

Community Group Guide

the Church at Martinsburg

“Big Picture Focus”

Matthew 16:18

Dennis Williams

May 24, 2015



Scripture Passage

Have a volunteer read the following scripture passage(s).

Matthew 16:18

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Discussion Questions

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means.

1. In Matthew 16:18 God says that he will build his church. How are you being used in God's plan to build his church?
2. In Acts 2:42 the scripture says, "They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching". How are you devoting yourself to the teaching?
3. "And all who believed were together and had all things on common". They loved spending time together as a church and being with other believers. In what ways is your love for the church and its people growing or being challenged?
4. They were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. Have you ever considered doing this to support missions and to help those who have a need? Why or why not?
5. If you were asked to join a mission team, would you hesitate? What concerns would you have?

Prayer

As you pray with your group, consider praying for the following things:

- Any personal requests. Pray for the personal requests that may have been shared in your group.
- A desire to have the Word of Christ dwelling richly in the hearts of your fellow group members (Col. 3:16).

- Ask the Lord to help you keep a big picture focus on God's plan to glorify himself through his building of the Church.

Weekly Scriptures

Encourage your group members to consistently read Scripture. The daily Scripture reading plan from the church is be a helpful place to start.

Monday – Colossians 1:18
Tuesday – Ephesians 1:22
Wednesday – Ephesians 2:19-22

Thursday – Ephesians 5:23
Friday – Ephesians 4:11-13
Saturday – Matthew 16:18

Weekly Update

Remind your group of some of the important things coming up for the church.

Upcoming events:

Graduate Recognition

Graduate Recognition is coming up on June 7th. If you or your group members have completed any degree this year, wed like to honor you and your achievements. Visit graduate.martinsburgchurch.org to get signed up.

One-Day Preaching Workshop

On Saturday, June 27, Dr. Mark Johnson will be teaching a one-day preaching workshop at 50 Monroe Street. This even is open to all men interested in teaching the Bible.

Follow-up

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email, text, etc. to your group with some or all of the following:

- A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
- Encourage individual members of your group with specific passages of scripture that deal with something they might be experiencing.
- A reminder to pray for the requests made during your group time.

Commentary

Matt. 16:18

“You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.”

This is one of the most controversial and debated passages in all of Scripture. Roman Catholics have appealed to this passage to defend the idea that Peter was the first pope. The key question concerns Peter's relationship to “this rock.” In Greek, “Peter” is Petros (“stone”), which is related to petra (“rock”). The other NT name of Peter, Cephas (cf. John 1:42; 1 Cor. 1:12), is the Aramaic equivalent: kepha’ means “rock,” and translates in Greek

as Kēphas. “This rock” has been variously interpreted as referring to (1) Peter himself; (2) Peter’s confession; or (3) Christ and his teachings.

For several reasons, the first option is the strongest. Jesus’ entire pronouncement is directed toward Peter, and the connecting word “and” (Gk. *kai*) most naturally identifies the rock with Peter himself. But even if “this rock” refers to Peter, the question remains as to what that means. Protestants generally have thought that it refers to Peter in his role of confessing Jesus as the Messiah, and that the other disciples would share in that role as they made a similar confession (see Eph. 2:20, where the church is built on all the apostles; cf. Rev. 21:14). Jesus’ statement did not mean that Peter would have greater authority than the other apostles (indeed, Paul corrects him publicly in Gal. 2:11–14), nor did it mean that he would be infallible in his teaching (Jesus rebukes him in Matt. 16:23), nor did it imply anything about a special office for Peter or successors to such an office. Certainly in the first half of Acts Peter appears as the spokesman and leader of the Jerusalem church, but he is still “sent” by other apostles to Samaria (Acts 8:14), and he has to give an account of his actions to the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:1–18). Peter is presented as having only one voice at the Jerusalem council, and James has the decisive final word (Acts 15:7–21). And, though Peter certainly has a central role in the establishment of the church, he disappears from the Acts narrative after Acts 15.

“Church” (Gk. *ekklēsia*) is used only here and in Matt. 18:17 in the Gospels. Jesus points ahead to the time when his disciples, his family of faith (12:48–50), will be called “my church.” Jesus will build his church, and though it is founded on the apostles and the prophets, “Christ Jesus himself [is] the cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20). Some scholars object that Jesus could not have foreseen the later emergence of the “church” at this time, but the use of Greek *ekklēsia* to refer to God’s “called out” people has substantial background in the Septuagint (e.g., Deut. 9:10; 31:30; 1 Sam. 17:47; 1 Kings 8:14). Jesus is predicting that he will build a community of believers who follow him. This “called out” community would soon become known as “the church,” a separate community of believers, as described in the book of Acts. gates of hell (Gk. *hadēs*, “Hades”; cf. “gates of Sheol” [Isa. 38:10]; “gates of death” [Job 38:17; Ps. 9:13; 107:18]). “Gates” were essential for a city’s security and power. Hades, or Sheol, is the realm of the dead. Death will not overpower the church.