's always one. But for those with fully-developed frontal lobes, they reason,
- "What good is \$100 million if I don't have any faculties with which to enjoy it? What kind of existence is that?"
- This is exactly what Jesus is saying. Why is it, then, that so many are willing to give up far, far more to gain far, far less? To trade the cause of Christ for material comforts is to sacrifice the eternal on the altar of the temporary.
- Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last. When the inevitable moment of your transition into eternity comes, are you going to enter rich toward God, or completely impoverished because you were so focused on checking off your bucket list?
(Greear, *What are You Going to Do with Your Life?* P. 29-30)

There is Nothing More Meaningful in this World than to give yourself wholeheartedly to the advance the Kingdom of God

Next Steps:

For Some – Salvation

For Some – Baptism, Church Membership

For Some – Group

For Some – Serve

For Some – Go Share - Invite

When you're sharing about Jesus' identity, especially when you bring up Caesarea Philippi, you might want to briefly address the disciples' previous acknowledgments of who He was. There's a noticeable progression in their understanding:

Think of it this way:

1. **Matthew 14 – After Jesus Walked on Water:** The disciples cried out, "Truly you are the Son of God!" (Matthew 14:33 ESV). This was an emotional, immediate reaction to seeing Jesus do something absolutely impossible for a human. They saw His incredible **power** over creation, calming the storm and walking on water. They recognized He was from God, mighty and divine, because of the miracles He performed. It was an acknowledgment of His divine ability and connection to the Father, a powerful display of what He *could do*.
2. **Matthew 16 – Peter's Confession at Caesarea Philippi:** Here, Peter declares, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16 ESV). This goes much deeper. It's not just about what Jesus *can do*, but *who He truly is*.
 - **"The Christ"** identifies Him as the promised Messiah, the long-awaited King and Savior sent by God.
 - **"The Son of the living God"** here signifies His unique, eternal relationship with the Father, not just a powerful figure, but God's one-of-a-kind Son.

Jesus Himself affirms that this understanding wasn't just human insight, but a **divine revelation** from God the Father (Matthew 16:17 ESV). It was a moment of true spiritual insight into His ultimate identity and purpose.

So, the first was a recognition of His divine **power** through miracles, while the second was a Spirit-led understanding of His divine **personhood** and **messianic mission**. Both are true, but the second shows a profound, God-given revelation of who Jesus truly is.

Here's why this distinction is important:

1. **Emotional Acknowledgment vs. Saving Faith:** The disciples' cry "Truly you are the Son of God!" (Matthew 14:33 ESV) was a powerful reaction to an overwhelming display of divine power. It demonstrated awe and a recognition of Jesus' unique connection to God, but it didn't necessarily encompass the full understanding of His redemptive work. Many people can be emotionally moved by Jesus' miracles, His teachings, or even His character, without placing their saving trust in Him as the Messiah who died for their sins. True salvation involves a heart-level repentance and faith in Jesus' atoning sacrifice and resurrection (Romans 10:9-10 ESV).
2. **Incomplete Understanding of His Mission:** At this point, the disciples still had a limited understanding of Jesus' ultimate purpose – His suffering, death, and resurrection. They recognized His power, but they hadn't yet grasped His messianic mission to redeem humanity through His sacrifice. Their idea of a "Son of God" might have been more aligned with a powerful deliverer or a wonder-worker, rather than the Suffering Servant who would lay down His life.
3. **Progression of Faith:** The Bible shows that the disciples' faith and understanding of Jesus deepened over time. While their confession after the walking on water incident was a crucial step, it wasn't the final stage. Peter's later confession in Matthew 16, acknowledged by Jesus as a divine revelation, represented a more complete and God-given understanding of Jesus as the *Christ* (Messiah) who would bring salvation. Their faith truly matured after the resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

So, for sermon purposes, you can effectively use this distinction to highlight that:

- **Simply acknowledging Jesus' divine nature or power isn't enough for salvation.** Many in Jesus' day saw His miracles and believed He was a prophet or even the Son of God in a general sense, but they did not commit their lives to Him as Lord and Savior (John 6:66 ESV).
- **True conversion requires a deeper understanding and personal faith in Jesus as the Christ who died for our sins and rose again.** It's about responding to the truth of the Gospel, not just being impressed by a miracle.
- **The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in revealing Jesus' full identity,** leading to genuine, saving faith, as Jesus indicated to Peter (Matthew 16:17 ESV).

This contrast can powerfully illustrate that while God often uses powerful experiences to draw people, genuine salvation goes beyond mere emotional responses to a committed faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Beyond Observation to Revelation

"Think about it: many people in Jesus' day saw His miracles. They witnessed Him walking on water, calming storms, healing the sick, and even raising the dead. They were amazed, impressed, and many would have readily acknowledged His supernatural power, perhaps even calling Him 'a son of God' in a general sense, acknowledging His divine connection. Yet, when Jesus pressed them with that ultimate question, Peter didn't just rehash observations. His response, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Matthew 16:16 ESV), came not from 'flesh and blood,' but from a divine revelation given by God the Father Himself (Matthew 16:17 ESV). This is the crucial difference. It moves us from merely being impressed by Jesus to personally receiving and believing the truth of *who He is*."

Sticky Statement: *"Being impressed by Jesus' power is one thing; being transformed by His person is everything."*

One commentator said, "...a true understanding of Christ comes not from human invention. Instead a true understanding of Christ comes only from divine revelation. (Platt, *Exalting Christ: Mt.* KL 4050)

- We must never forget that the grace of God is the only way that anyone can behold the beauty of Christ.
- John 6:44
- John 3:19

Thought I may add... Type of Jesus you believe in is the type of Jesus you'll follow (Platt, KL 4050)