

# “Who is Jesus”

Romans 12:1-3 & Matthew 16:13-18

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Who is Jesus?

What would you say about Jesus to a friend?

A stranger?

An enemy?

If Jesus asked you who he is to the world and then to you personally, what would you say?

**Matthew 16:13-18 (NLT) “When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” “Well,” they replied, “some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.” Then Jesus asked them, “But who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.”**

Peter answered, “Jesus you are the Messiah.” Messiah means anointed one by God to love and save. Jesus is the Messiah who brings heaven, the kingdom of God, to earth through his presence, through his love, through his healing, through his transformation of lives, through his saving of us from our mistakes.

Peter answered, “Jesus you are the Son of the living God.” Jesus is the human face of God embodying the grace of God. Grace is our living God, moment by moment renewing us.

Why is Peter able to make these declarations about Jesus and not the other disciples? What is the key difference in the answer Peter gave from the answers the other disciples gave?

Perhaps it is Peter’s personal experience of Jesus transforming his life. The other disciples gave answers that did not reflect their own personal experience of God. The other disciples said what others were saying about Jesus.

Jesus is asking you, “Who am I?” It is a personal question. Jesus is not asking what the church says about Jesus, or theologians, or the media, or your friends, or family. Jesus wants to know what is your personal experience of God.

Peter answers from his personal experience. Peter gets many things wrong over and over again; yet, Jesus still loves him, forgives him, and keeps giving Peter another chance to get it right. Peter walks on water for a moment, becomes afraid, sinks, and then has the faith to ask Jesus to save him which Jesus does. Peter tells Jesus the trip to Jerusalem and his sacrifice for us should be avoided. Jesus lovingly corrects Peter’s misunderstanding. Over and over again Peter gets it wrong, messes everything up, says the wrong thing, does the wrong thing; yet Jesus still loves Peter, saves him from his mistakes, and keeps giving him another chance.

It is like Bill Murray in the movie Groundhog Day. Jesus keeps giving Peter another chance until through a lot of trial and error Peter discovers who to truly love. Peter discovers more and more of heaven. Peter’s life day by day was changed, getting better and better becoming more and more like Jesus.

It is more difficult to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus if you do not personally know who Jesus is. It is more difficult to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus if you are trying to play it safe instead of striving with all you got to become like Jesus. The Apostle Paul describes true worship as daily striving to become like Jesus.

Peter never gives up. Peter's experience of Jesus enables him to know that Jesus will always transform him. This is why Peter does not give up after he denies Jesus. Peter for a while weeps bitter at his latest mistake, then Peter opens himself to Jesus who forgives him and gives him an abundance of opportunities to express who Jesus is.

Peter has past experiences of Jesus forgiving him, healing him, lovingly correcting him, giving him another chance, transforming him so Peter has faith that Jesus will do it again every time he messes up. This is why Peter was able to act so boldly, to live so abundantly.

Jesus affirms Peter's confidence in the transforming power of God. Jesus said, "All the powers of hell will not conquer it." Nothing can separate us from God's transforming love. No mistake is ever too bad for God's grace.

Even though we are all flawed, broken, and prone to making numerous mistakes over and over, God is transforming us and doing wonderful ministry through us. Ultimately all of us will be transformed into the glorious person God created us to be.

Our failures are never the last word; rather, resurrection is the last word. So when we say something we wish we could take back. When we had good intentions but failed. When we hurt others and ourselves. Jesus steps in and transforms us making us better than we were before.

Pastor King Oehmig wrote, "How do we become enlightened as to Jesus' true identity? Revelation is recognized as revelation only by grace through faith. Peter didn't figure it out after weeks of pouring over mathematical models of Messiahship. It occurred to him after living with Jesus and sharing deeply in his life and work—and by God's opening up his heart and life through the inner testimony of the Spirit. But the recognition of God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ is not just an "aha!" or "oh joy!" experience. It contains a strong "you've-got-to-be kidding" element as well. Revelation grasps and shakes and turns and empowers and demands of those who recognize it. Anyone who comes to the knowledge of Christ as Lord is held and transformed by that revelation. Christ, embraced and accepted, never leaves anyone the same."

Samuel Weiser wrote, "However often we may deny Our Lord, Jesus never denies us. The way is always open for us to turn again and "make good," as Peter did. No one is immune from failings, but the great thing is to serve God in spite of them. This is Peter's lesson to us, that we should stand up in that highest courage, that truest humility, which is not afraid of its own past but goes on in spite of it, enduring the scorn of others and leaving the issue in God's hands; which bows its head to the storm and trudges steadily onwards in the footsteps of the Master."

Jesus is asking you "who am I?" We answer the question with our lives. The Apostle Paul wrote. **Romans 12:1-3(NLT)** "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all God has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind God will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship God. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us."

The message paraphrase puts it this way. **Romans 12:1-3 (MSG) *Place Your Life Before God*** "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for God. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what God wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-

**formed maturity in you. I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what God does for us, not by what we are and what we do for God.**

Worship everyday by striving to be like Jesus rather than a flawed person. The flawed person becomes hurt, frustrated, and hates. Jesus loves. The flawed person becomes afraid and distances themselves from other. Jesus loves. The flawed person wants justice and revenge. Jesus is grace and forgives. The flawed person is overwhelmed and sad. Jesus is joy. The flawed person strives to win at any cost. Jesus strives for community, so all can win. The flawed person is negative, cynical, skeptical, and grumpy. Jesus is positive and celebrates the good. The flawed person points out and talks about their own and other people's faults and mistakes. Jesus builds us and others up celebrating our accomplishments. The flawed person is consumed with a desire for more money, more stuff. Jesus is grateful. The flawed person is confrontational, judges others, and forces their will on others which leads to war. Jesus is peace and celebrates our common good. The flawed person sees problems, a world where we will never get it all right. Jesus is solutions and is transforming the world into all that is good and right and pure. Every day sometimes numerous times throughout the day, we need Jesus to transform us from the flawed person to the likeness of Jesus.

Michel Quoist tells of a moment of his transformation will he was changed from the flawed person who saw death to Jesus who sees life and love. Michel said. "This morning I discovered the extraordinary power of Christ's love at the bedside of a dying man. I sat there not knowing what to say. What can anyone say to a dying man? I watched him. I thought him ugly, this old man with a face ravaged by wrinkles, oily with perspiration, where who knows what mysterious bombardments dug those red and black craters in the stubble of his beard. His wife held his hand as he lay there motionless. She leaned over him. "My dearest, the pastor is here to say hello." Then, as if she had forgotten my presence, she caressed the old man tenderly. "My love, my beautiful love," she whispered. I was a little embarrassed and taken aback by her words. How could anyone be so blind? I thought. No doubt about it, love is blind. Then something extraordinary happened. Responding to his wife's tenderness, the old man opened his eyes and a pale, tremulous smile hovered across his lips, a smile that was like the sun trying to pierce through dark clouds. He looked at his wife for a long time, then the clouds dispersed as he smiled widely, his whole face glowing. Then I saw it. I saw what she had been seeing all along. He was handsome. She was right, oh so right! Love isn't blind. On the contrary, love lets you see what others don't. Love lets you see beyond the physical person, love lets you see his real self, unique; as only those who love each other can see, know and admire." Amen