

Foundations – Week 1
Matthew 16:13-26 | January 25, 2026
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Introduction

This week we will begin a short series titled Foundations
Going to look at 3 passages of Scripture over next 3 weeks that are important for us
Begin with a passage in Matthew 16 and asking the question, “what is the church?”

Joel and I are honored to serve together now at Lamar
But in our culture today, it can become easy to put too much weight on a leader
Obviously godly leadership is very important; however, it is not the most important
As we look in Scripture, it is ultimately not about a person or a persona
The leader and Savior of the universal church and of WBC is Jesus Christ

And this is what gives us tremendous hope and confidence as we shall see
Leaders come and go, but Jesus is eternal
He loves this body, He died and rose again for this body
He will continue to shepherd this congregation

Who Is Jesus? – Matthew 16:13 – 17

Jesus begins with a question - Asks what people are saying about Him
The disciples answer that others say He is John, Elijah, Jeremiah, or a prophet
These are BIG comparisons - people recognized He was a messenger from God
However, the public is still categorizing Him based on what they can understand

Jesus then turns to the disciples and asks, “who do you think I am?”
Peter responds that Jesus is no mere prophet - He is the Christ, Messiah

Idea of the Messiah included different concepts of the nature and character

Ideal king that would restore the greatness of the nation - most popular

Suffering servant and Son of Man/Son of God

Jesus will be seeking to show that the Messiah is all three

Peter also notes that Jesus is the Son of God

Jesus is God - Second person of the Trinity, same substance as God

When you look at Jesus you see God

Purpose – Matthew 16:18

Jesus then effectively says, “You named me correctly, now I will name you”

Peter will be a key leader in His plans to establish and grow His church

Church

The church is a group of people who proclaim Christ as Lord

It is the Body of Christ

Purpose is to worship God, grow in faith, serve and evangelize

Build

The church is designed to grow

This occurs through evangelism – no one is born into the church

Jesus will build it, not us

Cannot truly build church on our own

Paul in 1 Corinthians: some plant and water, God brings growth

My Church

Jesus is the head of the church

He is the one who died for it and created it

This is not your church in the sense of you own it and lead it

It is not my church

The church belongs to Jesus

As a church we must seek His direction and leadership

It will not be defeated

This does not mean that a church will never close its doors
It means that the church as a whole will never be defeated
See this in countries in which persecution is so rampant
Unable to stamp out Christianity

How? – Matthew 16:21 – 23

In the following passage Jesus shifts dramatically in his conversation
This is the key to understanding how He will accomplish building the church

He notes that He will suffer and die and rise again three days later

This is preposterous to Peter

The long-awaited King cannot suffer and die!

We need to get a marketing and political campaign going; establish our
by laws

We need to formulate our mission statement and core values

That is how you start a religion or an organization

But Jesus did not come to do that, He came to build His church
And the way He must do that involves His suffering, death, and
resurrection

In order to build the church Jesus must die and rise again for it

This is what makes Christianity so different

As a result, Jesus rebukes Peter

His words are not from God but from the devil - Not saying he is demon
possessed

Membership – Matthew 16:24 – 26

Called to Die

So, how does one become a part of the church?

Jesus gives us insight into this - They must follow the path that Jesus
walks

They too must take up a cross and follow Him

When Jesus calls us to take up the cross it does not conjure up nice images
The cross was the most horrific form of capital punishment
Jesus would experience the worst form of torture and death conceived at the time
And now He seems to be calling us to experience the same thing

This is not in the same way though
We do not take up a cross in the sense that Jesus did to provide salvation
When Jesus died and rose again it paved the way for us
But we are now called to follow Him in obedience

Jesus is calling us to die
Die to the attempt to be good enough on your own and save yourself
Die to our self-righteousness, self-indulgence, our will, our desires
Die to the pursuits of this world and trying to find pleasure in the things of this world

Called to Suffer
And He is calling us to suffer
Jesus does not promise that following Him will be sunshine and rainbows
He tells us in John, if they persecute me, they will persecute you
Paul tells Timothy – all who desire to live a godly life will face persecution

Bonhoeffer Quote – all have different crosses to bear
See this at the end of John with Peter; Jesus tells Peter he will suffer
Peter says. “what about John?” Jesus – don’t worry about him, you follow me

Other Options?

So, some may be thinking, “I don’t like the sound of this, I don’t think I’ll opt for that”
“I’ll choose some other religion that is a little easier on the suffering stuff”

“I’ll just ignore that portion of what Jesus says”

But Jesus does not give us that option

Jesus is not one item we can choose on the menu of religions

Jesus is the only thing on the menu, everything else is just graffiti added by the world

John 14 – I am the way, no one comes to the Father except through Jesus

Furthermore, you either take Jesus fully or you do not take Him at all

We do not get to pick and choose what we obey

Lose Your Life

Jesus notes if you try to save your life by avoiding suffering & denial you lose it

He adds clarification by stating that if gain the whole world but lose eternity you lose

Can accumulate everything this world has to offer and still lose in eternity

Can be most “Righteous” follower of another religion and still lose eternity

Save Your Life

But there is good news - Following the cross and the tomb there is the resurrection!

We follow Him to the cross and to the grave but then we follow Him out of the grave

If we deny ourselves and lose our life we will gain a much better life

Jesus tells us in John 10 that He has come to give us life and life to the fullest

He would tell Peter no one who has left everything to follow Him won’t be rewarded

John Piper has often said that In essence there is no true self- denial

Jesus is asking us to trade in old clothes for new

Run down house for a mansion

Junker car for a luxury or sports car

You have to trade something in, you can't keep the old, but you get something better

All of this is for heaven and eternity
And also for this life – although it is not the American dream

C.S. Lewis – we are far too easily pleased quote

Application

Follow Me

World wants to make Jesus into something they are familiar with, Peter does this

However, we must truly acknowledge who Jesus really is
He is the Son of God, fully God and fully man

To call Him anything less is to call Him a liar – C.S. Lewis quote

We must recognize this initially as we declare Him to be our Savior and Lord

And if we do this then we must heed His call to follow Him

There must be an initial time in which we take up our cross
In which we confess that we cannot save ourselves and we die to the old self
In that we will find life

But then there must also be a continual following of Jesus and carrying our cross

We must daily refocus our mindset and pick up our cross and die to ourselves

This is hard – it is impossible on our own

The same grace that saves us initially is the same grace that empowers us

Connect to this through our exposure to the Word and Prayer and fellowship

And then we must extend His call to others

Jesus gives us the incredible opportunity to call others to follow Him

Follow me as I follow Christ – 1 Corinthians 11:1

The Church is the People

When Jesus states that He is building His church we must be clear

The church is not a building and it is not a bunch of programs and activities

The church is a community of God's people on mission for His glory

We must guard against substituting a building or programs for the church

And guard against valuing our own preferences over the purpose of the church

We have a lot of opinions

Therefore, we must make sure to be abiding in Christ and allowing Him to direct us

And then have a mindset of humility (Philippians 2) that puts others first

Church Building

Jesus is building His church

The church is the means by which God is working in the world

It is not an option for the Christian, that just would not make sense

We are made for community and to be a part of the family

Jesus died for us individually yes, but He also died to build a community

To not be involved is to not be in God's will

Therefore, it is important for us to be involved in the body of Christ

And Jesus is building each of us individually

Therefore, it is imperative that we are abiding in Him

Matthew 7

Be concerned about the areas in which you need to grow and not your neighbor

Not saying there is not a need for church discipline and accountability

But sometimes our concern is not out of love but out of frustration

Get the logs out of your eye to clearly see the needs of others

It is also imperative that we focus as well on our emotional health

Our spiritual maturity will never exceed our emotional maturity

1 Corinthians 3:6,7

So continue to abide in Christ and allow Jesus to bear fruit through you

But remember, God brings the growth

Be patient with this

It is Worth It

I want you to hear this very clearly

It is worth it

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose

– Elliot

Listen to the voices of thousands of missionaries, Christians throughout history

Listen to the saints who have gone on before us who are in heaven shouting down

It is worth it to suffer, to deny yourself, to trade in this life

It is worth it to open up and connect, It is worth it to serve, worth it to give

It is worth it to share your faith