

Preparation Study
Sunday, APRIL 22, 2012

MONDAY STUDY

Read Matthew 16:13-14 and answer the following questions:

- *Look closely at verse 14: when Jesus asked “who do others say the Son of Man is,” how many people had a response? (We don’t know specifically, but the fact that “they” answered indicates it was more than one disciple. We’ll talk about why that is significant in the next lesson point.)*
- *Why do you think people gave some of the answers they did?*
- *Have you ever felt like someone just didn’t “get” you? Do you think that is how Jesus might have felt at this point?*
- *This may seem like an obvious question, but let’s ask it anyway: why are we talking about the identity of Jesus when the lesson is supposed to be about how Jesus works through the church? (Because the church is the body of Christ, and if we are confused about what Jesus’ primary work was, then we will also be fuzzy on what the primary work of the church is.*
- *How do we know John the Baptist was a powerful preacher? (Matthew 3:5-6 says that people were coming from all over the region to hear him preach and to be baptized.)*
- *How do we know Jesus was a powerful preacher?*
- *What are some of the miracles Elijah did in the Old Testament? (He provided food for a widow in 1 Kings 17 and squared off against the prophets of Ba’al in 1 Kings 18).*
- *What are some of the miracles Jesus did?*
- *What is the danger of only focusing on part of Jesus’ work?*
- *So let’s bring it back to the church: Do people have only a partial picture of what the work of the church is?*
- *Who, or what, do people say the church is today?*
- *Are we ever a hindrance to the work God might do through us? How?*

Summary: Many people witnessed the work Jesus did but could not comprehend the significance of who He was and what that meant for His work. Similarly, lots of outsiders have impressions and opinions about the church, but for justified or unjustified reasons, they fail to see what the church really exists for. Christians must balance the call to not conform to what the world wants them to be with maintaining an accurately biblical impression in their communities. We will reach very few people for the gospel if our work and intentions are gray areas.

TUESDAY STUDY

Read Matthew 16:15-19 and answer the following questions:

- *Flash back to the first point. When Jesus asked “Who do people say I am?” lots of the disciples apparently spoke up. What is different about this question? (Jesus made it personal: “What about you? And this time, only one person spoke up.”)*
- *Based on the rest of Scripture, why are you not surprised it was Peter that spoke up?*
- *What kind of lives do you think we need to be living if we are to learn things that “flesh and blood can’t reveal?”*
- *What do you think Jesus did and did not mean when he told Peter He would build His church “on this rock?” (According to the lesson commentary, it could refer to Peter himself. Peter was the first leader of the church in Jerusalem, as Acts 15:7 implies. However, “this rock” could also be taken to mean the*

confession Peter had just made, and that the church would be built on the confession that Jesus is the Messiah. It does not necessarily mean that the formal leadership of the church would pass unbroken from Peter to a named successor.)

- *Whose church did Jesus say He would build? (His) What makes us forget that sometimes?*
- *How have you experienced the church prevailing against “the forces of Hades?”*
- *Why are we surprised when poverty, hardship, persecution and destruction come to the church?*
- *How do we maintain faith in this passage when we or our fellow church members are experiencing these things?*
- *What authority did Jesus give the church in this passage, and what do you think that means? (The church is given the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Keys represent access. When the confessing church proclaims Christ and people respond, the people gain access to the Kingdom. When we fail to proclaim Christ, people are kept from the Kingdom.)*

Summary: Peter may have made quite a few mistakes during his life of discipleship, but this made him a prime candidate to be an example for believers of all generations. In spite of all he got wrong, he did confess Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. Because of Peter’s confession, Jesus was able to freely declare His desire to manifest His work through us. And through Peter, we all receive the clear mandate to continue God’s work on earth.

WEDNESDAY STUDY

Read Matthew 28:18-20 and answer the following questions:

- *Why is it significant that Jesus “came near” to the disciples to give them this command? How does this tie verse 18 to verse 20?*
- *Is this a command for all Christians or a suggestion for whoever feels like it? Why?*
- *What examples have you seen of individuals or churches living this out?*
- *Why do you think this text is included in a unit called “Foundations of Our Faith”?*
- *If we are to teach others to observe everything Jesus has commanded us, then what is the implied expectation? (that we are committed to studying God’s Word ourselves)*
- *Are there any nations not covered by the Great Commission?*
- *Are there any believers that are exempt from it?*
- *Have you ever used “not being called” as an excuse to not go?*
- *According to verse 18, what is our reason to obey the Great Commission? (the authority of Jesus.)*
- *Look carefully. What is the command? (While it may appear to be “Go,” point out to the class that this is not actually a verb in the Greek. It’s a participle, and is best understood, “as you go...”The verb, and therefore the command, is to make disciples.)*
- *What are the details in verses 19 and 20? To whom are we going, and of whom are we making disciples? What are we to do with them when we make them?*
- *What is the promise, according to verse 20?*
- *What is it about missions that makes that promise so comforting and so necessary?*

Summary: No Christian can avoid the consistent theme throughout Scripture that God has called the church to work – not sit back and do fun things for itself, but to further His gospel for His glory. We cannot escape the mandate in Matthew 28:18-20.

THURSDAY THROUGH SATURDAY STUDY

Read the following articles included in your study packet:

1. "All Authority" – A Word Study;
2. The Disciples' Expectation of Jesus;
3. What did it Mean to Make Disciples?