

JESUS TODAY

WHO DO YOU SAY JESUS IS?

VIDEO 6 - TEACHING GUIDE

"If you want to know the heart of God, look at Jesus."

MATTHEW 16:15

"But what about you?" he asked.

"Who do you say I am?"

KEY THOUGHT

**"Eventually, everyone has to
decide
what they believe about
Jesus."**

TEACHING PURPOSE

This final lesson brings the apologetic journey to its necessary conclusion. Christianity is not merely a set of ideas to examine from a distance. The evidence about Jesus eventually presses a personal question: Who is Jesus to you?

The goal is not to pressure someone into an emotional response. It is to help them understand that Jesus Himself forces a decision. If His claims are true, neutrality is not a permanent option.

BIG IDEA

You can investigate the evidence, study the claims, and listen to what others believe - but eventually you must answer Jesus for yourself.

PRIMARY TEXT - MATTHEW 16:13-17

Matthew 16:13-17

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven."

Notice the movement of the conversation. Jesus begins with public opinion - Who do people say I am? Then He makes it personal - Who do you say I am? That movement is the heart of this lesson.

TEACHING OUTCOME

By the end of this teaching, the listener should understand why the identity of Jesus matters, why secondhand faith is insufficient, what the major possible conclusions about Jesus are, and what it means to personally respond to Him.

Eventually, everyone has to decide what they believe about Jesus.

1. EVERYONE HAS AN OPINION ABOUT JESUS

Jesus first asks His disciples what other people are saying. The answers are respectful: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or another prophet. In other words, people recognized that Jesus was extraordinary, but many still misunderstood who He actually was.

The same thing happens today. Jesus is described as a great teacher, moral example, prophet, revolutionary, spiritual guide, or symbol of love. Those descriptions may contain pieces of truth, but they do not automatically answer the question Jesus asks.

WHY THIS MATTERS

It is possible to admire Jesus without accepting His identity. It is possible to quote Jesus without following Him. It is even possible to respect Christianity while never deciding whether Jesus' central claims are true.

TEACHING NOTE

Do not begin by attacking what people currently believe. Start where Jesus started: acknowledge the opinions, then move toward the deeper question of identity.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

John 1:10-12 - Jesus came into the world He made, yet many did not recognize Him. Those who received Him and believed in His name were given the right to become children of God.

John 7:12 - Even during Jesus' ministry, people were divided over who He was.

DISCUSSION

1. What are the most common descriptions of Jesus you hear today?
2. Is it possible to think highly of Jesus and still misunderstand Him? Why?
3. What is the difference between respecting Jesus and trusting Jesus?

Public opinion can tell you what people think about Jesus. It cannot decide who Jesus is.

2. SECONDHAND FAITH IS NOT ENOUGH

Jesus changes one word and changes the entire conversation: you. "Who do you say I am?" Peter cannot answer by quoting the crowd. He cannot borrow the faith of his family, religious leaders, or friends.

This is one of the most important transitions in spiritual life. Many people begin with inherited beliefs. They grew up around Christianity, attended church, heard Bible stories, or were influenced by someone else's faith. Those experiences can be valuable, but eventually inherited faith must become personal faith.

NOT YOUR PARENTS. NOT YOUR CHURCH. NOT YOUR PASTOR. YOU.

No pastor can believe for you. No church membership can substitute for knowing Christ. No family history can make the decision on your behalf. Christianity is deeply communal, but the response to Jesus is personal.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

Romans 10:9 - The response involves personally confessing Jesus as Lord and believing in the heart that God raised Him from the dead.

John 3:16 - The invitation is directed to "whoever believes" in the Son.

2 Timothy 1:5 - Timothy was influenced by the sincere faith of his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice, yet that faith also had to live in Timothy himself.

APPLICATION

Ask: If every Christian influence disappeared from your life tomorrow, what would you personally believe about Jesus - and why?

Faith can be introduced to you by someone else, but it cannot be lived for you by someone else.

3. JESUS' IDENTITY IS THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Peter answers, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." This is far more than saying Jesus is inspirational. Peter identifies Jesus as God's promised Messiah and uniquely related to the living God.

The New Testament repeatedly presents the identity of Jesus as the dividing line. The question is not simply, "Do I like Jesus' teaching?" The deeper question is, "Who is the One doing the teaching?"

JESUS MADE CLAIMS THAT REQUIRE A VERDICT

John 8:58 - Jesus said, "Before Abraham was born, I am!" His audience understood this as an extraordinary claim, which is why they immediately attempted to stone Him.

John 10:30 - Jesus said, "I and the Father are one."

John 14:6 - Jesus presented Himself not merely as one teacher pointing toward truth, but as "the way and the truth and the life."

Mark 2:5-12 - Jesus forgave sins, provoking the question of who can forgive sins but God alone.

John 20:28-29 - Thomas addressed the risen Jesus as "My Lord and my God," and Jesus accepted his confession.

APOLOGETIC CONNECTION

The earlier videos establish the problem of sin, the need for rescue, the person and claims of Jesus, the cross, and the resurrection. This lesson connects those claims to the listener's personal conclusion. If Jesus truly rose from the dead, His identity cannot be reduced to 'just another teacher.'

The most important question about Jesus is not whether He was influential. It is whether He is who He claimed to be.

4. THE RESURRECTION CHANGES THE QUESTION

If Jesus had remained in the grave, Christianity would collapse at its center. The apostles did not preach merely that Jesus had good ideas. They preached that God raised Him from the dead.

That means the resurrection functions as God's public vindication of Jesus. It transforms the question "Who do you say I am?" from a matter of preference into a question about reality.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

1 Corinthians 15:14 - Paul says that if Christ has not been raised, Christian preaching and faith are empty.

Acts 2:32, 36 - Peter proclaims that God raised Jesus and made Him both Lord and Messiah.

Romans 1:4 - Jesus was powerfully declared the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead.

A SIMPLE APOLOGETIC FLOW

1. Jesus was a real historical person who was crucified.
2. His followers proclaimed that He rose bodily from the dead.
3. The resurrection proclamation began early and at the center of the Christian movement.
4. The disciples' lives were radically transformed by what they believed they had encountered.
5. If the resurrection is true, Jesus deserves more than admiration - He deserves our response.

IMPORTANT

Apologetics can remove obstacles and provide reasons for faith, but evidence is not the same thing as surrender. A person can understand the argument and still resist the implications.

If Jesus rose from the dead, the question is no longer, 'Do I like His teaching?' but, 'What will I do with Him?'

5. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KNOWING ABOUT JESUS AND KNOWING JESUS

A person can know facts about Jesus without trusting Him. Biblical faith is not blind belief, but neither is it merely intellectual agreement. It includes trust, allegiance, and relationship.

James 2:19 warns that simply acknowledging a theological fact is not the same as saving faith. The New Testament invitation is to receive Christ, follow Him, trust Him, and confess Him as Lord.

THREE LEVELS TO EXPLAIN

Information: I know what Christianity says about Jesus.

Conviction: I believe the claims about Jesus are true.

Trust: I place my life in His hands and begin following Him.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

John 1:12 - Receiving Jesus and believing in His name are connected.

Luke 9:23 - Jesus calls people to deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow Him.

Galatians 2:20 - Paul describes Christian life as Christ living in him and his present life being lived by faith in the Son of God.

ILLUSTRATION

You can study a bridge, understand its engineering, and believe it can hold your weight. Trust happens when you actually step onto it. In the same way, Christian faith moves from knowing claims about Jesus to entrusting yourself to Jesus.

Knowing the facts about Jesus is important. Following Jesus is the response those facts call for.

6. JESUS DOES NOT ASK FOR A PERFECT PERSON - HE ASKS FOR A RESPONSE

Some people delay answering Jesus because they think they must first fix their lives, resolve every doubt, understand the entire Bible, or become morally good enough. But the gospel reverses that order. We come to Christ because we need grace, not because we have already made ourselves worthy.

The first followers of Jesus were not finished products. Peter himself would later fail dramatically by denying Jesus. Yet Jesus restored him and continued to shape his life.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

Mark 2:17 - Jesus says He came not for those who think they are healthy, but for the sick; not to call the righteous, but sinners.

Romans 5:8 - God demonstrates His love in that Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - Salvation is by grace through faith, not something earned by works.

WHAT A RESPONSE CAN LOOK LIKE

Admit: I need God. My sin has separated me from Him.

Believe: Jesus is the Son of God who died for my sin and rose again.

Trust: I place my confidence in what Jesus has done rather than what I can do.

Follow: I turn toward Jesus and begin learning to live under His leadership.

PASTORAL NOTE

Avoid presenting these four words as a formula that earns salvation. They are a simple way to describe the posture of repentance and faith in response to the grace of God.

You do not clean yourself up so Jesus will receive you. You come to Jesus because you need Him to make you new.

7. THE QUESTION IS NOW YOURS

Jesus' question in Matthew 16 reaches across the centuries: "Who do you say I am?" At some point the listener has to move from observing the conversation to entering it.

This is where apologetics becomes personal. The purpose of evidence is not simply to win an argument. It is to help a person see clearly enough to make an informed response to Jesus.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

What do I currently believe about Jesus?

Why do I believe that?

Am I relying mainly on what someone else believes?

What evidence about Jesus is most compelling to me?

What still keeps me from trusting Him?

If Jesus really is the risen Son of God, what would need to change in my life?

Have I admired Jesus from a distance, or have I actually entrusted myself to Him?

A SIMPLE INVITATION

You do not have to pretend that you have no questions. You do not have to manufacture an emotional moment. But you can be honest with God. You can acknowledge your need, place your trust in Jesus, and begin following Him.

SAMPLE PRAYER

Jesus, I believe You are more than a teacher. I believe You are the Son of God, that You died for my sin, and that You rose again. I need Your grace. Forgive me, lead me, and teach me to follow You. I place my life in Your hands. Amen.

Eventually, everyone has to decide what they believe about Jesus.

LEADER / SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Use these questions to move the discussion from information to personal reflection without manipulating the room.

1. Why do you think Jesus first asked, "Who do people say I am?" before asking, "Who do you say I am?"
2. Which modern descriptions of Jesus are partly true but still incomplete?
3. Why is inherited faith unable to replace personal faith?
4. Which claim of Jesus is hardest to dismiss as merely the words of a moral teacher?
5. Why is the resurrection so central to deciding who Jesus is?
6. What is the difference between believing facts about Jesus and trusting Jesus?
7. What are common reasons people delay making a decision about Jesus?
8. Does following Jesus require having every question answered first? Why or why not?
9. If someone said, "I believe Jesus existed, but I don't know whether He is God," what would you encourage them to investigate next?
10. How would you personally answer Jesus' question today: "Who do you say I am?"

TEACHING FLOW - 30 TO 40 MINUTES

- 5 min: Read Matthew 16:13-17 and introduce the question.
- 5 min: Explain public opinion versus personal conviction.
- 8 min: Review Jesus' identity claims and the significance of the resurrection.
- 7 min: Explain knowing about Jesus versus trusting Jesus.
- 5 min: Present grace, repentance, faith, and following Christ.
- 5-10 min: Discussion, personal reflection, and prayer.

FINAL LEADER REMINDER

Do not rush the final question. Give people room to think. The aim is clarity, not pressure. Invite honest questions, keep bringing the conversation back to Jesus, and trust the Holy Spirit to work.

Series: WHO IS JESUS? Video 6: WHO DO YOU SAY JESUS IS?

Primary Scripture: Matthew 16:15 Key Thought: Eventually, everyone has to decide what they believe about Jesus.