

Jesus' Church

g r o u p s t u d y

Lesson 1
The Foundation

this book belongs to

date

Make the Most of this Study

The following recommendations will help your Jesus' Church Study Group experience the intended outcomes:

1. Each lesson builds upon the previous lesson, so work together and find a way to cover all seven lessons in as close to seven weeks as possible.
2. Invite everyone to bring their Bibles and pens.
3. If possible, sit at a table to be able to read, write, snack, and be closer to one another.

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Though the ESV and certain English versions do not capitalize divine pronouns, they have been capitalized in this resource.

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"I will build
My Church..."

Matthew 16:18

01 | The Foundation

Welcome to Lesson One of the Jesus' Church group study! The truths covered in these seven lessons are more than informational. Jesus intended them to be transformational—not only to transform us but also to transform the world. Today's lesson is called "The Foundation." Before we begin, let's pray and ask God to transform us through this lesson and the whole study.

The Church Must Be Built

Let's open our Bibles to Matthew 16 and read a powerful portion of Scripture.

Matthew 16:13–18 (ESV) Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Notice five words in the middle of verse 18. Jesus said, "I will build my church." This tells us that Jesus' Church did not come fully assembled. In fact, it didn't even come with all the pieces. The pieces are scattered throughout the world. So when Jesus said, "I will build My church," He was making a commitment to find all of the pieces—everyone who would accept His love and sacrifice—and to assemble them together to be His Church.

The Church Is People

The English New Testament uses the word “church” to translate the Greek word *ekklesia* (ek-klay-see'-ah). The word *ekklesia* means “an assembly of people.” *Ekklesia* is derived from two Greek words, *ek* meaning “out from” and *kaleo* meaning “to call.” Originally, “the ones called out” referred to the legislative body of the Greek republic that was led by citizens who were called out from their communities to serve their country. Today, when we refer to a session of state government, such as a state assembly, we are using the word “assembly” in the same way the Greeks used the word *ekklesia*.

Though *ekklesia* merely referred to an assembly in the Greek world of His day, it seems clear that Jesus chose the word *ekklesia* because it had been used to designate God’s people in the Jewish Greek Old Testament (Septuagint). When Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, “On this rock I will build My church,” He placed emphasis not on the word “church,” but on the word “My.” There were many assemblies in Jesus’ day, but Jesus was clearly announcing that He was going to build a new assembly; an *ekklesia* of His own.

In the New Testament, the word “church” is used to describe several different assemblies of believers, including: 1) the universal Church (often designated with a capital “C”), meaning all believers of all ages around the world (Ephesians 1:22–23); 2) a local church or house church, meaning believers who identify with and regularly attend a particular gathering (Philemon 2); and, 3) a collective church, such as “the church of Ephesus” which was comprised of many house churches (Revelation 2:1).

Interestingly, the word “church” in the New Testament is *never* used to describe a building; it is only used to describe an assembly of people. For example, the apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 4:15, “Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.” Nympha’s house was not the church, but she welcomed a gathering of the church (people) to meet in her house.

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The Church Belongs to Jesus

Now let's put things in perspective. The Church belongs to Jesus. He's not an elected leader of the Church. He's not the Church's CEO or chairman of the board. The Church belongs to Him. How so? Let's start from the beginning. Without Jesus, the earth and mankind would not exist. John 1:3 says, "All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created" (CSB). God created Adam in His own image and told him that he could eat anything his heart desired except the fruit on one particular tree. God warned Adam that if he ever disobeyed and ate from that tree, he would surely die.

Unfortunately, that's exactly what Adam did. He took matters into his own hands and disobeyed God, and by doing so, he unleashed wickedness, abuse, violence, depression, sickness, grief, addictions, and pain into the world. And because sin, like a spiritual DNA, was passed down to every person, human beings have continued to sin, rebel, and run from God, not realizing they're running toward eternal destruction in a lake of fire (Revelation 21:8).

But Jesus knew that despite His Father's love, a righteous and holy God could not merely sweep sin and rebellion under the rug. So Jesus humbled Himself to become one of us, a human being. By the wisdom of God, Jesus was born of a virgin so that He did not inherit our sin. And having been born sinless, He refused every temptation to sin for His entire life on earth. Then, having proven Himself to be righteous, before God and man He humbled Himself yet again and submitted Himself to His Father, the Judge of all the earth. Jesus invited all of God's wrath, all of His judgment against sin, all of His righteous anger, and the full and complete punishment for the sins of mankind—past, present, and future—to be executed against Him. That's what happened when Jesus died on the cross.

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In Acts 20:28, the apostle Paul commanded the elders in Ephesus to "shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (NKJV). Jesus literally purchased the Church—every member of every culture in every nation. So when Jesus said, "I will build My Church," He meant it. The Church belongs to Jesus. And if you're part of Jesus' Church, then you belong to Jesus as well. 1 (First) Corinthians 6:20 says, "You were bought with a price."

Jesus Builds a Strong Church

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, “I will build My church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” What ingredients made the first-century Church so powerful and unstoppable? That’s what we’ll be learning throughout this study, but it began with a solid and unshakable foundation. Notice in Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, “On this rock I will build My church.” Jesus builds His Church upon a solid foundation which He called “this rock.” Let’s talk about what He meant.

After calling Himself the “Son of Man,” Jesus asked His disciples two questions. First, He asked, “Who do people say that I am?” And second, “Who do you say that I am?” Notice He didn’t ask what people *thought* or *believed*, nor did He ask what people *had said* in the past. He asked *what do people say*, and *what do you say*. In response to Jesus’ second question, Simon confidently declared, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus responded to Simon and told him that he was blessed because his knowledge that Jesus was both the Christ (the promised Savior they’d been waiting for), and the Son of God wasn’t learned from a human being but by supernatural revelation from Father God in heaven.

Then in verse 18, the next thing Jesus said was, “And I tell you, you are Peter.” Jesus had already given Simon the nickname Peter, or *petros* in Greek, which means “rock.” He was telling Simon that because of this divine revelation and his belief and confession of it, he had now become rock-solid. This revelation is what made Peter want to obey Jesus. It’s what made him want to follow Jesus everywhere He went and do everything He did. It’s what made him believe that he could walk on water when everyone else stayed in the boat. It’s why Peter was one of the three disciples Jesus wanted with Him everywhere He went. It’s why Matthew, when he began to name the 12 disciples in Matthew 10 said, “First, Simon, who is called Peter.” He actually used the word “first.” It’s why Peter’s name is mentioned over 150 times in the New Testament, but the next-closest disciple, John, is only mentioned about 40 times, including all the verses that refer to John as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” It’s why Peter had such confidence in the name of Jesus that he told a lame man to “arise and walk,” and he did. It’s why Peter had confidence that he could raise Tabitha from the dead. It’s why people wanted to get their sick relatives to Peter so badly that they researched the path he walked to the temple and determined which way the sun was facing so they could place their sick relatives where Peter’s shadow would touch them, and they were all healed. It’s why Peter, along with the other apostles, would not stop preaching in the name of Jesus, even when they were beaten and threatened by the religious leaders. It’s why they stayed in Jerusalem even when the persecution became so fierce

that the rest of the church scattered. It's why Peter followed Jesus' direction to do something he was committed never to do: enter a pagan Roman city. But Peter followed Jesus' direction and went to Cornelius' house, and by doing so the Gentiles (non-Jews) received salvation and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for the very first time. It's why Peter, when Jesus was arrested, made the mistake of pulling out his sword to fight and was willing, if necessary, to die in defense of his Lord. It's why Peter would not stop preaching about Jesus until the day he was martyred. And it's why historical tradition tells us that when he discovered the Romans were going to crucify him for his faith in Christ, he requested to be crucified upside down because he was not worthy to be crucified like the precious Lord and Savior he walked with over 30 years before.

So, let me ask you, have you received the revelation that Jesus is the Son of God, your Savior and your Lord? Because when you do, it will cause you to reevaluate your priorities. It will require that you stop living your own life and live the life that Jesus has for you. It will motivate you to love the people Jesus died for more than your own reputation. It will compel you to pray and seek after God with all your heart. And it will convince you that you are a chosen member of Jesus' Church, and you are called to help Him strengthen the other members.

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On This Rock

Now look again at verse 18. Jesus said, "And on this rock I will build My church." Some people think Jesus was saying that He would build His Church on Peter. But Jesus didn't use *petros* here. He said, "And on this *petra* I will build My church." While *petros* (or Peter) refers to a normal loose rock, *petra* means a very large rock, such as bedrock—the kind of rock you would build a house on, a foundation. Jesus did not say He would build His Church on one human follower but on the *petra* of divine revelation of the person of Jesus Christ and a person's faith-filled response to that revelation. Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart

that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” So it’s not only the Church as a whole that’s built on the *petra* rock, it’s every member of the Church. Jesus also used the word *petra* in Matthew 7:24–26 when He taught that every individual who hears His words and obeys them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock (*petra*), but an individual who doesn’t obey His words is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. You can see that divine revelation of Jesus and hearing God’s Word provide a person with the strength to believe, but that person still must respond to that opportunity with faith and obedience. Peter, throughout the rest of his life, boldly and openly confessed his faith in Jesus, and he also obeyed and served Jesus until the day of his death. And that’s why Peter was himself a *petros*, and why he was built, like every other true believer, on the *petra* of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Peter later wrote about this very thing in 1 Peter 2:5 when he said, “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house” (NASB 2020). Here, Peter used a different word from *petros*. He used the word *lithos*, which means “stones.” You see, though you become strong and solid when you first receive the revelation of Jesus and respond in faith to it, you are still like a dusty rock with jagged edges. But Jesus looks at you, loves you, and sees exactly how to release your greatest potential for His kingdom. Then He washes you with His Word and begins shaping you to fit perfectly in particular places of His house, the Church. And this is why we can’t simply do whatever we want or like. We have been called. We have been chosen. We are among the relatively few in this world who have been privileged not only to know the Savior but to be part of the spiritual house that He Himself is building. It is an inexpressible honor to be a member of Jesus’ Church!

We have been called. We have been chosen.

So, what is the foundation, *the rock* on which Jesus’ Church is built? It is the divine revelation of the person of Jesus Christ to each member of the Church and their faith-filled response to it by confessing Jesus as Lord and following Him.

Maybe you never realized this before, or perhaps you did at one time, but today God is renewing the revelation of His Son in you. Either way, this is exactly why God brought us together to do this study.

Now let's look at this passage one last time and discuss what God is revealing to us:

Matthew 16:13–18 (ESV) Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” **14** And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” **15** He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” **16** Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” **17** And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. **18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you believe you have received revelation of who Jesus is, and if so, who do you—personally—say He is?
2. Given the revelation of Jesus that we have received, how is God calling us to live for the rest of our lives?

7-Day Plan

Part of what makes this study so transformational is that we continue to study about Jesus' Church a little each day. Over each of the next seven days, we will each take 10–15 minutes a day to **Read**, **Write**, and **Pray**. We'll **read** a short passage of Scripture, **write** the answer to a question or two, and **pray** that God will use us that day to minister to people. The verses to read and questions to answer each day are below, at the end of this lesson. When we come back together next week, we'll take a few moments to discuss what we learned throughout the week. So please bring your answers to the daily devotional questions to our next meeting.

Close in Prayer

Let's stand, hold hands as a group, and take turns asking Father God in Jesus' name to continue teaching us—both this week and throughout this study—how to be the members of Jesus' Church He wants us to be.

Week One

Day 1 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Ephesians 5:25–33

Write: In what ways did/does Jesus show His love to the Church?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 2 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Ephesians 1:3–14

Write: List some of the benefits of being part of Jesus' Church.

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 3 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Luke 6:46–49

Write: How does a person become solid on the rock (*petra*)?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 4 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Mark 8:34–38

Write: What do you lose and gain by being part of Jesus' Church?
What does that mean?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

*So then faith comes by hearing, and
hearing by the word of God.*

Romans 10:17

Day 5 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Matthew 7:21–23

Write: Can we simply choose to obey certain things and ignore God's other commands? Why or why not?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 6 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Romans 10:13–17

Write: How will people receive the revelation of Jesus Christ?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 7 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Mark 16:15

Write: Whom have we been sent to? How will we reach them?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Additional Notes



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