

THE THREAD

DISCOVERING THE THREAD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE BIG-PICTURE STORY OF THE BIBLE

PART 3: THE GOSPEL COME TO LIFE

LESSON 7 || PETER'S CONFESSION OF CHRIST

SESSION SNAPSHOT

NARRATIVE PASSAGE: Matthew 16:13-20

GOSPEL FOCUS: Ephesians 2:19-22

STUDENT TAKEAWAYS:

- Understand that Peter rightly identified Jesus as the Son of God, the promised Messiah who had come to take away the sins of the world.
- Understand that the Church is built on the confessions of faith of all believers, with Jesus as the cornerstone.
- Consider their role within your church and the Church as a whole.

OVERVIEW:

As you continue looking at the big-picture story of the Bible, in this lesson, you'll encounter Jesus and the disciples in the region of Caesarea Philippi. This specific region was in the northern part of the Holy Land and was well known as a place of temples and idols set up to worship false gods. What a proper setting for Jesus to confront the disciples with the question, "Who do men say that I am?" Jesus was about to find out the real impact He had on the disciples by asking the most penetrating question of all, "Who do you say I am?" Peter's confession of faith is the basic building block of a relationship with God. In this lesson, you will lead your students to examine what has been called one of the most remarkable passages in the Gospel.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *Thread* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide the basic context for the passages you'll be studying.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible study lesson, we encourage teachers to help students know *who* wrote a particular book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHY TEACH CONTEXT?** Grasping the big-picture view of God's story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they're studying.

MATTHEW

- *Author:* Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the events he details in his gospel
- *Time frame:* Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50s or 60s AD, though some think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
- *Purpose:* Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to persuade them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. He was also probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel declares that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

EPHESIANS

- *Author:* The Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians. Of course, we know Paul as the one-time chief enemy of the Church. After his miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul would go on to have a position of great importance in the early Church and beyond. He wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament.
- *Time frame:* Ephesians was probably written by Paul from prison in the latter years of his life, sometime around 60 or 61 AD.
- *Purpose:* Paul had a very close relationship with the church in Ephesus. The letter covers general teaching on the work of Christ to redeem believers, unity among believers, and how believers are supposed to conduct themselves.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- **GETTING STARTED**– An introductory activity designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- **THE STORY**– A section featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- **THE THREAD**– A special emphasis where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- **WRAPPING UP**– An application-focused segment helping teenagers ask the question, “How am I impacted by what I learned today”?

GETTING STARTED

- *Goal:* To help students begin thinking about their own confession of faith.
- *Set-Up:* You will need a 3x5 card and a pen or pencil for each student.

FIRST, begin by asking the students if they’ve ever really been pressed to explain to someone what they believe about God. **Ask something like:**

- **Have you ever had someone ask you to explain what you believe about God?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **If so, what kind of questions did they ask? How did the conversation go? Did you feel comfortable giving an explanation?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **If not, do you think you’d be comfortable in that situation? Why or why not?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

THEN, pass out the notecards and explain to students that before you get into the lesson, everyone is going to write down a bullet point list of what they believe about God. To make it a little easier on them, tell them that you just want them to write down between 3-5 points. Let them know that they won’t have to share their cards with anyone if they don’t want to. Some possible answers might include: I believe in God; I believe in Jesus; I believe Jesus is God; I believe Jesus died for our sins; I believe we can be saved by trusting Jesus; I believe God has a plan for us, etc.

NEXT, after the students have had some time to make their list, explain to them that what they’ve written down is a confession of what they believe. **Say something like:**

- **When we normally think of a confession, we think of someone telling the police about a crime they committed or telling a priest about something they did wrong. Really, a confession is just an acknowledgment or admission of something; it’s not necessarily about something bad. What you’ve written down today is a confession, or acknowledgment, of your faith. You’ve confessed what you believe.**

THEN, ask something like:

- **What do you think you’d say or confess if Jesus stood before you and asked, “Who do you say that I am?”**
 - *Answers will vary.*

FINALLY, tell your students that today’s lesson is about a confession made by Peter to that very question. Tell them that they will discover what led to Peter’s confession and how Jesus responded to his words. Ask if there are any questions, then move on to the Bible study portion of the lesson called The Story.

THE STORY

- *Goal:* To help your students understand that their faith, their church, and the Church are all built on confessions of faith, and the cornerstone of that faith is Jesus Christ.
- *Set-Up:* None needed

FIRST, explain that the last few lessons have followed the life of Christ from His birth to His days of ministry. Remind them that in the last lesson, they studied the miracle Jesus performed by feeding the 5,000. Tell them that today, they will move on to a bold confession made by one of Jesus' disciples. Use the Connecting the Dots material to cover some of the events that occurred between your last lesson and this one.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

As you teach *The Thread*, there will naturally be some gaps in the story. This is an optional way for you to fill in some of the gaps between the last lesson you taught and this one. Use it to review or connect the dots to the events surrounding the passage.

- Caesarea Phillipi was in the northern part of the Holy Land, away from most of the places Jesus had spent most of His ministry years. The city was known for having ancient temples and idols of pagan gods and is an interesting place to have a discussion about real faith and the real God.
- Jesus had done some amazing miracles and made bold proclamations about who He was. He regularly demonstrated His control of the physical world and made claims about His power over the spiritual world.
- The disciples still struggled to understand everything Jesus was teaching them. The religious leaders weren't excited about what He was doing and teaching. They saw Him as a threat.

THEN, ask the students to find Matthew 16 in their Bibles or on their devices. You can use the information found in the Bible Background to give your students a better understanding of who wrote the book and why it was written. Remind them that Matthew is the first book in the New Testament and one of four books known as The Gospels.

NEXT, read or have a student read verses 13-14 and begin the discussion of the text by **asking something like:**

- **What do you think about their response to Jesus' question? Why do you think people identified Jesus like that?**
 - *Answer:* The talk was that Jesus might be John the Baptist brought back to life or a prophet like Elijah, Jeremiah, or other Old Testament prophets. There are several Old Testament prophecies of a great prophet that would come before the "day of the Lord."
- **What do their answers reveal about people's understanding of who Jesus really was?**
 - *Answer:* It shows that they didn't really understand who He was or what He had come to do.

THEN, read or have a student read Matthew 16:15 and **ask something like:**

- **So, what do you think is going through the disciples' minds right now? What would you think if He put you on the spot like that?**
 - *Answers will vary.* They were probably a little nervous. They probably thought something like, "Can't you just tell us so we don't look dumb?"
- **What do you think the correct answer to this question is? What answer was Jesus looking for?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Jesus was looking to see if His disciples realized who He really was.

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 16:16-17 and **ask something like:**

- **Let's break down Peter's confession real quickly. What is he saying about who Jesus is?**
 - *Answer:* "Christ" literally means "Messiah" or "Anointed One." Peter has realized that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah prophesied about in the Old Testament and the One whom the people had been eagerly waiting for. By saying that Jesus is the "Son of the Living God," Peter is acknowledging Jesus' divinity. He is saying that

Jesus isn't just a regular person that God picked to lead His people. So, in short, Peter said that Jesus is the divine Son of God Who has been anointed by God to come and save His people.

- **Now, let's look at Jesus' response to Peter in verse 17. What does He mean when He says that flesh and blood didn't reveal that to Peter, but His Father did?**
 - *Answer:* Jesus is saying that Peter did not make his confession based on anything from the human side, such as logic, evidence, or popular opinion. Peter came to faith in Christ because of a revelation from God.
- **Why is that significant? What does it say about human beings?**
 - *Answer:* It reminds us how our sin blinds us from the truth and that God opens our minds and pricks our hearts to understand who He really is. It puts our spiritual pride in its proper place.

THEN, say something like:

- **Peter's confession of faith was intensely personal. He believed that Jesus was the Son of God, the long-awaited Messiah, because God revealed it to him. Since the very first confession by Peter, untold numbers of people have come to know Jesus as their Savior. While there are many important confessions we can make about what we believe, the most important will always be whom we believe Jesus is.**

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 16:18-20. Say something like:

- **What Jesus meant when He said that He would build His church on this rock has been debated for a long time. Some see it as a reference to Peter himself, and others see it as a reference to Peter's confession. Jesus was talking directly to Peter when He said this, so it is safe to assume that, in some way, He was talking about Peter's role in the expansion of the Church. But it wasn't about Peter himself. It was about the content of Peter's confession and how God would use Peter to initiate the spread of that message around the world. We'll dig into this a little more in The Thread.**

IF STUDENTS DON'T HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE THREAD AND SEE WHERE YOU CAN FIND THE CONNECTION OF THE GOSPEL TO THE BIG-PICTURE NARRATIVE OF SCRIPTURE.

THE THREAD

FIRST, ask the students to turn to chapter 2 in the book of Ephesians. While they are turning, remind them that Paul wrote Ephesians from prison toward the end of his life. You can use the Bible Background section at the beginning of the lesson for more information on the book.

NEXT, read or have a student read Ephesians 2:19-22. Ask something like:

- **When you think about our culture today, do you think we're more individualistic or community-based? Explain.**
 - *Answers will vary.* We can tend to be more individualistic and isolated. We usually think first about ourselves before thinking of others. We focus on our needs and wants more than other people's needs. We're often encouraged to do what makes us happy without considering the bigger picture.
- **How does verse 19 address our individualistic tendencies?**
 - *Answer:* It refers to us as fellow citizens and members of a household. Those are more community-oriented descriptions. We aren't just "a citizen" or "a member." We're fellow citizens and members of a household. We're together.
- **What are some characteristics of a strong household?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Some good answers are unity, foundation, peace, and love.

- If we think about all of us, all believers, as members of one household, what unites us? What are we built upon?
 - *Answer:* We are united in Christ. This passage tells us that He is the cornerstone. He is what joins us together, not trivial other things like styles, preferences, and strategies.
- Think back to what Jesus said to Peter. What does it mean in this passage that the household is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets?”
 - *Answer:* Peter made the bold declaration that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. The church has been built on the foundation of proclamations like this. The Church was built on the foundation of those prophets and apostles who took this message to the world. As their message went forth, the Church began to grow. And so, today, that’s the message we take into the world. The household of the church has been built on the foundational message proclaimed by the apostles and prophets, with Jesus as our cornerstone, and we are responsible for continuing the spread of that message.
- What role do we play in continuing to be a part of the household of the Church?
 - *Answer:* We continue to proclaim that message. Too often, we get sidetracked by other things and lose sight of the fact that the main calling of the Church is to simply proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

FINALLY, bring it together by saying something like:

- Confessions of faith are strong declarations of what we believe about God. The first and most important of these declarations is who we believe Jesus Christ to be. This faith that saves is the very foundation of today’s church. Paul affirmed the words of Christ by telling the Gentile believers that they, too, were important parts of God’s Kingdom. Paul declared that Jesus was the cornerstone of faith and the church, even though He was rejected by many of his fellow Jews. As students, it is sometimes easy to think that you are not a vital part of the church. But Paul says that God knits everyone together to create His house of worship. You are important in the Kingdom, and the church should always welcome your exciting declarations of who God is and what He has done in your life.

IF YOUR STUDENTS DON’T HAVE ANY MORE QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE WRAPPING UP SECTION.

WRAPPING UP

- *Goal:* For students to consider their role within your church and the Church as a whole.
- *Set-Up:* None needed

FIRST, ask your students to look back at the cards they created in the opening activity. As they look over the cards, ask if there are any new declarations they would like to add after studying the Bible passages in the lesson. Possible new statements could include: I am a member of the household of God; Jesus is the cornerstone of my faith; I am an important part of my church, etc. Give the students time to add new statements to their cards.

THEN have the students look at their cards one more time. Ask a series of questions like the following:

- Do you really believe the confessions you wrote down on your card?
- Are you living your life in such a way that people around you know that you really believe the declarations you wrote down?
- How would your church and community be different if you lived a life that reflected your beliefs?

NEXT, ask something like:

- What are some ways you can be a part of the mission of our local church and the Church as a whole?
 - *Answer:* You can be consistent in your proclamation that Jesus is the Christ that brings salvation to His people.
- What are some practical ways you can do that? How does that impact our local church? How does it impact the Church as a whole?
 - *Answers will vary.*

FINALLY, close the lesson by challenging the students to think about the boldness and the power of the confessions they wrote down. Help them see that as a part of the Church in the world and their local church, strength comes from making strong confessions about God and living them out each day.

During the prayer time, ask if any students would be willing to share one or two of the confessions they wrote down that they would like to commit to being more serious about reflecting. Pray that each student would have the courage to live out their confessions both in their church and at school.

If there are no more questions, close your time in prayer.

- If you've purchased the corresponding devotional journal, remind students they'll be working through Week 33 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions and to give memorizing this week's verse their best shot.
- If you're utilizing the digital devotions included in the Thread curriculum, remind students how you'll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well that you want to share?
- Something that didn't work that you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns at feedback@youthministry360.com.