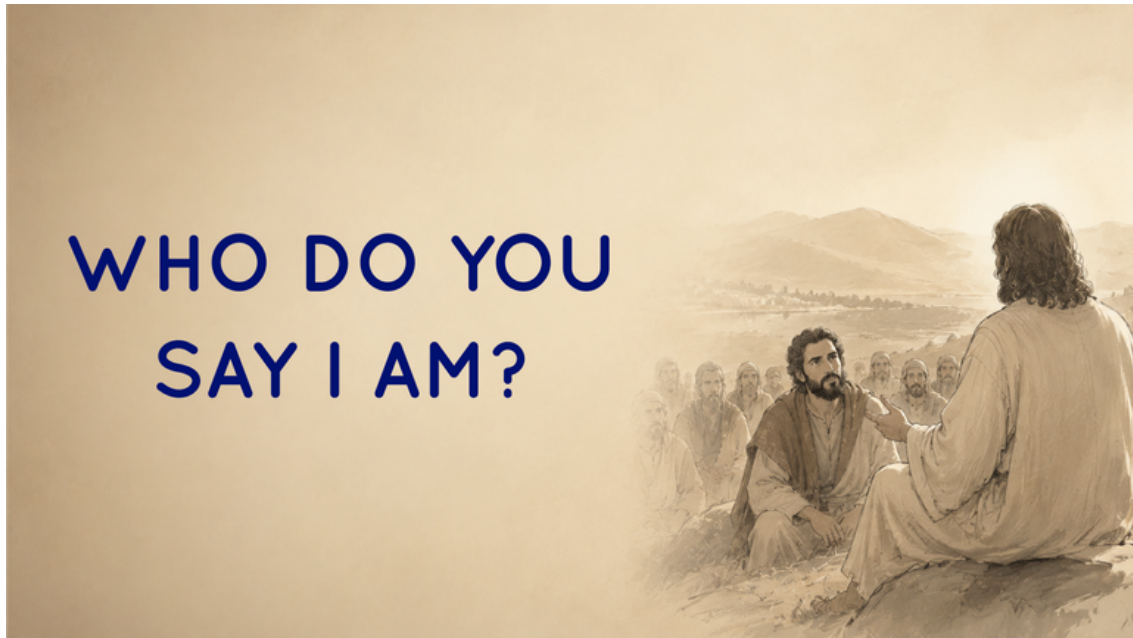


WEEK OF JULY 12, 2026

**5-Day Devotional
based on Sunday's message:**



Who Do You Say I Am?
Matthew 16:13-28

Provided by



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Matthew 16:13-28 (NLT)

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” “Well,” they replied, “some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.” Then he asked them, “But who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hellg will not conquer it. And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.” Then he sternly warned the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead. But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him_k for saying such things. “Heaven forbid, Lord,” he said. “This will never happen to you!” Jesus turned to Peter and said, “Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.” Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds. And I tell you the truth, some standing here right now will not die before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.”

Day 1: The Question

Devotional

Have you ever noticed how easily we let other people shape our opinions? Sometimes it's something as simple as choosing a restaurant because everyone else recommends it. Other times it's more significant. We hear enough voices, enough opinions, and enough commentary that, before long, we find ourselves repeating what we've heard without ever asking whether we've truly made it our own. When Jesus arrived in the region of Caesarea Philippi, He began by asking His disciples what everyone else was saying about Him. Their answers reflected the popular opinions of the day. Some believed He was John the Baptist. Others thought He was Elijah, Jeremiah, or another prophet. Then Jesus gently shifted the conversation with one simple word: "But..." Public opinion suddenly gave way to personal conviction. "But who do you say I am?" That question still confronts every generation. Our culture has plenty to say about Jesus. Some admire His compassion. Others respect His moral teaching. Many are comfortable calling Him a great religious leader while stopping short of acknowledging Him as Lord. However, Jesus never asked His disciples to decide which opinion sounded most convincing. He asked them to answer for themselves. Peter's response changed everything. "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus explained that Peter hadn't reached that conclusion through human reasoning alone. The Father had graciously revealed it to him. The Christian life begins the same way today. We don't merely adopt someone else's opinion about Jesus. By God's grace, we come to know Him personally through His Word and respond in faith. Every step of discipleship grows out of that one foundational confession.

Going Deeper

Notice that Jesus didn't begin by correcting the crowds. He began by speaking to His disciples. Before Christ changes the world around us, He desires to deepen the faith within us. The most important question is not what others believe about Jesus, but whether we have personally entrusted ourselves to Him as Savior and Lord.

Bible Verse

"Then he asked them, 'But who do you say I am?'" — Matthew 16:15 (NLT)

Reflection Question

If someone asked you who Jesus is, how would you answer in your own words? Has your understanding of Jesus grown since you first trusted Him? How?

Day 1: The Question (continued...)

Today's Practice

Spend a few minutes today reading what Scripture reveals about who Jesus is. Choose one or two of these passages:

- * John 1:1–5 — Jesus is the eternal Word through whom all things were created.
- * Matthew 11:28–30 — Jesus is gentle and humble in heart.
- * John 10:11–18 — Jesus is the Good Shepherd.
- * Hebrews 4:14–16 — Jesus is our compassionate High Priest.
- * John 5:22–27 — Jesus is the righteous Judge, entrusted by the Father with all judgment.
- * Revelation 19:11–16 — Jesus is the victorious King who reigns in righteousness.

As you read, ask yourself, “What does this passage reveal about who Jesus is?” Write down one attribute of Christ that encourages or challenges you, and thank Him for revealing Himself more clearly through His Word.

Prayer

Father, Thank You for revealing Your Son through Your Word. Thank You that You do not leave us to guess who Jesus is but lovingly make Him known. Continue opening my eyes to see Christ more clearly each day. As I grow in my understanding of Him, deepen my love, strengthen my faith, and help me follow Him with wholehearted obedience. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 2: More Than I First Knew

Devotional

Have you ever revisited a place you hadn't seen in years? The buildings hadn't moved. The streets were still familiar. Yet somehow you noticed things you had completely overlooked before. Your perspective had changed, allowing you to appreciate what had always been there. Our relationship with Jesus often grows in much the same way. Peter's confession was absolutely true. Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus even told Peter that this understanding had been revealed to him by the Father. Peter wasn't pretending. His faith was genuine. Yet within moments, Peter demonstrated that while he truly knew who Jesus was, he still had much to learn about what Jesus had come to do. His understanding was real, but it wasn't yet complete. That should encourage every believer. Sometimes we become discouraged because we realize how much we still have to learn. However, spiritual growth isn't evidence that we've been failing, but evidence that we're following. The closer we walk with Christ, the more He reveals His character, His wisdom, and His purposes. We begin to see aspects of His grace and faithfulness that we couldn't have appreciated earlier in our journey. The goal of the Christian life is not simply to know more information about Jesus. It is to know Jesus Himself more deeply. As we spend time in His Word, walk with Him through both joys and trials, and experience His faithfulness day after day, He patiently continues revealing Himself. Like Peter, we never outgrow our need to keep learning from our Master.

Going Deeper

Jesus told Peter that his confession came because the Father had revealed it to him. Spiritual understanding is ultimately God's gracious work. That truth should lead us to approach Scripture with humility and prayer, asking the Holy Spirit not merely to teach us facts, but to help us know Christ more deeply.

Bible Verse

"Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being.'" — Matthew 16:16–17 (NLT)

Reflection Question

How has your understanding of Jesus changed since you first trusted Him? What has God used most to deepen your faith: His Word, life's experiences, other believers, or something else?

Today's Practice

Spend a few minutes thanking God for one way He has helped you know Jesus more deeply than you did a year ago. Then pray this simple prayer: "Lord, thank You for all You have shown me about Yourself. Keep my heart humble and teachable. Help me never stop growing in my understanding of who You are." Finally, ask God to bring one person to mind who has helped you grow spiritually. Reach out to them today with a note, text, or phone call, and thank them for the role they have played in your walk with Christ.

Prayer

Father, Thank You that You never stop revealing Your Son to those who seek Him. Thank You for patiently teaching me, correcting me, and helping me grow. Guard me from becoming satisfied with what I already know, and give me a lifelong desire to know Christ more deeply. May every season of my life draw me closer to Him and make me more like Him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 3: When Jesus Doesn't Meet Our Expectations

Devotional

Have you ever looked back on a difficult season and realized that, if you had been in control, you would have chosen a completely different path? At the time, it may have felt confusing or even painful. Yet with the benefit of hindsight, you can now see how God used that season to strengthen your faith, deepen your character, or draw you closer to Him. What you once wanted to avoid became one of the very things God used for your good. Peter found himself in a similar moment. After confessing that Jesus was the Messiah, he expected the story to move toward victory and triumph. Instead, Jesus began explaining that suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection were all part of God's plan. Peter couldn't imagine the Messiah taking that road. Out of genuine love for Jesus, he tried to persuade Him to choose another way. Jesus' response reminds us that sincere faith can still be accompanied by incomplete understanding. Peter wasn't wrong about who Jesus was. He was wrong about how Jesus would accomplish His mission. The cross wasn't a tragic interruption to God's plan. It was God's plan. Without the cross there would be no forgiveness, no resurrection hope, and no salvation. We can find ourselves making Peter's mistake more often than we'd like to admit. We may trust Jesus as Savior while quietly expecting Him to work according to our timetable, our preferences, or our understanding of what is best. Yet discipleship means learning to trust that God's wisdom is greater than ours, even when His plans lead us somewhere we never expected to go.

Going Deeper

One of the clearest signs of spiritual maturity is allowing Scripture to correct our assumptions about God. Every time we discover that Jesus is different than we imagined, we have a choice. We can cling to our expectations, or we can surrender them and allow Christ to reshape our hearts. Growth happens when we choose the second path.

Bible Verse

"From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem..." — Matthew 16:21 (NLT)

Reflection Question

Has there been a time when God used a difficult circumstance for your good, even though you couldn't see it at first? Is there an area of your life where you're asking Jesus to follow your plans instead of surrendering to His?

Today's Practice

Set aside five uninterrupted minutes today. Open your hands as a physical reminder of surrender and quietly pray: "Lord Jesus, I trust You more than I trust my own understanding. Help me release the expectations I've been holding onto and teach me to embrace Your perfect will." After you pray, sit quietly for a few moments. Resist the urge to fill the silence. Simply rest in God's presence and allow your heart to become still before Him.

Prayer

Father, Thank You that Your plans are always wiser than mine, even when I don't understand them. Forgive me for the times I've expected Jesus to fit my plans instead of surrendering to Yours. Give me the humility to trust Your heart when I cannot see Your purposes, and remind me that the cross itself is proof that You accomplish Your greatest work through ways I would never have imagined. Help me follow Jesus with confidence, knowing that His way is always the way of life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 4: Following the Real Jesus

Devotional

Have you ever known exactly what the right thing to do was, yet found yourself hesitating because you knew it would be difficult? Sometimes obedience isn't complicated. It's simply costly. We know the conversation we need to have, the forgiveness we need to offer, the apology we need to make, or the step of faith God is asking us to take. The struggle isn't understanding God's will. The struggle is choosing to trust Him enough to obey. After speaking about His coming death and resurrection, Jesus turned to His disciples and explained what following Him would require. Discipleship was never intended to be casual or convenient. It would mean denying themselves, taking up their cross, and following wherever He led. Jesus wasn't inviting them to admire Him from a distance. He was inviting them to walk beside Him in complete surrender. That invitation hasn't changed. Every day we face moments when our desires compete with Christ's direction. We can protect our comfort, our reputation, or our preferences, or we can trust that His way is always better than our own. While obedience may involve sacrifice, Jesus never asks us to give up something without offering something far greater in return. His commands are not meant to burden us but to lead us into the life we were created to live. The more clearly we see Jesus for who He truly is, the more willingly we follow Him. Obedience isn't driven by guilt or fear, but flows from love. When we recognize that the One leading us is our Savior, Shepherd, and King, we discover that even difficult paths become places where His grace is more than enough.

Going Deeper

Jesus' call to "take up your cross" wasn't merely about enduring hardship. In the first century, the cross represented complete surrender. Following Christ means placing His authority above our own desires every single day. Discipleship is less about one dramatic decision and more about countless daily choices to trust and obey.

Bible Verse

Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.'" — Matthew 16:24 (NLT)

Reflection Question

Is there an area where you know Jesus is calling you to obey, but you've been reluctant to take the next step? How does remembering who Jesus is give you confidence to follow Him, even when obedience is difficult?

Today's Practice

Ask the Lord to reveal one specific act of obedience you've been postponing. It may be forgiving someone. Serving quietly. Confessing a sin. Beginning a difficult conversation. Stepping into a ministry opportunity He's placed before you. Before you act, pray: "Lord Jesus, because You are my Savior and my King, I choose to trust You more than myself today." Then, by God's grace, take that step before the day is over.

Prayer

Father, Thank You that Jesus never asks me to go where He has not already gone before me. Give me courage to obey when obedience is difficult and faith to trust that Your way is always best. Help me remember that every act of surrender is another opportunity to become more like Christ. May my life reflect not only what I believe about Jesus but also my willingness to faithfully follow Him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 5: The Journey Continues

Devotional

Have you ever looked back over old photographs and realized how much has changed? Sometimes the change isn't immediately obvious while you're living through it. But years later, you can see how God has been quietly shaping your life through countless ordinary moments. The person you are today didn't happen overnight. Growth came one step at a time. Peter's story reminds us that spiritual growth works much the same way. Matthew 16 records one of the defining moments of Peter's life. He boldly confessed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. It was a remarkable declaration of faith. Yet within the same conversation, Peter misunderstood Jesus' mission, was lovingly corrected, and then heard Jesus' call to take up his cross and follow Him. Peter didn't have everything figured out that day. However, he was following the right Person, and Jesus wasn't finished with him. That's encouraging because the same is true for us. None of us follows Jesus perfectly. We all have moments when our faith is strong and moments when our understanding is incomplete. Yet Jesus doesn't abandon His disciples because they still have room to grow. He patiently teaches us, corrects us, restores us, and continues forming us into His likeness. The Christian life isn't about reaching perfection. It's about faithfully walking with Christ as He continues His work in us. As this week comes to a close, remember that Jesus' question still echoes in our hearts: "Who do you say I am?" We answer it with our words when we confess Him as Lord. We answer it with our lives every time we trust Him, obey Him, and continue following Him. One day our journey of faith will become sight. Until then, every step of obedience is another opportunity to know our Savior more deeply and reflect Him more faithfully to the world around us.

Going Deeper

Peter's confession wasn't the end of his discipleship; it was the beginning. Throughout the Gospels, we watch Jesus patiently shape Peter into the man God called him to become. The same Lord who transformed Peter is still transforming His people today. Our hope rests not in how perfectly we follow Jesus, but in His faithfulness to continue His work in us.

Bible Verse

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.'" — Matthew 16:24 (NLT)

Reflection Question

As you look back over the past year, where have you seen Jesus helping you grow as His disciple? What is one area where you sense Him inviting you to take another step of faith?

Today's Practice

Before going to bed tonight, spend a few quiet minutes thanking God for the ways He has faithfully grown you since you first came to know Christ. Then write a short prayer that completes these two sentences: "Lord, thank You for showing me..." "Lord, continue teaching me..." Place that prayer in your Bible or journal. Revisit it in a few months and take time to notice how faithfully Jesus has continued shaping your life.

Prayer

Father, Thank You for Your patience and Your faithfulness. Thank You that You never stop revealing Your Son or shaping Your people. As I continue following Jesus, keep my heart humble, teachable, and eager to grow. Help me to trust You when I don't understand, obey You when it's difficult, and rejoice that You are continuing the good work You began in me. May my life increasingly reflect the Savior I have confessed as Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.