

Who Do You Say I Am?

For almost two years, Jesus and his disciples shared amazing ministry. They healed the sick, raised the dead, gave hope to the discouraged and good news to the hurting. They also fed hungry people by the hundreds. Throughout that time, however, something bothered Jesus. Matthew 16: 13-20 records Jesus expressing this by asking his disciples, "Who do people say I am?"

The answers came quickly. "Some say Elijah; some say John the Baptist, Jeremiah, or some other great prophet."

Then, Jesus went for the close. "Now who do *you* say I am?" More than a question about his role or job description, Jesus was asking: "What do I mean to *you*?"

Probably, the disciples were less quick to answer. Human nature prefers to talk about religion and other people. But, *me* talk about *my* faith? No way! Peter, however, chose to rely, "You are the Messiah." Jesus responded with astonishment and delight! Their relationship grew even more close and deep.

This story becomes especially interesting as we consider its potential for us. Peter enjoyed a close relationship with Jesus, but Scripture reminds us that God never plays favorites. God values everyone, equally. So, Peter's story is our Good News.

Peter brought three assets that we have to Jesus' question. First was his equivalent of our Sunday school knowledge about the faith. Peter was not a scholar as, for example, Paul was. But, knowledge's value is not by the pound. The knowledge Peter and we have is good enough for God to start with. What we have is always good enough!

Secondly, Peter was a businessman. He knew how to get the facts, analyze them, make a decision, take a measured risk, and make a commitment. This way of thinking and working would have been second nature to Peter. It is what he did every day at work.

Thirdly, Peter was human, like us. He had tastes and preferences, strengths and weaknesses. He did good things and made mistakes. His life experiences shaped how he perceived and responded to life. He was married, and had a family. He apparently knew the need to risk his self to build a relationship, and he answered Jesus' question.

Peter's assets - religious knowledge, workplace 'mindset,' and personal life - were all that he had to answer Jesus' question. He chose to risk, and spoke up. Then, look what happened! Jesus helped him become one of history's greatest change agents.

Jesus' question to Peter is now our question. Let us follow Peter's example, taking who we are and what we have, and respond to Jesus. Then, what will Jesus and *we* do?

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