

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Knowing the Person and the Work of Jesus

A Clergy Equip teaching resource on Matthew 16:13-26

The Pastor's Packet

The complete resource in one file: the study behind the text, the four session guides, and the student packet a group carries.

All Scripture: New American Standard Bible, 1995 (NASB95)

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
The Communicator's Study Brief	4
Session One — The Question	14
Session Two — The Person	17
Session Three — The Keys	21
Session Four — The Work	25
The Student Packet	29

Introduction

Knowing the Person and the Work of Jesus

A CLERGY EQUIP LEADER'S GUIDE, FOUR SESSIONS ON MATTHEW 16:13-26

All Scripture: New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition (NASB95).

What This Resource Is

At a place called Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples two questions, and everything that follows in Matthew's Gospel hangs on the distance between them. "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" gathers opinion. "But who do you say that I am?" demands knowledge. Peter answered, and his answer, given to him by the Father, opened three things in a single scene: the church, the keys, and the curriculum of the cross.

This is a four-session teaching series built on Matthew 16:13-26, walking a group from the Question, to the Person, to the Keys, to the Work. It exists to press one claim: **knowing the person and the work of Jesus is the doorway into the Kingdom**. Not a doorway among several. The doorway. An opinion about Jesus can be borrowed. The knowledge that opens the Kingdom is revealed, and it is asked of every person in the first person.

The same chapter that hands Peter the keys shows him refusing the cross five verses later. This series refuses to separate what Matthew holds together. A Christ confessed but not crucified is a Christ of man's interests, and a partial knowledge of Christ produces a partial gospel. Sessions One and Two build the knowledge of the person. Session Three opens the Kingdom that knowledge unlocks. Session Four insists that the person is never known rightly apart from His work.

The Thesis, in One Sentence

Knowing the person and work of Jesus is the doorway into the Kingdom, and that doorway opens only as far as the knowing goes.

Who This Is For

This series is written for any leader teaching adults: a small group, an adult class, a midweek gathering, or a whole congregation across four consecutive services. It assumes a room willing to be asked a personal question, not merely to receive information. No prior familiarity with this material is required of the leader. Everything a leader needs to teach it with confidence and integrity is contained in these four session guides.

How to Use It

The series was built to run four consecutive sessions, and that is still its cleanest use: four nights in a week, four class periods in a row, or a compressed weekend intensive with a short break between sessions. It also stretches. A leader may run it as four consecutive weekly sessions, one per week, with the discussion questions serving as the connective tissue between weeks. It can also be run as a single

extended teaching day, with a longer break inserted after Session Two, since the Question and the Person form one movement and the Keys and the Work form the next. Choose the format that fits the room; the content does not change.

Each session stands on its own for a first-time visitor while building toward the next. A leader should say, briefly, at the top of each session, what came before, so no one in the room feels behind. Each session guide supplies a one-sentence recap for exactly this purpose.

What's Included

- 1 **This introduction** (00), covering the series thesis, audience, format, and preparation.
- 2 **Four session guides** (01 through 04), one per movement of the text: the Question, the Person, the Keys, and the Work. Each guide carries a Passage Overview, a set of Movements through the text with one Teaching Center marked in each, Room Questions for discussion, a Landing statement, and Leader Notes with the exact fill-in answer key for the matching page of the student packet.
- 3 **A student packet** to be printed and carried across all four sessions, with fill-in blanks, discussion questions, a take-home question, a memory verse, and a closing page for each person's own written answer to the question Jesus asked.
- 4 **A Communicator's Study Brief**, the deep study that stands behind the four guides: the geography, the grammar, the Old Testament roots, the Greek behind the English, the three doctrinal fences, and the questions a room will ask. You do not preach the brief; you preach from it. Read it once, all the way through, before you teach Session One.

How a Leader Prepares

Take this series before you give it. Read the Communicator's Study Brief once, all the way through, first. It puts the full ground under you before the first word is spoken in a room. Then read all four session guides once through before teaching the first one, so you can see where the whole arc is going even while a room hears it one session at a time. Session Three, on the keys, carries a standing doctrinal guardrail that a leader must hold firmly: read that guide's guardrail section more than once before you teach it. Do not paraphrase Scripture from memory; read directly from an NASB95 text so the fill-in blanks and the printed packet match exactly what the room hears.

Prepare the room, not only the content. This series asks a personal question and, in the final session, invites a written and spoken answer. A leader should be ready for real answers, some tentative, some resolved, and should not rush past the moment a person actually answers Jesus' question for the first time in their own words.

A Note on Scripture

All Scripture in this series is quoted from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition (NASB95). Every quotation is set apart as a block quote, carries its verse numbers, and closes with a full reference. Read every passage in its printed form rather than from memory, so the room hears exactly what the packet prints.

The Communicator's Study Brief

Who Do You Say That I Am? -- Knowing the Person and the Work of Jesus

CLERGY EQUIP | MATTHEW 16:13-26 | THE STUDY BEHIND THE FOUR SESSIONS

All Scripture: New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition (NASB95).

What This Brief Is, and How to Use It

The four session guides are built to be *taught*: they move a room through the text in a single sitting. This brief is built to be *studied*: it puts the full ground under a communicator before the first word is ever spoken in a room.

The session guides tell you what to say. This brief tells you what you are standing on when you say it: the geography, the grammar, the Old Testament roots, the Greek behind the English, the doctrinal fences, and the questions a room will throw back at you. A leader who has read this brief once, slowly, will teach the four sessions not as a script handed to them but as a text they have themselves entered.

Read this brief once, all the way through, before you teach Session One. Then keep it beside you as you prepare each session; every session has its own deep-dive below, keyed to the movements in that session's guide. You do not preach this brief. You preach *from* it. Most of what is here never reaches the room directly. It reaches the room as the confidence and accuracy of a teacher who knows more than they are saying.

A word on posture before any of the content: this series asks a personal question and, at its end, invites a personal answer. The communicator who has let the question do its own work on them first will teach it differently from one who has only prepared its answers. Take the series before you give it. That is the first instruction of the leader's guide, and it is the first instruction here.

The Passage as One Movement

Matthew 16:13-26 is a single scene with a single hinge, and the series honors it as one movement rather than four detached lessons. The whole Gospel of Matthew turns here. Watch the architecture:

- **16:13-17, The Question and the Confession.** Jesus asks, Peter answers, and Jesus names the Father as the source of the answer.
- **16:18-20, The Church and the Keys.** On the confessed Christ, Jesus builds His church and hands the keys of the Kingdom.
- **16:21-26, The Cross and the Cost.** "From that time" Jesus begins to teach His death; Peter, fresh from the keys, refuses it and is rebuked; Jesus gives the shape of following.

One phrase holds it together and marks it off from everything before it: "**From that time Jesus began...**" (Greek *apo tote ērxato*, 16:21). Matthew uses that exact phrase only twice as a structural seam: at 4:17, where Jesus *begins to preach* the Kingdom, and here at 16:21, where He *begins to show* the cross. The

confession at Caesarea Philippi is the fold in Matthew's Gospel: everything before it builds the question "who is He?"; everything after it walks toward Jerusalem and the cross. When you teach this passage you are teaching the seam of the whole Gospel. That is not an overstatement for effect; it is a structural seam Matthew's own wording marks.

The series thesis flows straight out of that architecture: **knowing the person and work of Jesus is the doorway into the Kingdom, and that doorway opens only as far as the knowing goes.** The same chapter gives the keys and shows them nearly dropped five verses later. Person and work are never separated in the text, so the series never separates them.

The Setting Is Part of the Sermon: Caesarea Philippi

The place is not backdrop. Jesus chose the ground.

Caesarea Philippi sat about twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee, at the southern foot of Mount Hermon, at the edge of the land, as far from Jerusalem and the temple as His ministry took Him. It was built around a spring that fed the Jordan, gushing from a great rock face honeycombed with carved niches. That rock face and its grotto were sacred to **Pan**, the Greek god of the wild; the town's older name was *Paneas* (it survives today as Banias). The cavern at the spring's mouth was popularly regarded as a **gate of the underworld**, a mouth of the realm of the dead. Older still, the region carried associations with **Baal** worship. Generations before, **Herod the Great had built a gleaming marble temple to Caesar Augustus** there, and it still stood; his son Philip the Tetrarch later enlarged the city and named it Caesarea Philippi: Caesar's town, Philip's version, to distinguish it from Caesarea on the coast.

So stand where the disciples stood. In one field of view: a shrine to a nature-god, niches full of lesser idols, a cave popularly tied to the realm of the dead, the old memory of Baal, and a marble temple declaring a man in Rome to be a god and a son of god. Every rival answer to "who is divine?" was carved into the same cliff.

There Jesus asked, "But who do you say that I am?" And *there*, standing before a rock face full of dead gods and a cave called a gate of Hades, He said, "upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." The setting is doing theological work the whole scene long:

- "The Son of the **living** God" lands against gods who never spoke, never acted, never loved.
- "The **gates of Hades** will not overpower it" is spoken near a cavern the locals tied to the underworld.
- A church founded on a confessed, living Christ is planted at the precise spot where Caesar claimed divinity and Pan claimed the wild.

You do not need to lecture the geography in the room; two minutes is plenty, and Session One's guide guards you against turning it into a history class. But *you* should know it in full, because nearly every image in the passage is drawn from that cliff.

Session One -- The Question (Matthew 16:13-17)

The claim: the question of who Jesus is must be answered by each person, in the first person, and the answer that opens the Kingdom is given by God, not assembled by research.

THE TITLE JESUS USES OF HIMSELF

Jesus asks the poll question about “**the Son of Man**” (Greek *ho huios tou anthrōpou*). This was His own favored self-designation, and it is not merely a humble way of saying “this fellow.” It reaches back to **Daniel 7:13-14**, where “one like a Son of Man” comes on the clouds and receives an everlasting, universal dominion from the Ancient of Days. The title holds humanity and glory together in one breath: the truly human one who is also the enthroned one. So the very question (“who do people say the Son of Man is?”) already carries a claim inside it that the crowds miss entirely.

THE POLL PRODUCES A CATEGORY, NEVER A CONFESSION

The crowd’s answers (John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets) are all *respectful* and all *wrong*, and they fail in a single identifiable way: every one names Jesus by comparison to **someone dead**. A poll can only ever produce a category: great teacher, prophet, moral example, historical figure. It sorts Jesus into a known bin. It cannot produce a confession, because a confession requires that the person be known, not classified. This is the exact shape of modern error too: “a great moral teacher” is respectful, insufficient, and wrong in precisely the crowd’s way.

THE TURN TO THE SECOND PERSON

“But who do *you* (plural, but pressed personally) say that I am?” (16:15). The Greek pronoun *hymeis* is emphatic: *you*, over against the crowds. The question moves from third person to second person **and it has never moved back**. No one answers it by proxy: not by a parent’s faith, a denomination’s catechism, or the church that raised them. This is the session’s teaching center, and it is the whole series’ contract with the room: this is not four sessions of information, it is one question asked four ways.

THE SOURCE OF THE TRUE ANSWER

Peter confesses, and Jesus immediately names where the answer came from: “**flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven**” (16:17). “Simon Barjona” means “Simon, son of Jonah”: Jesus names Peter’s earthly parentage precisely as He denies that earthly parentage (flesh and blood) produced the confession. The knowledge that opens the Kingdom is *revealed*, not assembled.

Guard this from a false conclusion in the room: revelation is not anti-intellectual, and it does not make study pointless. It is the honest admission that the deepest knowledge of Christ is given by God, through His Word, to a heart that asks. The packet’s printed blank here is “**given**”; the guide’s Landing says “revealed” for warmth. Both name the same thing: this knowledge is received, not achieved.

WHY “DOORWAY INTO THE KINGDOM” CARRIES WEIGHT FROM THE FIRST SESSION

Session One frames the stakes with **Matthew 6:33**: seek first the Kingdom. In this house’s reading, seeking the Kingdom means aiming at God’s way of doing and being right (the Amplified Bible’s rendering of the verse, which the guide echoes) *and* seeking access into “the embassy of God,” the place of safety and provision. That “embassy” image recurs through Sessions Three and Four and does real connective work across the series; it is the teacher’s own framing device for the Kingdom, tied to Matthew 6:33, and it should be taught as an image that illuminates the Kingdom, not as a phrase lifted from the verse itself. Know its origin so you can hold it lightly: it is a lens, and a good one, not a proof-text.

Session Two -- The Person (Matthew 16:16 with 28:18-20)

The claim: discipleship is immersion into the character of Christ, and Christ must be *known*. Knowledge is the substance of the Christian life, not its first step only.

WHAT THE CONFESSION NAMES

"You are **the Christ** (Greek *ho Christos*, Hebrew *Mashiach*: the Anointed One, the promised, long-awaited Messiah), **the Son of the living God**." Two namings in one breath: the **office** (the Christ) and the **person** (the Son of the living God). Many accept the office who have never met the person; the confession requires both. "Living" (*zōntos*) is the whole contrast against the dead idols of the cliff face, and it echoes the Old Testament's own name for God as "the living God" over against the nations' gods.

THE EPISTEMOLOGY CHAIN: KNOW → BELIEVE → FOLLOW

This is Session Two's teaching center and the engine of the whole series:

A person cannot believe what they have no knowledge of. A person will not follow someone they do not believe.

Knowledge precedes belief; belief precedes following. So knowing Christ is not devotional garnish; it is the *precondition of discipleship itself*. Jesus grounds this in His own definition of eternal life: "**This is eternal life, that they may know You...and Jesus Christ whom You have sent**" (John 17:3). The Greek is *ginōskōsin*, relational, experiential knowing, not *knowing about*. Eternal life is defined by Jesus as knowing God.

A note for the studious communicator: this chain is drawn from the teacher's own "Character of Christ" material, which sits inside a larger framework than this course reproduces. The course deliberately borrows only the know/believe/follow chain and the "modeled before duplicated" principle. If a well-read leader goes looking for a fuller structure behind it, know that it exists but is intentionally not carried into this series. The chain stands on its own and teaches cleanly without it.

THE ONOMA BRIDGE: MATTHEW 16:16 COMPLETED AT MATTHEW 28:19

This is the most doctrinally freighted move in the series, and it must be taught with both confidence and restraint. The claim: Peter's confession at 16:16 is a **partial disclosure** that the Great Commission at 28:19 **completes**. At 28:19 Jesus commands baptism "in the **name** (singular: Greek *eis to onoma*, not "names") of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." One name, three persons, and the verse never pronounces the name. The rest of the New Testament supplies it: the Father has given His own name to the Son (John 17:11); the name above every name, at which every knee bows, is *Kyrios*, Lord (Philippians 2:9-11); and it is under that name, "the name of Jesus Christ," that the apostles baptized (Acts 2:38). Peter names the Son by revelation at 16:16, before the Son later discloses the full triune name into which every disciple is immersed at 28:19.

Keep this deliberately light in the room. One sentence is the whole dose: "the name, singular, is asserted here and never pronounced, and Peter's confession is where its disclosure begins." Do not build a lecture on it. It does its quiet work in a sentence and collapses into confusion if over-pressed. The deeper lexical grounding exists (the house's *onoma* lexical study) for a leader who wants to go further privately; it is not

for the room.

TRINITARIAN GUARDRAIL -- this is essential, not optional.

The singular name of Matthew 28:19 is **one divine nature and character owned in full by three genuinely distinct persons**: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three persons, never three masks worn by one (that ancient error is modalism, and this series rejects it). The single name unites their nature; it does not collapse their persons. Teach it as *one God in three persons* and the onoma point stays sound. Read Acts 2:38 the same way: it is apostolic baptismal *practice standing inside* the triune name of 28:19, not a rival “in Jesus’ name only” formula set against the Father and the Spirit. The church has always baptized into the triune name; “the name of Jesus” names the authority under which she baptizes, not a shorter list of persons. **If a room cannot hold the lexical point without hearing the three persons collapse into one, drop the point and keep the persons.** The persons of the Trinity are never worth trading for a lexical insight.

IMMERSION, AND “MODELED BEFORE DUPLICATED”

“To make a disciple is to **immerse** a person into the character of Christ.” The verb behind “baptizing” (*baptizō*) means to immerse, to dip fully, and the series reads the Commission’s baptism as immersion into the very character of God disclosed in Christ, not merely a rite performed on someone. Then the pastoral edge (Movement 4): a leader **cannot immerse anyone deeper than the leader has personally gone** (John 14:12; the source also drew on 1 Corinthians 11:1, but only John 14:12 is retained here). Jesus modeled everything He commanded before He commanded it. This is why Session Two belongs to the leaders as much as to any student: the depth of the disciple-maker sets the depth of the immersion. Say it gently; it is invitation, not indictment.

Session Three -- The Keys (Matthew 16:18-19 with Isaiah 22:22 and Matthew 18:18)

The claim: knowing the King opens the *administration* of the Kingdom; the keys are a steward’s office, not a weapon, and they reach only as far as revelation reaches.

This is the session most likely to draw pushback, because “binding and loosing” arrives in most rooms already distorted. Read the guardrail below more than once before you teach.

THE ROCK AND THE GATES

“You are Peter (*Petros*, a stone), and upon this rock (*petra*, bedrock) I will build My church.” The interpretive history here is famous, and you should know its shape so you can steer around a fight: readings have variously made the rock (a) Peter personally, (b) Peter’s confession, or (c) Christ Himself, the One confessed. **This series teaches the church as built on the confessed Christ:** the rock is the confession of the living Son, and Peter stands in it as the first confessor, not as an office of personal primacy. You need not stage the whole debate in the room; teach the confessed Christ as the foundation and you are on the series’ ground.

“The **gates of Hades** will not overpower it.” Gates are **defensive** architecture: they do not chase anyone. So the picture is not a besieged church barely holding on; it is a church **advancing**, and death’s own gates failing to hold against her. Spoken near a cavern the locals called a gate of the underworld, the image is

vivid: His assembly will walk through every gate death can close.

THE KEY IS A STEWARD'S KEY (ISAIAH 22:22)

The background of Matthew 16:19 is **Eliakim** in Isaiah 22, the steward set “over the house” of David in place of the disgraced Shebna: “Then I will set the **key of the house of David on his shoulder**; when he opens no one will shut, when he shuts no one will open” (Isaiah 22:22). The key-holder **does not own the house**. He opens and shuts strictly on the king’s behalf. That is the office Jesus hands the confessing church: stewardship, real authority, *derived* authority. (Note for the studious: Revelation 3:7 applies this same Isaiah 22:22 language directly to the risen Christ, who holds “the key of David,” a reminder that the church’s steward-key is always under the King’s own hand.)

Keep two keyrings distinct as you teach, or a room will fuse them: the risen Christ Himself holds “the keys of **death and of Hades**” (Revelation 1:18); the keys of the **Kingdom** are the ones entrusted to the confessing church. One sentence prevents a common conflation.

BINDING AND LOOSING IN ITS OWN CONTEXT

“Binding and loosing” is **rabbinic idiom for forbidding and permitting**. In the Hebrew halakhic vocabulary behind it, to “bind” (*asar*) is to declare forbidden and to “loose” (*hittir*) is to declare permitted. It is **teaching and governing authority**, declaring what the Kingdom permits and forbids, and Jesus extends the very same authority to the community’s discipline in Matthew 18:18, where the explicit context is a sinning brother, witnesses, and the church’s decision. Binding and loosing is the church’s Word-governed authority to teach and to discipline.

STANDING GUARDRAIL -- the single most important thing to get right in this session.

Matthew 16:19 (the keys, binding and loosing) and Matthew 12:29 (binding the strong man) are **two different texts doing two different works, and they must never be fused**. The keys are rabbinic idiom for teaching and governing authority: forbidding and permitting what the Kingdom allows. They are **not addressed to Satan** and are **not spiritual-warfare language**. Binding the strong man in Matthew 12:29 describes **Christ’s own plundering of the enemy’s house**, a different subject entirely. Fusing the two turns a steward’s key into a warfare incantation and misreads *both* passages. Most of any given room has only ever heard the fused version, so the correction must be **gentle and unhurried**: the goal is a room that loves the text more, not a room that feels corrected.

THE GRAMMAR GUARDS THE ORDER

“Whatever you bind on earth **shall have been bound** in heaven” (16:19). This is a **future-perfect** construction (a periphrastic future perfect, *estai dedemenon*, “will have been [already] bound”). It puts **heaven first**: earth ratifies what heaven has already settled, never the reverse. The keys do not *initiate*; they *administer*. Heaven is not waiting on our declarations. We are announcing heaven’s. And this is exactly why the keys were handed to the man who had just received revelation: **authority flows from knowing**. A church that wants more authority is really being invited into more revelation. That is the session’s Kingdom claim in one line.

Session Four -- The Work (Matthew 16:21-26 with Philippians 3:10)

The claim: person and work are one knowledge; a Christ known without His cross is a partial Christ, and the doorway into the Kingdom opens fully only at the cross.

"FROM THAT TIME": THE CONFESSION UNLOCKS THE CURRICULUM

"From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer...and be killed, and be raised up on the third day" (16:21). As noted at the top, *apo tote ērxato* is Matthew's structural seam. Jesus taught the cross **only to confessors**, and only *after* the confession, never to the crowds in the contested territory of Session One. The order preaches: **person first, then work, but never person without work**. And notice the curriculum's content from its very first lesson: not only suffering and death, but "raised up on the third day." The work of Christ is **cross and resurrection, one act of God**. Never teach the cross here without the empty tomb, because Jesus did not.

PETER'S STUMBLE

"Peter took Him aside and began to **rebuke** Him... But He turned and said to Peter, '**Get behind Me, Satan!** You are a **stumbling block** to Me.'" The same mouth that confessed now rebukes; the rock (*petra*) becomes a **stumbling block** (Greek *skandalon*, the trigger of a trap, a stone that trips) within a breath. Hold the room here with the guide's guardrail: **Peter is not an unbeliever**. He is the man with the keys, refusing the work because he loves the person on his own terms. "Satan" here names the *role* Peter has stepped into (an adversary setting his mind on "man's interests, not God's"), not a claim that Peter has lost his faith.

This is the sermon inside the sermon: **partial knowledge of Christ produces a partial gospel, and a Christ without a cross is a Christ of man's interests**. Every generation rebuilds Peter's error in its own style: a Christ who blesses but never bleeds, who empowers but never demands, who saves but never says "deny yourself." **Guard this movement from becoming a scolding of Peter**. He is every one of us, and the room should feel that before it is ever said aloud.

THE SHAPE OF FOLLOWING

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must **deny himself** (Greek *aparnēsasthō*, disown), and **take up his cross** (a Roman instrument of shameful public death; the image is unmistakable to Jesus' hearers) and follow Me. For whoever wishes to **save his life** (*psychē*) will **lose** it; but whoever **loses his life** for My sake will **find** it." The wordplay on *psychē* runs through 16:25-26. It means both **life** and **soul**, and Jesus turns it: grasp your life and you forfeit your soul; spend your life for Him and you find it. The work of Christ becomes the way of the disciple: what He did *for* us sets the pattern of what He does *in* us, death to self, life from God.

Hold Session One's promise together with this session's demand, because Matthew holds them together: *seek first the Kingdom and all these things will be added* (6:33); *lose your life for His sake and you will find it* (16:25). The embassy, with its safety and its provision, is real. And the road into it runs through the cross. **Provision follows the seeking; it never replaces it.**

GOSPEL GROUNDING -- hold this under the whole demand.

Denying self, taking up the cross, and losing your life are the **shape of following a Christ already received**, not the **price of receiving Him**. Salvation is God's gift, grasped by faith in the crucified and risen Lord (Ephesians 2:8-9); the cross the disciple carries is the **fruit and pattern** of that gift, never its purchase. When the series says "the work, embraced," it means the room **trusts the whole Christ**, the One who died and rose, not that anyone suffers their way to the door. Keep the sequence the series has kept from the first session: **grace first, then the cross we carry because we are already His**. A room that hears "carry your cross or you are not saved" has heard the gospel backward. Fence it plainly, and the final Landing's open door reads as **gift, not wage**.

KNOWING HIM WHOLE

Paul gathers person and work into one clause: "**that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death**" (Philippians 3:10). "Know" is *gnōnai*, the same relational knowing as John 17:3. Resurrection power and the fellowship of sufferings (*koinōnia*) are not two electives; they are one knowledge of one Christ. "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). The apostle who knew the most chose to know *this*. That is the person-and-work thesis in Paul's own voice, and it is where the series lands: **the person, known; the work, embraced; the Kingdom, open**.

The Doctrinal Fences, Gathered in One Place

A communicator teaching this cold should be able to state each of these in their own words before a room asks. Three fences carry the series:

- 1 **The keys are not warfare (Session 3)**. Binding and loosing = teaching and governing authority (forbid and permit), never a formula addressed to Satan. Matthew 12:29 (the strong man) is a separate text about Christ's own victory. Never fuse them. *This is the highest-risk item in the whole course*.
- 1 **The singular name is Trinitarian, not modalist (Session 2)**. One name, one nature, three genuinely distinct persons: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 is baptismal practice inside the triune name of 28:19, not a rival "Jesus-only" formula. If the lexical point starts to blur the persons, drop the point and keep the persons.
- 1 **Cross-bearing is discipleship, not the price of salvation (Session 4)**. Justification is by grace through faith in the crucified and risen Christ; the cross we take up is the fruit of that gift, not its purchase. Never let "the Kingdom stands open" be heard as a door earned by our own cross-carrying.

Two further standing positions sit quietly under the series and are **intentionally left unnamed in the room**, but you should know them:

- **Person and work are inseparable, but this is sequence-and-union, not merit**. "Person first, then work, but never person without work" describes the *order and inseparability* of how Christ is known, never a claim that works earn standing. The whole (crucified and risen) Christ is the object of saving faith.

- **The already/not-yet of sanctification.** “Deny self” is not self-erasure; it is the un-making of the old so the new can live. This ties to a broader sanctification frame the course does not spell out. Leaving it unnamed is deliberate (a room does not need the vocabulary to receive the reality), but if a thoughtful believer asks “does denying myself mean losing who I am?”, the answer is no: it is the death of the old self so the true self, remade in Christ, can live.
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Questions a Room Will Ask (and How to Meet Them)

Teaching this cold, you will meet these. Prepare them now.

- **“Doesn’t ‘upon this rock’ make Peter the first pope?”** Teach the confessed Christ as the foundation; Peter stands in the confession as its first voice. The series does not rest the church on Peter’s person or an office of primacy, and you need not stage the whole debate to say so plainly and warmly.
 - **“I was taught to ‘bind’ Satan in prayer. Are you saying that’s wrong?”** Be gentle. Say what the text is (teaching and governing authority; Matthew 18’s discipline context) and what it is *not* (a formula against Satan; that is a different text, Matthew 12:29). The goal is a room that loves the text more, not one that feels corrected. Many have only ever heard the fused version.
 - **“Should we baptize ‘in Jesus’ name’ (Acts 2:38) or in the triune name (Matthew 28:19)?”** Both are the church’s, and they are not rivals: the church baptizes into the triune name of 28:19; “in the name of Jesus” names the authority under which she does it. Do not let this become a Oneness-versus-Trinity fight in the room. Hold the three persons and the one name together.
 - **“If I have to take up a cross to be saved, how is that grace?”** This is the works-salvation question, and it is the most important one to answer cleanly. Salvation is God’s gift received by faith; the cross you take up is what following a Christ you already belong to looks like: the fruit of grace, never its purchase.
 - **“Was Peter lost when Jesus called him ‘Satan’?”** No. Peter is the confessing believer who, in a breath, set his mind on man’s interests. “Satan” names the adversarial role he stepped into, not a loss of faith. He is every one of us.
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Reference Shelf

Key terms, gathered:

- *ho huios tou anthrōpou*: “the Son of Man,” Jesus’ self-title, rooted in Daniel 7:13-14 (the enthroned, dominion-receiving human one).
- *ho Christos / Mashiah*: the Anointed One, the promised Messiah (the “office” Peter names).
- *zōntos*: “living,” the whole contrast against dead idols.
- *eis to onoma*: “in the name” (singular) of Father, Son, and Spirit (Matthew 28:19).
- *baptizō*: to immerse fully; the series reads it as immersion into Christ’s character.
- *Petros / petra*: stone / bedrock; the church built on the confessed Christ.
- *asar / hittir*: bind (forbid) / loose (permit); the rabbinic idiom behind the keys.

- *estai dedemenon*: periphrastic future perfect; “shall have been bound,” heaven’s prior verdict.
- *apo tote ērxato*: “from that time [He] began,” Matthew’s structural seam (4:17; 16:21).
- *skandalon*: stumbling block, the stone that trips; Peter, from *petra* to *skandalon* in a breath.
- *psychē*: life / soul; the wordplay in 16:25-26.
- *gnōnai* / *ginōskō*: to know relationally (John 17:3; Philippians 3:10).
- *koinōnia*: fellowship, sharing; the fellowship of His sufferings (Philippians 3:10).

The passages the series stands on: Matthew 16:13-26 (the spine); Matthew 28:18-20; Isaiah 22:22; Matthew 18:18; Matthew 12:29 (as the text to keep *distinct*); Matthew 6:33; John 17:3; John 14:12; John 17:11; Philippians 2:9-11; Philippians 3:10; Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 2:2; Revelation 1:18; Revelation 3:7; Daniel 7:13-14; Ephesians 2:8-9.

A note on translation. This series quotes the New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition (NASB95), throughout, and the printed student packet blanks are keyed word-for-word to it. Read every passage from an NASB95 text in the room rather than from memory, so the room hears exactly what the packet prints. Where this brief paraphrases or renders Greek, it is study help for you and is marked as such. It is not for reading aloud as Scripture.

Before You Teach: A Short Checklist

- ☐ Read this brief once, all the way through.
 - ☐ Read all four session guides once through, so you see where the arc goes.
 - ☐ Read the Session Three guardrail more than once. It is the highest-risk moment in the course.
 - ☐ Have the three fences (keys / Trinitarian name / gospel grounding) in your own words.
 - ☐ Have an NASB95 text in hand for every session; do not paraphrase the passages from memory.
 - ☐ Prepare the room, not only the content: this series asks a personal question and, at its end, invites a written and spoken answer. Be ready for real answers, and do not rush the moment a person answers Jesus’ question for the first time in their own words.
 - ☐ Take the series before you give it. Let the question do its work on you first.
-

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Clergy Equip | *Who Do You Say That I Am?* | *The Communicator’s Study Brief*.

Session One — The Question

Matthew 16:13-17

CLERGY EQUIP | WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM? | SESSION 1 OF 4

NASB95 throughout. Part of the Leader's Guide introduced in `00-leader-guide-introduction.md`.

This Session's Role in the Series

The series opens where Jesus opened: with a question, not an assertion. This session establishes the difference between opinion about Jesus and knowledge of Him, and it plants the series thesis: knowing the person and work of Jesus is the doorway into the Kingdom. Nothing later in the series works until the question lands in the first person for every person in the room.

Entry into the Kingdom carries this weight because Jesus Himself names it the priority above every other priority (Matthew 6:33). Seeking the Kingdom means, as the Amplified Bible renders it, aiming at and striving after God's way of doing and being right, and it means seeking access into the embassy of God, the place of safety and provision. That is what is at stake in how a person answers this session's question.

Why This Matters (Background for the Leader)

You are teaching the hinge of Matthew's Gospel. Jesus withdraws with His disciples to the northern edge of the land, asks what the crowds are saying about Him, then turns the question on the Twelve directly. Peter answers, and Jesus names the source of the answer: not flesh and blood, but the Father Himself. Everything that follows in the chapter, the church, the keys, the cross, hangs on this single exchange. As the leader, hold that weight loosely in the room. Your job this session is not to resolve the tension the question creates. It is to let the question do its work and trust the arc to answer it fully by the last session.

Passage Overview

Matthew 16:13-17 is the hinge of Matthew's Gospel. Jesus withdraws to the far northern edge of the land, asks His disciples what the crowds are saying, then turns the question on them. Peter answers, and Jesus names the source of the answer: not flesh and blood, but the Father. Everything that follows in the chapter (the church, the keys, the cross) hangs on this exchange.

Movement 1 -- The Place Is Part of the Sermon (v. 13a)

Caesarea Philippi. Twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee, a center of competing worship: shrines cut into the rock face, a temple to Caesar, a region thick with gods and their claims. Jesus does not ask the identity question in a safe room among friends. He asks it where every rival answer is on display.

Say it to the room: we live in our own Caesarea Philippi. The question of who Jesus is gets asked in **contested** territory, then and now, surrounded by rival claims, and the setting has not made the question

harder. It has made it sharper.

Movement 2 -- The Poll (vv. 13b-14)

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” (Matthew 16:13-14, NASB95)

Every answer in the poll is respectful, and every one is wrong. Notice the shape of the error: the crowd can only name Jesus by comparison to someone dead. John, Elijah, Jeremiah. A poll produces a **category**, never a confession. A poll can tell you what people think. It cannot tell you who He is.

For the room: ask what today’s polls are saying. A good teacher, a prophet, a moral example, a historical figure. Respectful. Insufficient. Wrong in the same way.

Movement 3 -- The Turn (v. 15) -- TEACHING CENTER

¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15, NASB95)

The question moves from the third person to the **second** person, and it has never moved back. “But who do you say.” No one answers this question by proxy. Not a parent’s answer, not a denomination’s answer, not the answer of whatever church raised them. It is the question every generation, and every person in the room, must answer in the first person.

Hold the room here. This is the session’s center: the question itself, put personally.

Movement 4 -- The Source (vv. 16-17)

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 16:16-17, NASB95)

Peter’s answer did not come from research or exposure alone. Jesus names the source: the **Father** revealed it. This is why the series begins with asking rather than asserting. An opinion about Jesus can be borrowed, but the knowledge that opens the Kingdom is **given**. Revelation is not anti-intellectual. It is the honest admission that the deepest knowledge of Christ comes from God Himself, through His Word, to a heart that asks.

Room Questions

- 1 Where did your first answer to “who is Jesus?” come from? Whose answer was it originally?
- 2 What is the difference between what you know *about* Jesus and how you know a person you love?

- 3 The crowd compared Jesus to dead prophets. What do our modern comparisons (“a great teacher”) quietly deny?

Session One Landing

An opinion about Jesus can be borrowed. The knowledge that opens the Kingdom is revealed, and it is asked of each person personally. Now the question is put to this room, and the series will not let it go: who do you say that He is? Do not answer quickly. Answer truly. The next session looks hard at the answer Peter gave and what it means to actually know this person.

Leader Notes

- This session sets the series’ contract with the room: this is not four sessions of information. It is one question asked four ways.
 - Do not resolve the tension this session. Let people leave with the question working on them. The final session resolves it at the cross.
 - The packet’s Session One page carries the fill-in blanks, the discussion questions, a take-home question, and the memory verse (16:15-16). Its third discussion question is where the room names today’s polls aloud.
 - Guard the clock: Movement 1 tempts a leader toward a history lecture. Two minutes of setting is enough; the question itself is the sermon.
 - **Packet fill-ins this session, in order: contested (Movement 1), category (Movement 2), second (Movement 3), Father and given (Movement 4).** Say each bolded word plainly as you teach; the room writes as you speak. The Landing above says “revealed” for flavor, but the printed blank word is “given.”
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Clergy Equip | Who Do You Say That I Am? | Session 1 of 4.

Session Two — The Person

Matthew 16:16 with Matthew 28:18-20

CLERGY EQUIP | WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM? | SESSION 2 OF 4

NASB95 throughout. Part of the Leader's Guide introduced in `00-leader-guide-introduction.md`.

This Session's Role in the Series

The first session put the question to the room. This session examines the answer: what exactly did Peter name, and what does it take to actually *know* this person rather than hold a position about Him? The session lands the series' discipleship claim: knowing Christ is not the first step toward discipleship. It is the substance of it.

One-sentence recap for visitors: last session Jesus asked “who do you say that I am?” and we saw that the answer cannot be borrowed. This session: the answer itself.

Why This Matters (Background for the Leader)

Peter's confession names two things in a single breath, and the Great Commission completes what the confession begins. Matthew 16:16 is a partial disclosure. Matthew 28:19 is its completion: one name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, into which disciples are immersed. This is not a minor grammatical curiosity. Matthew 28:19 asserts that a single name belongs to three persons, and it never pronounces that name. The rest of the New Testament supplies the answer: the Father has given His own name to the Son (John 17:11), and the name above every name, the name at which every knee bows, is Kyrios, Lord (Philippians 2:9-11), and it is under that name, “the name of Jesus Christ,” that the apostles baptized (Acts 2:38). Peter's confession at Matthew 16:16 is the epistemological starting point of that whole disclosure. He names the Son by revelation before the Son later names the full Trinitarian character into which every disciple is immersed. Carry that connection lightly into the room. One sentence is enough: “the name, singular, is asserted here and never pronounced, and Peter's confession is where its disclosure begins.” Do not build a lecture out of it; let it do its quiet work.

TRINITARIAN GUARDRAIL -- read before you teach this.

The singular “name” of Matthew 28:19 is one divine nature and character owned in full by three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Genuinely three, never three masks worn by one. The single name unites their nature; it does not collapse their persons. Teach it as one God in three persons and the onoma point stays sound. Read Acts 2:38 the same way: it is apostolic baptismal practice standing *inside* the triune name of 28:19, not a rival “in Jesus' name only” formula set against the Father and the Spirit. The church has always baptized into the triune name; “the name of Jesus” names the authority under which she baptizes, not a shorter list of persons. If a room cannot hold the lexical point without hearing the three collapse into one, drop the point and keep the persons.

Passage Overview

Peter's confession names two things at once, and the Great Commission completes what the confession begins. Matthew 16:16 is the partial disclosure; Matthew 28:19 is the completion: one name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, into which disciples are immersed. This session walks from the confession to the Commission and shows that they are one movement.

Movement 1 -- What the Confession Names (16:16)

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16, NASB95)

Two namings sit in one sentence. The confession names the office and the **person**:

- **The office:** "the Christ," the Anointed One, the promised Messiah. Everything a waiting people longed for.
- **The person:** "the Son of the living God." Against the dead gods carved into rock in the region where this was spoken, "living" is not a filler word. It is the whole contrast. Every rival shrine on display held a god who had never spoken, never acted, never loved. Peter names a Son whose Father is alive.

Say it to the room: many people accept the office who have never met the person. The confession requires both.

Movement 2 -- The Chain: Know, Believe, Follow -- TEACHING CENTER

Here is the chain that drives the whole series:

A person cannot believe what they have no knowledge of. A person will not follow someone they do not believe.

Knowledge precedes belief. Belief precedes following. So the necessity of knowing Christ is not devotional garnish. It is the precondition of discipleship itself. A church can stay busy for a Christ it barely knows, and the busyness will not survive the first real test, because no one keeps following someone they do not actually believe, and no one truly believes a person they do not know.

³ "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3, NASB95)

Eternal life is defined by Jesus Himself as **knowing** God. Not knowing about. Knowing.

Movement 3 -- The Bridge to the Commission (28:18-20)

¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20, NASB95)

Watch the singular: “the *name*,” one name, three persons. The verse asserts the name and never pronounces it, which sends a leader back to the confession: the One Peter named in Matthew 16 is the One who discloses the full name in Matthew 28. Baptizing “in the name” is immersion into the character of God disclosed in Christ: the Greek verb’s own picture, whatever a tradition’s practice of the water. To make a disciple is to **immerse** a person into the character of Christ.

Put it in other terms for the room: discipleship is not a curriculum with Jesus as the mascot. It is a person, entered.

Movement 4 -- Modeled Before Duplicated

A leader cannot immerse someone into a depth of Christ’s character the leader has not explored personally. The person being led will not live deeper than the one leading has gone. Jesus modeled everything He commanded before He commanded it. The disciple-maker’s own depth sets the depth of the immersion.

¹² “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.” (John 14:12, NASB95)

For the room: whoever the room is discipling, whether children, new believers, or a wider circle, will not be immersed any deeper than the room itself has gone. This is why this session belongs to the leaders as much as to any student.

Room Questions

- 1 Peter named the office and the person. Which half of the confession is easier for you, and why?
- 2 Walk the chain backward: where following is thin, is the real gap belief? Where belief is thin, is the real gap knowledge?
- 3 If discipleship is immersion into Christ’s character, what specifically of His character have you explored deeply enough to immerse someone else into?

Session Two Landing

Knowing Christ is not step one of the Christian life, completed and left behind. It is the substance of the whole walk. The question from the first session has an answer, and the answer is a person, and a person must be known. The next session turns to what the confession received: Jesus handed Peter keys, and the text itself will tell us what they are and what they are not.

Leader Notes

- The “living God” contrast carries forward from Session One; a visitor gets it in one sentence.

- Keep the onoma material light in the room: one observation, “the name, singular, never pronounced,” is enough. The deeper lexical grounding is available if a leader wants to study it further, but it does not need to be preached.
- **Trinitarian guardrail (mirrors the callout above):** the singular name unites one nature across three distinct persons; it never collapses them. Acts 2:38 is practice inside the triune name of 28:19, not a rival formula. If the lexical point starts to blur the three persons into one, drop it and keep the persons.
- Movement 4’s application is this session’s pastoral edge. Say it gently and let it land. Do not scold; invite. If your setting runs alongside a children’s or youth program, this is the natural place to name that the depth of what younger disciples receive will not exceed what the adults leading them have gone after themselves.
- Packet page: the chain (know, believe, follow) as a fill-in; memory verse John 17:3.
- **Packet blank key (Session Two, in order): person / knowledge / follow / knowing / immerse.** Five blanks across four sentences (sentence 2 carries two). Watch one phrasing: the packet’s chain sentence reads “cannot believe,” with no “possibly,” and its John 17:3 line lands “**knowing** God, not merely knowing about Him.” The bolded words above sit in packet-phrased sentences; say them plainly and the room fills every blank.

Clergy Equip | Who Do You Say That I Am? | Session 2 of 4.

Session Three — The Keys

Matthew 16:18-19 with Isaiah 22:22 and Matthew 18:18

CLERGY EQUIP | WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM? | SESSION 3 OF 4

NASB95 throughout. Part of the Leader's Guide introduced in `00-leader-guide-introduction.md`.

STANDING GUARDRAIL, READ THIS BEFORE YOU TEACH THIS SESSION:

Matthew 16:19 (the keys, and their binding and loosing) and Matthew 12:29 (binding the strong man) are two different texts doing two different works. They must never be fused. The keys of Matthew 16:19 are rabbinic idiom for teaching and governing authority: forbidding and permitting what the Kingdom allows. They are not addressed to Satan, and they are not spiritual-warfare language. Binding the strong man in Matthew 12:29 describes Christ's own plundering of the enemy's house, a different subject entirely. Fusing the two turns a steward's key into a warfare formula, and it misreads both passages. This guardrail is not optional color for this session. It is the single most important thing a leader must get right in this session, because it is also the passage a room is most likely to have already heard mishandled somewhere else.

This Session's Role in the Series

The confession received keys. This session teaches what Jesus actually handed Peter: not a weapon, not a warfare formula, but a steward's office, authority to administer access to what the King has already settled. The session lands the series' Kingdom claim: knowing the King is the doorway into administering the Kingdom, and the keys reach only as far as the knowing reaches.

One-sentence recap for visitors: the first session asked who we say Jesus is; the second showed the answer is a person who must be known; this session, what that knowledge opens.

Why This Matters (Background for the Leader)

This is the session most likely to generate pushback or questions afterward, because "binding and loosing" carries a great deal of inherited baggage in many rooms, most of it borrowed from a different text entirely. Your job is not to win an argument. It is to let the actual grammar and the actual Old Testament background speak plainly, so the room leaves loving the text more rather than feeling corrected. The background text is Isaiah 22:22, where the key of the house of David is laid on a steward's shoulder. A steward does not own the house he serves. He opens and shuts strictly on the king's behalf. That is the office the keys describe, and it is why the future-perfect grammar in Matthew 16:19 matters so much: heaven has already settled what earth then ratifies, never the reverse. Hold this order carefully. The keys do not initiate anything. They administer what has already been decided. This is precisely why they were handed to the man who had just received revelation, not to just anyone in the crowd. Authority flows from knowing, never the other direction.

Passage Overview

¹⁸ “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:18-19, NASB95)

Three gifts sit inside two verses: a church built on the confessed Christ, gates that cannot hold against her, and keys placed in stewarding hands. This session walks them in order and lets the Old Testament and the grammar keep the room honest.

Movement 1 -- The Rock and the Gates (v. 18)

The church is built on the confessed Christ, and “the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” Notice what gates are: **defensive** architecture. Gates do not chase anyone. The picture is not the church under siege, barely holding on. The picture is the church advancing, and death’s own gates failing to hold. In a region where a rock face nearby was popularly associated with the underworld’s own gates, Jesus declares that His assembly will walk through every gate that death can close.

Say it to the room: the church was never designed to hide behind her own doors. She was designed to walk through the enemy’s.

Movement 2 -- The Key Is a Steward’s Key (Isaiah 22:22)

²² “Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder, When he opens no one will shut, When he shuts no one will open.” (Isaiah 22:22, NASB95)

The background of Matthew 16:19 is Eliakim, steward of the house of David. The key-holder does not own the house. He opens and shuts on the king’s behalf. That is the office Jesus hands Peter, and through the confession, the church: stewardship, real authority, derived authority. The key of the Kingdom is a **steward’s** key.

Tie this back to the first session’s language: the Kingdom is the embassy of God, the place of safety and provision every person is told to seek before everything else (Matthew 6:33). This session shows the embassy’s own administration. The steward’s key is access to the King’s house, held on the King’s behalf. What was sought in Session One is what the confession receives here. Keep two keyrings distinct as you teach: the risen Christ holds “the keys of death and of Hades” Himself (Revelation 1:18); the keys of the *kingdom* are the ones entrusted to the confessing church.

Movement 3 -- Binding and Loosing in Its Own Context -- TEACHING CENTER

Slow down here. This is where the text is most often taken somewhere it does not go.

What it is: binding and loosing means **forbidding** and permitting, the rabbinic idiom. It is teaching and governing authority: declaring what the Kingdom permits and forbids. Jesus extends the same authority to the discipline of a community:

¹⁸ “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 18:18, NASB95)

In Matthew 18 the context is explicit: a brother who sins, witnesses, and the church’s decision. Binding and loosing is the church’s Word-governed authority to teach and to discipline.

What it is not: this text is not addressed to Satan at all. Binding the strong man (Matthew 12:29) is a different text doing different work: there, Jesus describes His own plundering of the enemy’s house. Fusing the two turns a steward’s key into a warfare incantation, and the room loses both texts in the process. Say this plainly and kindly. Much of any given room has only ever heard the fused version.

Movement 4 -- The Grammar Guards the Order (v. 19b)

“Whatever you bind on earth **shall** have been bound in heaven” (emphasis added). The future perfect puts heaven first: earth ratifies what heaven has settled, never the reverse. The keys do not initiate; they administer. Heaven is not waiting on our declarations. We are announcing heaven’s.

This is exactly why the keys were handed to the man who had just received revelation. Authority flows from knowing. A church that wants more authority is really being invited into more revelation.

Room Questions

- 1 What changes in prayer and service when the key is understood as a steward’s key rather than a weapon?
- 2 Where have you heard binding and loosing used before? How does the Matthew 18 context, teaching and discipline, reframe it?
- 3 “Earth ratifies what heaven has settled.” What is one place you have been asking heaven to ratify your plan rather than asking to know heaven’s?

Session Three Landing

Knowing the King is the doorway into administering the Kingdom. The keys go with the confession, and they reach exactly as far as the knowing reaches. Come back for the final session, because the man holding these keys is about to stumble, and his stumble is the most important warning in the chapter: it is possible to know the person and still refuse the work.

Leader Notes

- This is the session most likely to generate pushback or follow-up questions. The “what it is not” turn must be gentle and unhurried. The goal is a room that loves the text more, not a room that feels corrected.
- The Revelation 1:18 distinction (Christ’s own keys versus the entrusted keys) is one sentence in the room; it prevents a common conflation without opening a new lecture.
- “Upon this rock” carries a well-known three-way interpretive history (Peter himself, Peter’s confession, or Christ as the One confessed). The Communicator’s Study Brief names all three and states this series’ position: the church is built on the confessed Christ, with Peter standing in the confession as its first voice. One sentence of awareness keeps a trained reader from thinking the guide has not seen the debate.
- If this is the third of four consecutive sessions, energy in the room may be at its lowest here. The gates image, the church advancing, carries the energy; lead with it.
- Packet page: Isaiah 22:22 background box, a “what this text is saying / what it is not saying” two-column, memory verse 16:19.
- **Packet blank key (Session Three, in order): defensive / steward / forbidding / shall.** The bolded words above sit in packet-phrased sentences. Watch two phrasings: the packet’s third blank reads “binding and loosing means forbidding and permitting” (say “means,” not only “rabbinic idiom for”), and the fourth blank wants the single word “shall” inside the 16:19 quotation; read the verse fragment slowly and the room catches it. The packet’s is/is-not two-column table mirrors Movement 3’s “what it is / what it is not” turn.

Clergy Equip / Who Do You Say That I Am? / Session 3 of 4.

Session Four — The Work

Matthew 16:21-26 with Philippians 3:10

CLERGY EQUIP | WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM? | SESSION 4 OF 4

NASB95 throughout. Part of the Leader's Guide introduced in `00-leader-guide-introduction.md`. This is the series' destination: the doorway opens fully only at the cross.

This Session's Role in the Series

The series has moved from the Question to the Person to the Keys. Now it arrives where Matthew drives it: the same chapter that hands Peter the keys shows him refusing the cross five verses later. This session lands the series' hardest and most necessary claim: knowing the person without knowing the work produces a partial gospel, and a partial gospel cannot open the Kingdom. Person and work are one knowledge.

One-sentence recap for visitors: Jesus asked who we say He is; the answer is a person who must be known; that knowledge received keys; this session, the knowledge that costs.

Why This Matters (Background for the Leader)

Hold this carefully as you teach: Peter is not an unbeliever in this passage. He is the man who just received the keys, and within five verses he rebukes the Lord he had just confessed. This is the sermon inside the sermon, and it is the reason this series refuses to separate the person of Christ from His work. A room can know a great deal about who Jesus is and still, like Peter, want that person on its own terms rather than on His. Guard this movement from becoming a scolding of Peter. He is every one of us, and the room should feel that before it is ever said aloud. The goal of this session is not to shame anyone for a partial gospel they may have been taught or have taught themselves. It is to complete, gently and firmly, what the whole series has been building toward.

Passage Overview

"From that time" (16:21) marks a turn: only after the confession does Jesus begin to teach the cross. Peter, fresh from the keys, rebukes Him and is called a stumbling block. Jesus then gives the shape of following: deny self, take up the cross. The series' question is answered fully only here.

Movement 1 -- "From That Time": The Confession Unlocks the Curriculum (v. 21)

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. (Matthew 16:21, NASB95)

Jesus did not teach the cross to the crowds in the contested territory of Session One. He taught it to confessors. The cross came only after the **confession**. The order matters and preaches: person first, then work, but never person *without* work. Notice also what the curriculum contains from its first lesson: not only suffering and death but “raised up on the third day.” The work of Christ is cross *and* resurrection, one act of God.

Movement 2 -- Peter’s Stumble (vv. 22-23) -- TEACHING CENTER

²² Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” (Matthew 16:22-23, NASB95)

The same mouth that confessed rebukes. The rock becomes a stumbling block within a breath. Hold the room here: Peter is not an unbeliever. He is the man with the keys, and he is refusing the work because he loves the person on his own terms.

This is the sermon inside the sermon. Partial knowledge of Christ produces a partial gospel, and a Christ without a cross is a Christ of **man’s** interests. Every generation rebuilds Peter’s error in its own style: a Christ who blesses but never bleeds, who empowers but never demands, who saves but never says “deny yourself.” Jesus calls that construction by its true name.

Movement 3 -- The Shape of Following (vv. 24-26)

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:24-26, NASB95)

The work of Christ becomes the way of the disciple. What He did *for* us sets the pattern of what He does *in* us: death to self, life from God. The immersion named in Session Two goes this deep. Character formation runs through crucifixion, not around it. Hold Session One’s promise together with this session’s demand, because Matthew holds them together. Seek first the Kingdom and all these things will be added (Matthew 6:33); lose your life for His sake and you will find it (16:25). The embassy is real. The safety and the provision are real. And the road into them runs through the cross. Provision follows the seeking; it never replaces it.

GOSPEL GROUNDING -- hold this under the whole demand.

Denying self, taking up the cross, and losing your life are the shape of following a Christ already received, not the price of receiving Him. Salvation is God's gift, grasped by faith in the crucified and risen Lord; the cross the disciple carries is the fruit and pattern of that gift, never its purchase. When the series says "the work, embraced," it means the room trusts the whole Christ, the One who died and rose, not that anyone suffers their way to the door. Keep the sequence the series has kept from the first session: grace first, then the cross we carry because we are already His. A room that hears "carry your cross or you are not saved" has heard the gospel backward. Fence it plainly, and the Landing's open door reads as gift, not wage.

Movement 4 -- Knowing Him Whole (Philippians 3:10)

¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; (Philippians 3:10, NASB95)

Paul's ambition holds person and work in one clause. Resurrection power and the fellowship of sufferings are not two electives. The person and the work are one **knowledge** of one Christ.

² For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2, NASB95)

The apostle who knew the most chose to know this.

Room Questions

- ¹ Where is your version of Peter's rebuke, the place you want the person but resist the work?
- ² What has knowing Christ actually cost you? If the honest answer is "nothing yet," what does the chain from Session Two say about that?
- ³ Read Philippians 3:10 aloud. Which half of the verse do you find yourself editing out?

Session Four Landing -- The Doorway Opens

The first session's question is answered fully only here. Who do you say that He is? The Christ, the Son of the living God, who was crucified and raised. The person, known. The work, embraced. And now the Kingdom stands open.

Close the series where it began: the question, put one last time to the room, but this time invite the answer aloud. Let the room say the confession together, first person, and send them out through the doorway they now know: not four sessions of information, but one Christ, known whole.

Leader Notes

- If this is the final of four consecutive sessions, people may be tired. Keep the session unhurried; the material is heavy enough without added volume.
- The corporate confession at the close is the series' formational moment and pairs with the packet's "My Answer" page (each person writes their own first-person answer before speaking it). If the moment calls for space to respond further, the session is built to allow it.
- Guard Movement 2 from becoming a scolding of Peter. He is us, and the room should feel that before it is said.
- The already/not-yet guard: deny-self is not self-erasure. It is the un-making of the old so the new can live. This ties quietly to a broader sanctification frame; there is no need to name that frame explicitly in the room.
- **Gospel grounding (mirrors the callout above):** the deny-self, take-up-the-cross demand is the path of the already-saved, not the price of salvation. Justification is by grace through faith in the crucified and risen Christ; the cross we carry is its fruit, not its purchase. Never let the Landing's "the Kingdom stands open" be heard as a door earned by cross-carrying.
- Packet page: Philippians 3:10 memory verse; the "My Answer" write-in; series map completed (all four doors).
- **Packet blank key (Session Four, in order): confession / man's / cross / knowledge.** The bolded words above sit in packet-phrased sentences. One watch: the third blank wants "cross" inside the 16:24 quotation ("take up his cross and follow Me"); the verse itself fills it when read aloud. The fourth blank's sentence is the packet's Philippians 3:10 line: "the person and the work are one knowledge."

Clergy Equip | Who Do You Say That I Am? | Session 4 of 4.

The Student Packet

Knowing the Person and the Work of Jesus

A Four-Session Study

All Scripture: New American Standard Bible (1995)

The Series at a Glance

	Door	Text	The Claim
Session 1	The Question	Matthew 16:13-17	The question must be answered in the first person
Session 2	The Person	Matthew 16:16; 28:18-20	Discipleship is immersion into the character of Christ
Session 3	The Keys	Matthew 16:18-19; Isaiah 22:22	Knowing the King opens the administration of the Kingdom
Session 4	The Work	Matthew 16:21-26; Philippians 3:10	Person and work are one knowledge; the doorway is the cross

The series in one sentence: knowing the person and work of Jesus is the doorway into the Kingdom.

How to use this packet: each session has its own pages. Bring the packet to every session, fill in the blanks as your leader teaches, take one question home with you, and carry one verse in your heart. If you miss a session, the pages still work: read the passage, work the outline, and rejoin the group the next time it meets. The last page belongs to you alone; it will not be used until the final session.

Session 1: The Question

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 16:13-17, NASB95)

FOLLOW THE TEACHING

- 1 Jesus asked His question at Caesarea Philippi, surrounded by rival shrines and rival claims. The place is part of the sermon: the question of who Jesus is gets asked in _____ territory, then and now.
- 2 The crowd's answers were respectful, and every one was wrong. They could only name Jesus by comparison to someone dead. A poll produces a _____, never a confession.
- 3 "But who do you say that I am?" The question moves from the third person to the _____ person, and it has never moved back.
- 4 Peter's answer was not produced by research or exposure alone. "Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My _____ who is in heaven" (16:17). An opinion about Jesus can be borrowed; the knowledge that opens the Kingdom is _____.

TALK IT THROUGH

- 1 Where did your first answer to "who is Jesus?" come from? Whose answer was it originally?
- 2 What is the difference between what you know *about* Jesus and how you know a person you love?
- 3 The crowd compared Jesus to dead prophets. What do our modern comparisons ("a great teacher") quietly deny?

ON THE DRIVE HOME

If Jesus asked you His question today, face to face, what would you say, and would it be your own answer?

Carry this verse: ¹⁵ He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" (Matthew 16:15-16, NASB95)

Session 2: The Person

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16, NASB95)

¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20, NASB95)

FOLLOW THE TEACHING

- 1 The confession names two things at once: the office (the Christ, the promised Anointed One) and the _____ (the Son of the living God). Against the dead gods in the rock face, "living" is the whole contrast.
- 2 The chain that carries the Christian life: a person cannot believe what they have no _____ of, and will not _____ someone they do not believe. Knowledge precedes belief; belief precedes following.

- 3 “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). Eternal life is defined by Jesus as _____ God, not merely knowing about Him.
- 4 Matthew 28:19 says “the name,” singular, of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To make a disciple is to _____ a person into the character of Christ. And no one can immerse another deeper than they themselves have gone.

TALK IT THROUGH

- 1 Peter named the office and the person. Which half of the confession is easier for you, and why?
- 2 Walk the chain backward: where your following is thin, is the real gap belief? Where belief is thin, is the real gap knowledge?
- 3 What specifically of Christ’s character have you explored deeply enough to immerse someone else into?

ON THE DRIVE HOME

Anyone you are discipling, whether family, friends, or a wider circle, will not be immersed deeper than you yourself have gone. What is one part of Christ’s character you will go deeper into this month?

Carry this verse: “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (John 17:3, NASB95)

Session 3: The Keys

¹⁸ “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:18-19, NASB95)

²² “Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder, When he opens no one will shut, When he shuts no one will open.” (Isaiah 22:22, NASB95)

FOLLOW THE TEACHING

- 1 “The gates of Hades will not overpower it.” Gates are _____ architecture. The picture is not the church under siege; it is the church advancing, and death’s gates failing to hold.
- 2 The background of the keys is Eliakim in Isaiah 22:22. The key-holder does not own the house; he opens and shuts on the King’s behalf. The key of the Kingdom is a _____’s key.
- 3 In its own context, binding and loosing means _____ and permitting: the church’s authority to teach what the Kingdom forbids and allows, extended to loving discipline in Matthew 18:18.
- 4 The grammar keeps the order straight: “whatever you bind on earth _____ have been bound in heaven.” Heaven settles; earth ratifies. The keys never initiate; they administer.

WHAT THIS TEXT IS SAYING, AND WHAT IT IS NOT

This text IS saying	This text is NOT saying
The church received a steward's authority from her King	The church owns the house or sets its terms
Binding and loosing is teaching and discipline: forbid and permit	Binding and loosing is a formula addressed to Satan
Earth announces and ratifies what heaven has settled	Heaven waits to ratify what earth declares
The keys go with the confession and reach as far as revelation reaches	Authority can be seized apart from knowing the King

(Binding the strong man in Matthew 12:29 is a different text doing different work: there Jesus describes His own triumph over the enemy. Keeping the two texts distinct lets each one say what it truly says.)

TALK IT THROUGH

- 1 What changes in your praying and your serving when the key is a steward's key rather than a weapon?
- 2 How does the Matthew 18 context (teaching and discipline) reframe how you have heard "binding and loosing" used?
- 3 "Earth ratifies what heaven has settled." Where have you been asking heaven to ratify your plan rather than asking to know heaven's?

ON THE DRIVE HOME

A person or a group that wants more authority is really being invited into more revelation. What would it look like for you to accept that invitation this week?

Carry this verse: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:19, NASB95)

Session 4: The Work

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. ²² Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." ²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:21-26, NASB95)

FOLLOW THE TEACHING

- 1 “From that time”: Jesus taught the cross only after the _____. Person first, then work; but never person without work.
- 2 The same mouth that confessed, rebuked. Peter wanted the person on his own terms, and Jesus named the construction: a Christ without a cross is a Christ of _____ interests.
- 3 The work of Christ becomes the way of the disciple: “he must deny himself, and take up his _____ and follow Me” (16:24).
- 4 Paul holds it all in one clause: “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings” (Philippians 3:10). The person and the work are one _____.

TALK IT THROUGH

- 1 Where is your version of Peter’s rebuke, the place you want the person but resist the work?
- 2 What has knowing Christ actually cost you? If the honest answer is “nothing yet,” what does Session Two’s chain say about that?
- 3 Read Philippians 3:10 aloud. Which half of the verse do you find yourself editing out?

ON THE DRIVE HOME

The first session’s question is answered fully only at the cross and the empty tomb. Before you sleep, answer it once more, out loud, in your own words.

Carry this verse: “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;” (Philippians 3:10, NASB95)

My Answer

This page is yours. In the final session you will write your own answer to the question Jesus asked at Caesarea Philippi, in the first person, in your own hand. Then the group will say it together as one confession. Do not write what you were taught to say. Write what you now know.

Jesus asked: “But who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15)

My answer:

Signed: _____ Date: _____

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16, NASB95)

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