

Sermon Discussion Guide

Encounters with Jesus: Peter's Confession
Matthew 16:13-20
March 7 & 8, 2020

Part 1: Pray

Every time we study God's word, we should ask God to give us the Holy Spirit to prepare our hearts, teach us and mold us into who he created us to be. Ask God to reveal his truth to transform you through your discussion time.

Part 2: Read the Text

Read the passage(s) from the sermon. Keep a focus on key words, repeated phrases or major themes.

Part 3: Reflect on the Sermon

Introduction

1. As we consider this account of the beginning of the church, consider the perception of the church today. In what ways is the church flawed? What makes the church flawed?
2. If you were to ask your friends or neighbors about their perception of the church, what might they say? Can you think of specific negative experiences with the church of your friends and family? What (if any) negative experiences have you had with the church?

The Prevailing Church: The Confession

1. When asked who people said that he is, Peter told Jesus he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Why was this confession so important? Consider and discuss the implications of Jesus NOT rebuking Peter for his declaration.

2. Consider again and discuss the following quote from C.S. Lewis.

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

3. Jesus tells Peter that “flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.” Discuss how Ray explained this idea. How does the fact that we play no part in our salvation offend our American (and otherwise sinful) sensibilities?

4. Who do you say that Jesus is? (Consider giving each person in your group the chance to speak to where they are/have been on this question.) Why do we say that this is the most decisive matter in your life?

The Prevailing Church: Community

1. After 400 years of silence from the prophets, this is God’s declaration about his church - that he will build it. What is the significance of that declaration?

2. Anything that God builds is lasting and strong (and in good hands), including his church. Why is this so difficult to us to believe? Why do we so often want to assume control of the church?

3. Discuss what you think Ray meant when he said that, “The church is the most staggering thing in the world?”

Prevailing Church: Calling

1. Would you say that you take church seriously? How do you know whether you or someone else takes it seriously?
2. Just as Peter speaks his right and true confession of who Jesus is, he [Jesus] inaugurates his church by giving it over to his people. What do we make of that?
3. No other company, organization or institution has the keys to the kingdom. What does this say about the authority of church and its God ordained leaders, particularly when someone is confronted with their sin by the church? Would you say that you love the church and actually believe that it has the keys to the kingdom?

Part 4: Summarize the Message

How would you summarize the sermon to someone who has never heard it? What are your two or three key takeaways from the message and your discussion?

How does this sermon change your perspective on God? Your own heart? And/or, how to follow him?