

Life Changing Community Group Discussion Questions

week of 8/23/26

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today as a community of people who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. As we open Your Word together, we ask that You quiet our minds and soften our hearts. Help us not simply to engage in an intellectual exercise, but to encounter You personally. Speak to each person in this room in the way they most need to hear from You today. May Your Spirit guide our conversation, and may we leave this time changed in some small but meaningful way. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ice Breaker

What is one thing about yourself that has noticeably changed over the years, and what or who do you credit for that change?

Summary

This sermon centered on the pivotal moment in Matthew 16 when Jesus asks His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" and Simon Peter answers, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Pastor Mark explored how this confession is the most important answer anyone will ever give, because it shapes every other aspect of life, from vocation and relationships to how we face death. In response to Peter's confession, Jesus gave Simon a new identity (renaming him Peter), invited him into a new community (the church), and gave Him a new vocation rooted in eternal purpose.

The sermon also unpacked why Jesus called Simon "son of Jonah" rather than "son of John." Rather than a factual error, this was a deliberate comparison. Like Jonah, Peter was flawed, reluctant, and prone to failure. Yet God used Jonah mightily, and Jesus was reassuring Peter that the same grace would apply to Him. The church is presented not as an optional add-on to faith, but as the very means of salvation that Christ Himself established. The message closes with a call to confess Jesus as the Christ and to embrace the new identity, community, and mission that come with that confession.

Key Verses

- Matthew 16:15-19
- John 1:42
- John 21:15-17
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Jonah 4:2

Questions

1. Jesus asked His disciples, 'Who do you say I am?' (Matthew 16:15, NIV). How would you answer that question in your own words today, and how has your answer changed or deepened over time?
2. Pastor Mark described the moment he personally wrestled with this question in his dorm room and said his faith shifted from something inherited to something owned. Can you describe a moment when your faith became personally yours rather than simply something you grew up with?
3. Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter, signaling a new identity. In what ways did your own identity change after you confessed Jesus as the Christ? What old things passed away and what new things came?

4. Pastor Mark made a strong statement that the church is not an accessory to salvation but the means of salvation. How do you respond to that idea? In what ways has being part of a church community shaped your faith and your life?
5. Jesus told Peter that whatever is bound or loosed on earth will be bound or loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19, NIV), pointing to the eternal weight of the church's mission. How does that reality change the way you think about inviting someone to church or sharing your faith?
6. Jesus called Simon 'son of Jonah,' comparing Him to a prophet who was reluctant, flawed, and even angry at God's grace toward others. In what ways do you see yourself in Jonah's story? How does it encourage you to know that God used Jonah anyway?
7. Pastor Mark suggested that Peter may have been reassured by being called son of Jonah because it meant God would not let Him go, just as God never let Jonah go. Have you ever experienced a season where you ran from God, and how did God pursue you back?
8. The sermon closes with the idea that confessing Jesus as the Christ gives us a new identity, a new community, and a new vocation. Which of these three gifts feels most alive in your life right now, and which one do you feel you need to lean into more deeply?

Life Application

This week, take one concrete step to live out your confession that Jesus is the Christ. It might be as simple as wearing a cross or another visible symbol of your faith and being ready to explain it if someone asks. It might mean reaching out to someone you have been meaning to invite to church. Or it might mean sitting quietly and honestly answering the question Jesus asked Peter: 'Who do you say I am?' Write your answer down and reflect on how that answer is shaping the decisions you are making right now in your relationships, your work, and your use of time and money.

Key Takeaways

- The confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the most important answer anyone will ever give, because it shapes every other area of life including vocation, relationships, and how we face death.
- When we confess Jesus as the Christ, He gives us a new identity. Just as Simon became Peter, we become new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV), and who we understand ourselves to be is fundamentally changed.
- The church is not an optional add-on to the Christian life. Jesus Himself said He would build His church, and it is the means through which salvation and the kingdom of God advance in the world.
- By calling Simon 'son of Jonah,' Jesus was reassuring Peter that God can use flawed, reluctant, and imperfect people, and that just as God never let Jonah go, He would never let Peter go either.
- The authority given to Peter and the church carries eternal weight. What the church does on earth has consequences in heaven, which means every act of witness, invitation, and ministry truly matters.

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. We confess that truth again together right now. Thank You for the reminder today that You do not wait for perfect people before You act. You used Jonah.

You used Peter. And You use us. Remind each person in this group this week that their identity is secure in You, that they belong to the community You are building, and that the work they do in Your name carries eternal significance. For anyone still wrestling with who You are, we ask that You make Yourself known to them in a way they cannot ignore. Pursue them the way You pursued Jonah. And for all of us, may the confession we make with our lips be lived out with our lives. We pray this in Your name, amen.