

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ have their own faith in Jesus.

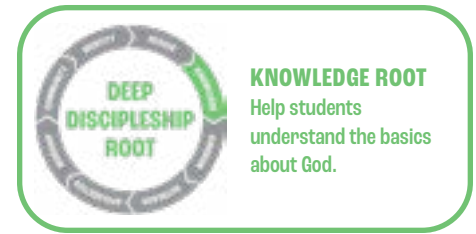
SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 16:13-17

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The district of Caesarea Philippi was in a Gentile region over 100 miles from Jerusalem. The area was infested with pagan beliefs and false gods. Baal worship was widespread. Shrines to the Greek god Pan spotted the region. And Augustus Caesar had a temple erected in his honor. It was here, surrounded by idols worshiped by the masses, that Jesus asked his best friends about who they believed him to be.

Check out the *Teacher Prep Video* for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/815136422>



FACILITATOR NOTE: We're giving you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.

OPENING

PRAYER

1-2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

OPTIONAL: Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.

OPENING QUESTIONS

3-5 minutes

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- Whose name do you not know but probably should?



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3-5 minutes

Where do you want to go to college? What do you want to be when you grow up? Who makes the best pizza?

These are all critical questions we must answer for ourselves. Still, one question ranks number one on the "All-Time-Important-Questions" list: Who is Jesus? In some aspects, the answer to this question is the answer to all our questions. It doesn't matter what our family or friends believe about Jesus, *disciples of Christ have their own faith in Jesus.*

Read Matthew 16:13–14 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **What are some different ways that culture labels Jesus?**
A good guy, a good teacher with moral ideas, similar to Gandhi, etc.
- **If you were to poll your school, what would be the popular opinion of Jesus?**
Answers will vary. Ask your students how those opinions might affect their beliefs about Jesus.
- **Who was the first person to tell you about Jesus?**
Answers will vary. Push students to recall as many details as they can.



Say something like: Almost the whole world, including people from every religion, will acknowledge that Jesus is great. But Jesus is more than great—he is the Son of God.

Read Matthew 16:15 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **Who do you know that is an excellent reflection of Jesus?**
Answers will vary. Ask follow-up questions: What traits do you admire most about them? How do you think they became the example they are?
- **How do you think our actions reflect what we believe about Jesus?**
The old saying that actions speak louder than words is true. It can be easy to say we believe Jesus is the Son of God, but a tree is known by its fruit (Luke 6:43–45). How we live will always speak the truth of what we believe.
- **What do you think we should do after we realize Jesus is the Christ?**
Make a choice. Choose to submit to Jesus as God or continue serving self/other idols as god. Either way, we have to answer the question about who Jesus is.



Say something like: Just as the disciples had to do, we all have to decide who we believe Jesus is. It is a question we must answer for ourselves. No one else can answer for us.

FACILITATOR NOTE: If you have extra time, go through the next set of questions. If not, skip to the **Connection** section.

Read Matthew 16:16–17 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **How does God reveal himself to us?**
His Word (2 Tim. 3:16–17), Jesus (Col. 1:15, Heb. 1:1–2), creation (Rom. 1:19–20), the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10–13), and other people.
- **Why can't we fully understand who Jesus is without God's help?**
Think of it a bit like an artist explaining his art. A painting or sculpture may appear one way to us, but the insights from its creator reveal the truth of the art. Only God the Father fully knows God the Son (similar to how only an artist fully knows her art), so only he can make Christ known.



Say something like: God desires everyone to know him and have a relationship with him (1 Tim. 2:3–6). Because of his great love for us, God reveals himself in many ways.



CONNECT & APPLY

CONNECTION

5-7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story of a time you were confused for someone else.



Example: There is a story by Mark Twain called *The Prince and the Pauper* that has been retold in many different ways. Regardless of the retelling, the central concept is always the same—a person of high regard switches places with a person of common or low regard. And practically no one can tell the difference. The switching of identities confuses everyone as to who is really who, but in the end, the truth is revealed.¹ While people may be confused at times as to the real identity of Jesus, we can be sure the truth of who Jesus is will be unmistakable when he returns in the end.

- Why is it important that we don't get confused about the true identity of Jesus?
The answer to the question of Jesus' identity shapes our answer to all questions. It determines the outcome of our lives here and for eternity.

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

Disciples of Christ have their own faith in Jesus.

Use the *Mark of a Disciple* to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

What can you do to explain to others the truth about Jesus? Write down some ways God has revealed the truth about himself to you and pray for someone to share it with.



Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



FACILITATOR NOTE: Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.



CLOSING

PRAYER

2-3 minutes

Take time to let your students pray for each other's applications in the upcoming weeks.
Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.

MEMORY VERSE

Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

"Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'
Matthew 16:16 (ESV)

NOTES

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¹ "The Prince and the Pauper," *Wikipedia* (Wikimedia Foundation, January 21, 2023), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Prince_and_the_Pauper.

