

Small Group Discussion + Leader Guide

Sunday - August 2, 2026

Preached By: Matt Alexander

“Built By Christ”

Fusion Church Madison 12 Year Anniversary

Matthew 16:13-20

OPENING QUESTION

Take a few minutes to get the conversation started before diving into the text.

If someone asked you, "What makes a church strong?" how would you have answered that question before this sermon? Has your answer changed at all?

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus is faithfully building His church, securing its victory, and advancing His kingdom through His people. As His church, we are called to trust His promise, follow His leadership, and faithfully participate in the work He is accomplishing.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Before discussing the main points, take a moment to consider the setting of Matthew 16:13-20.

Jesus deliberately led His disciples to Caesarea Philippi, one of the most pagan cities in the region. Temples to Caesar, shrines to false gods, and altars to pagan worship surrounded them on every side. It was in that environment that Jesus asked His most important question.

Context Question: Why do you think the location matters? What does it say about Jesus that He chose this particular setting to ask, "Who do you say that I am?"

PART ONE: THE CHURCH JESUS BUILDS CONFESSES THE RIGHT CHRIST

Matthew 16:13-17

Key Truth: *The foundation of the church is not programs, attendance, budgets, or buildings. It is the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Discussion Questions

1. In verses 13-14, the crowds offered several opinions about Jesus. John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets. These were all respectful answers. What is the difference between respecting Jesus and confessing Jesus? Why does that distinction matter?
2. Jesus shifts from "What are people saying?" to "Who do you say that I am?" in verse 15. Why is that shift so significant? How does this question feel personal to you today?
3. Peter's confession in verse 16 was not the result of human reasoning. Jesus says in verse 17 that the Father revealed it to him. What does it mean for saving faith to be a gift from God rather than a conclusion we reach on our own? How does that shape the way we pray for people who don't yet know Christ?
4. The sermon included this quote from Martyn Lloyd-Jones: "The ultimate test of a preacher is that people are not saying, 'What a wonderful sermon,' but, 'What a wonderful Savior.'" How does that principle apply not just to preaching but to the way we live out our faith in front of others?
5. The sermon warned that a church can become more excited about ministry than about Jesus, more passionate about methods than

about the Master. What are some practical signs that a church or an individual believer might be drifting in that direction?

PART TWO: THE CHURCH JESUS BUILDS TRUSTS HIS CERTAIN PROMISE

Matthew 16:18

Key Truth: *Jesus said, "I will build my church." Those four words are the foundation of every confidence we have as a church. The Builder does not fail.*

Discussion Questions

1. The sermon pointed out that Jesus uses future tense: "I will build." Not "I built" or "I started." What does it mean to you personally that Jesus is actively building His church right now, today?
2. Jesus calls it "my church." The sermon said, "Fusion Church isn't ultimately your church. It isn't my church. It belongs to Jesus." How does the reality that the church belongs to Christ change the way we think about our role within it?
3. The promise that "the gates of hell shall not prevail" is often read as a defensive image, as if the church is under attack. But the sermon pointed out that gates defend rather than attack. The church is advancing. How does that shift in perspective change the way you think about sharing the Gospel or engaging your community?
4. Looking at the cultural moment we are in, it can feel like the church is losing ground. How do you personally hold onto the promise of Christ in seasons when circumstances seem discouraging?
5. The sermon said this promise changes how we pray, how we give, how we serve, and how we endure difficult seasons. Pick one of those four areas. How specifically does the promise "I will build my church" change the way you approach that area of your life?

PART THREE: THE CHURCH JESUS BUILDS ADVANCES HIS KINGDOM MISSION

Matthew 16:19-20

Key Truth: *Jesus builds His church, and then He entrusts His people with the mission of proclaiming the Gospel. The Builder and the mission are never separated.*

Discussion Questions

1. The "keys of the kingdom" are not about deciding who enters heaven. They represent the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, Paul describes believers as ambassadors for Christ, with God making His appeal through ordinary people. What does it mean to you that God has chosen to work through people like us?
2. The sermon described the book of Acts as not ultimately the story of the apostles, but the story of the risen Christ continuing His work through His people by the power of the Holy Spirit. How does that framing change the way you read the New Testament? How does it change the way you see your own life?
3. The sermon named specific evidences of Christ building His church at Fusion: restored marriages, students surrendered to ministry, mission teams, Life Groups, church planting, multilingual ministry, and more. What evidence of Christ's building work have you personally witnessed in this church or in your own life?
4. The sermon closed with a series of forward-looking questions. Will we continue sharing Christ with our neighbors? Will we continue sending missionaries? Will we continue investing in the next generation? Which of those questions lands most heavily on you personally, and why?
5. The sermon said, "There are still people who have never confessed, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" So our work is not finished." Who in your life has not yet made that confession? What is

one step you could take this week to move toward them with the Gospel?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Use these summary statements to anchor your group's conversation before moving to application.

- The church is not built on programs, personalities, or resources. It is built on the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- Jesus said "I will build my church." The success of the church has never rested on gifted leaders or clever strategies. It has always rested on Christ.
- The gates of hell do not prevail against the church because Christ has already conquered death. The church does not advance in fear. It advances in confidence.
- The church belongs to Jesus. He purchased it with His blood. Our role is not to build it for Him but to faithfully participate in what He is already doing.
- The mission Jesus gave His church is the proclamation of the Gospel. Everything the church does rises and falls on that faithful declaration.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or more of these applications to commit to before your group meets again.

Personally: Spend time this week answering Jesus's question for yourself: "Who do you say that I am?" Write out your answer in your own words. Let it become a declaration you return to regularly.

In Prayer: Identify one or two people in your life who have not yet confessed Christ. Commit to praying for them by name every day this week, asking God to do what only He can do: open their eyes to the beauty of Christ.

In Community: Share with someone in your group one specific way you have seen Jesus building His church in your own life over the past year. Gratitude expressed out loud builds faith in the people around you.

In Mission: Take one tangible step toward someone who does not yet know Christ. This could be an invitation to church, a conversation about faith, a meal shared, or simply a message that says you are thinking about them.

In Worship: Before your next group meeting, read Revelation 7:9-10, where John describes the great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne. Let that vision of the completed church fuel your faithfulness in the present.

CLOSING REFLECTION

The sermon ended with a recommitment to three things. As you close your group time, read these aloud together and let them serve as both a summary and a sending.

The same confession Peter made: "***You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.***"

The same promise Jesus gave: "***I will build my church.***"

The same mission He entrusted to us: To know Christ, to make Christ known, and to make disciples until the day we join that great multitude around His throne.

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time by praying together. Consider praying specifically for:

- Anyone in your group who is still working through the question "Who do you say that I am?"
- The people each group member named who do not yet know Christ
- Fusion Church as it enters its thirteenth year
- Faithfulness to the Gospel mission in your neighborhood and beyond

*To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. **Ephesians 3:21***