

SESSION 2

glow in the dark

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:16



Many of us who grew up in the church were taught to stay away from non-Christians because they would pull us away from our faith. As a result, the longer a person has followed Jesus, the more isolated they become from those who are far from God. In the same way, Jesus' disciples were taught that good Jewish believers should stay away from those who were ungodly because they would make you unclean.

Light is meant for dark places. Instead of leading His followers away from tough and scary places, Jesus often takes us on perilous paths to engage those far from God. Jesus has a big heart for those in the darkness, which means we should, too. If we follow Jesus, He calls us not to be safe but to be dangerous.

share your story

Open your group with a brief prayer asking God for insight as you study. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during your discussion.

Then, begin your time together by using the following questions and activities to get people talking:

How have you been looking at the people in your life differently since the last session?

Did you grow up in a home or religious system that taught you that to be more faithful meant isolating yourself from the "bad" people? Or did you grow up believing you were the kind of "bad" person religious people would stay away from? Share with the group.

What do you think it means to "glow in the dark"?

watch the video



NOTES FROM THE SESSION



hear God's story

READ MATTHEW 16:13-18

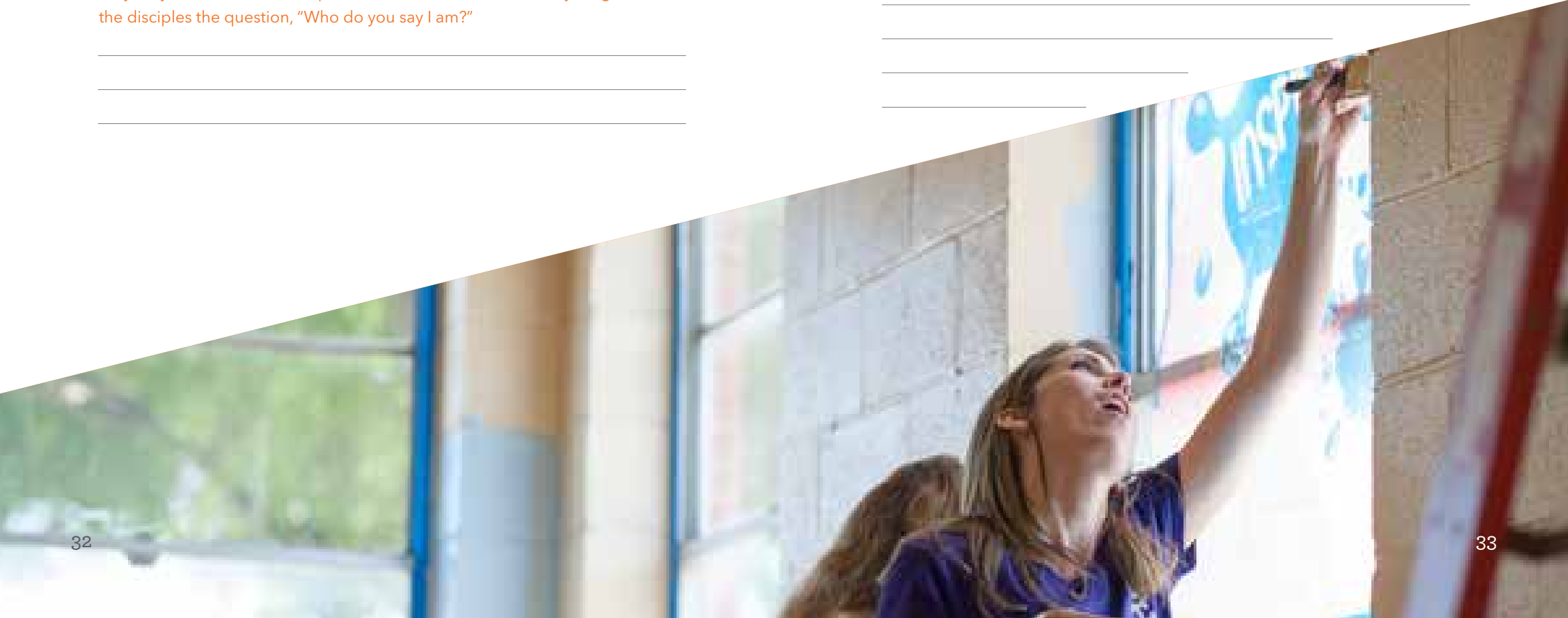
When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Why do you think it was so important to Jesus, who knows everything, to ask the disciples the question, "Who do you say I am?"

Do you see a connection between Jesus asking this question in Caesarea Philippi (regarding what we just learned in the video about this area) and Peter (who later denied Jesus) being the one who answered the question?

Why did Jesus call Peter "blessed"?

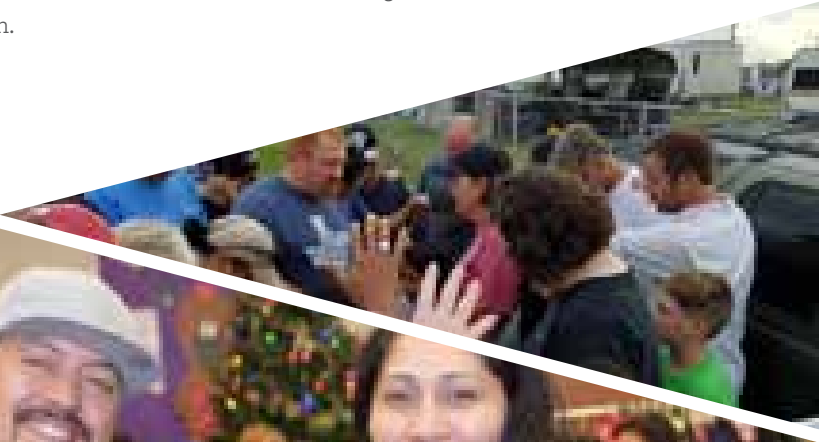
In your own words, what exactly is Jesus revealing in verse 18?





study notes

Matthew 16:18 says, “and I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” This is the first time the word, “church,” is mentioned in the New Testament—it literally means “the called out ones.” The disciples would have understood this word to mean something like a movement. When we think of church today, we most likely think of a building, but it is essential to remember that Jesus initiated a movement of people changed by His grace who would be empowered to transform the world. So, we don’t go to church—we are the church.



create a new story

In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you've learned from the teaching and Bible study. Then, think about practical steps you can take in the coming week to live out what you've learned.

Caesarea Philippi was the darkest place known to the disciples, and it was there that Jesus promised to build His church. In the same way that Jesus brought light to darkness, we are called to glow in the dark. What does this mean for you personally?

Jesus calls us to be brave and bold. Naturally, it is easier for many of us to isolate instead. What are reasons that we choose to isolate instead of glowing in the dark?

Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say I am?" What would you answer?



Jeff challenged us to not play defense but instead to play offense and bring the hope of Jesus to the people in our lives. In the last session, we asked you to write some names in the Circles of Life diagram. Who did you identify as the people in your life who need to meet Jesus? Go back to the Circles of Life diagram on page 18 to help you think of various people you come in contact with on a regular basis—people who need to know Jesus more deeply. Consider ideas for action and make a plan to follow through on one of them this week.

Here are some simple ways to connect with God. Tell the group which ones you plan to try this week, and talk about your progress and challenges when you meet next time.

- + PRAYER. Commit to personal prayer and daily connection with God. You may find it helpful to write your prayers in a journal.

- + DAILY DEVOTIONS. The Daily Devotions provided in each session offer an opportunity to read a short Bible passage five days a week during the course of our study. Take time to read carefully and reflect on the passage. Write down your insights about what you read each day. Copy a portion of Scripture on a card and tape it somewhere in your line of sight, such as your car’s dashboard or the bathroom mirror. Or text it to yourself! Think about it when you sit at red lights or while you’re eating a meal. Reflect on what God is saying to you through these words. On the sixth day, summarize what God has shown you throughout the week.

Give each person an opportunity to share prayer requests. If you’d like, you can write these on the Prayer and Praise Report on page 92.

Close your meeting with prayer.



for additional study

Take some time between now and our next meeting to dig into God's Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own. Jot down your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. You may even want to use a Bible website or app to look up commentary on these passages. If you like, share what you learn with the group the next time you meet.

READ MATTHEW 5:14-16

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

What is the purpose of the light?

Are you ever tempted to hide the light?

Why does Jesus call us the light?



READ ISAIAH 60:1-3

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”

What command does God give us in this passage?

The darkness obviously refers to life without God. Many people in our culture experience this darkness to be hopelessness. How can we be a light for people who have lost hope?

What promise does God give us?



daily devotions



Day 1

READ 1 PETER 3:15

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

REFLECT

How do you prepare yourself in case someone asks about your faith? Are you kind and loving? Or is your goal to simply convince them that you are right?



Day 2

READ EPHESIANS 5:15-17

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

REFLECT

People who don’t follow Jesus will remember our actions way more than our words. So ask yourself, “Do I make wise choices? Do my actions reflect Jesus?”



Day 3

READ 2 PETER 3:9

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

REFLECT

Is there someone in your life you have been praying about for a long time who still hasn’t accepted Christ? Don’t be discouraged. Instead, remember how the Lord has been patient with you and is also patient with your friend.



Day 4

READ ROMANS 8:26

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

REFLECT

Sometimes, it is hard to get out of bed, and sometimes, it is difficult to pray and live up to the purpose God has given us. On those days, don't forget that Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us. Ask God to open your ears and your heart so that you might experience the Holy Spirit, especially on days when you feel down and hopeless.



Day 5

READ ROMANS 10:15

And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

REFLECT

Don't forget that you are sent to bring the Good News! It is a privilege to share the gospel!



Day 6

Use the following space to reflect on what you learned this week and what God is saying to you.
