

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

Read Matthew 16:13-20 aloud.

1. This week’s passage begins with Jesus surveying the disciples about people’s opinion of him (13). Why do you think Jesus begins by asking this question?

If Jesus were to pose the same question concerning popular opinion of him in our culture today what kinds of answers would you give?
Hint: Think movies, cartoons, slogans, bumper stickers, etc.

Do you think it matters if disciples today have knowledge of popular opinions of Jesus? Why or why not?

2. The answers the disciples give to Jesus’ initial question center on prophetic figures from the Bible (14). What does it mean to be prophetic? And what about Jesus’ life and ministry was prophetic that the crowds would even think of him this way?

In what ways was did the early church continue this prophetic character of Jesus’ ministry?
For example, think of the church’s words and deeds in Acts.

What would it mean for the church today to continue the prophetic character of Jesus’ mission? Name some specific traits and actions.

3. Image Jesus turned to you and asked, “Who do you say that I am?” How would you honestly respond to this question?

Why is it significant that disciples of Jesus, then and now, have an idea about the identity of Jesus?

Are there any passages of Scripture, hymns, or images that are particularly helpful for you in thinking about following Jesus? What about them do you find instructive or inspiring?

4. According to Jesus’ response (18-19) to Peter’s confession (16-17) what is to serve as the foundation of the church?

What does it mean to call Jesus the Christ/Messiah?
See the Bible Notes section for further information.

Furthermore, what does a church who is founded on Jesus Christ look like?

What might be some other possible foundations the church might try to build upon?
An individual personality? A certain reputation? Attendance?

How can a church guard against these “faulty foundations?”

5. What is one of your biggest concerns for the church today?

What promises does Jesus make about the church in this passage (18-19)?

Do any of these promises make you think/feel differently about the concerns you just mentioned? If so, which ones and how do they change your perspective?

6. If Jesus says that he is going to build the church (18), then what role do disciples have in this process?

How have you seen God build the church in your lifetime? And how have you seen disciples play a role in this process?

✠ **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It’s okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

What is one specific way you can help the church at College Hills to grow?

Resources

Bible notes

The town of *Caesarea Philippi* was known for both its pagan shrines to various gods as well as for containing a river that emerged from an underground spring thought to be an opening to Hades (the underworld). Such a context gives added weight to both Peter's confession as well as Jesus' declaration about the church.

The title "Messiah" (or "Christ") literally means "Anointed One." This term echoes the way in which kings were anointed with oil to declare their royal office (i.e., Saul, 1 Sam 10:1). Therefore, to give Jesus such a title was a bold claim of the early disciples that Jesus was King of the Jews. Ironically, their king was ultimately crucified (not the typical path of a king), thus creating a very different understanding of what it meant to declare Jesus king and a very different kind of a church following such a king.

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

"Building Upon the Rock"

Collect several rocks large enough to be written upon but not too large that the kids cannot pick them up. Also, have a few Sharpie markers. Hand out a rock to each kid (hold off on the markers).

Talk to me about rocks. Describe the rock you have. What do you see? What do you feel? What kinds of things do we use rocks for? If you had to do one thing with this rock of yours what would it be?

Read Matthew 16:13-18.

What does Jesus say is "the rock" of the church?

Does he literally mean a rock? If not, then what does he mean?
What does it mean that Jesus is the foundation for the church?

Why is it important for followers to know their foundation?

As a way to remember that Jesus is to be the foundation of the church and our lives have the kids write the name of Jesus on one side and their name on the other. If they want, and if you have other markers, they can decorate them too. Finally, let them take the rock home and keep as a reminder.

LIFE Group Guide

Matthew 16:13-20 – A Dream Come True

By Wilson McCoy (wilson.mccoy@gmail.com)

The theme: Jesus' dream is the construction of the church built upon the confession of him as the Christ. While promised years ago this vision continues to remain alive in our world. Therefore, the church today can have hope that the dream that has been coming true for thousands of years will continue to do so far into the future.

This week Kevin's lesson reminded us of our foundation and builder—Jesus Christ. This construction imagery envisions the church as a dynamic work in progress. Not only are we a fulfillment of Jesus' promise (we are the church!), but we are also participants in this never-ending building project (we help build the church!). This week we explore the good news that Jesus is the Christ and upon him the church is built and thrives.

Leadership tip: Often conversations about the church can turn into extended complaint sessions—about leaders, members, programs, etc. However, Jesus' words in our text today about are incredibly hopeful. This session will allow space for people to voice their concerns about the status of the church in our world and leaders should honor those comments. However, also be intentional about keeping the positive spirit alive in Jesus' words about the church alive in your group as well.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone's spiritual pulse, and "break the ice." No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ Summer is coming to an end and school is about to start. What is the favorite thing you did so far this summer?
- ❖ Growing up what was a most favorite thing about starting the new school year? (Try not to say "recess.")
- ❖ On July 31 College Hills will be serving the community with our annual school store. How do you plan to be involved in this service opportunity? *Contact Carol Locke for how you can serve.*