

Bible reading: Matthew 16:13-20

Who are you?

THIS WEEK WE EXPLORE HAVING CONFIDENCE IN JESUS.

Taking the twelve disciples a long way north, Jesus wants to know if they have understood who he is yet. In the shadow of empire, they declare him to be king, and he assures them that this confession will help them break the grip of that empire on them and others.



Bible notes



Caesarea Philippi was named after Caesar, and Herod's son Philip, a Roman puppet king. The city symbolised Roman power. Springs flow there, at the foot of Mount Hermon, and Jews honoured it as a source of the Jordan. This is the place where Jesus invites his disciples to name him. Unsurprisingly, others place him among the prophets – Matthew has already linked him to John the Baptist (14:2) and Jeremiah (2:17). Peter's statement is mind-blowing. The Jews had been waiting for the Messiah for centuries (Isaiah 7:14). Confidently to recognise Messiah in Jesus is to proclaim a new world order, where God's authority is made real in a human being. Matthew has already told his hearers that Jesus is the Son of God (3:17). However, this is the first time a disciple names Jesus in this way. In response, Jesus recognises a direct revelation from the Father and affirms Simon's nickname 'Peter', recognising a rock-solid moment of understanding. This insight is the foundation for the Church community's commitment to Jesus on the basis of understanding and confessing his identity. Jesus reassures the disciples that even if they face hostility (as the Early Church did), they can be confident. Peter, the keeper of the keys, holds the responsibility of passing on the good news of the kingdom that has been revealed to him, letting people into God's community and ensuring they maintain a God-focused way of life. This 'Messianic secret' is a theme running across Matthew, Mark and Luke. Peter and the other disciples need to understand more before they can proclaim Jesus' identity in public.



Build a strong tower using Duplo™ bricks or sturdy kitchen equipment e.g. containers or cans. Use masking tape or sticky notes and a permanent pen to write down the things you know about Jesus – who he is and what he has done for us. Include any names that Jesus is given in the Bible. Give thanks that 'the name of the Lord is a strong tower' (Proverbs 18:10).

First impressions

- How confident are you in your faith?
- Is it something you'd rather hide or shout about from the rooftops?
- How does knowing Jesus increase your self-esteem and self-awareness?



WATCH



Look at the 'Reverse Selfie' video by Dove. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2T-Rh838GA>
What does Jesus have to say to people suffering from poor self-esteem? Capture that message on paper or on your phone. Keep the message somewhere prominent as a reminder to have confidence in Jesus. You could also share the message with others who might find it helpful.

A prayer for all ages

Lord Jesus, you are our rock,
the firm ground on which we stand. (*stamp feet*)
You are there when things go wrong. (*cover face with hands*)
You help us when we don't know what to do next.
(*thumbs up, both hands*)
You love us when we are hurt by other people. (*hug self*)
With your help we can hang on to calm, no matter what.
(*palms down, calming gesture*)
Thank you.
Amen.

REFLECT

Before Dietrich Bonhoeffer's execution in 1945, the German theologian and anti-Nazi wrote a poem entitled 'Who am I?' Read the last lines and contemplate their meaning in relation to the Bible passage.
Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.
Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine.



Play a simple identity guessing game which focuses on identity, such as the board game 'Guess who', or Hedbanz™. Talk together about what it means to know and trust Jesus.