



Summer

SCHOOL

WEEK 3 - LEADER GUIDE

"Labels" - Message by JB Powell

Start

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

When you were growing up, did people label you anything? If so, did you like it or dislike it and why?

Share

Welcome to our ongoing series entitled, "Summer School."

When you hear the words, "Summer School," you immediately begin to think of a place you would rather not be. There is so much to do in the summertime and school isn't necessarily on the top of most people's agenda. We would all rather be at a pool or on a vacation in the summer, not sit in a classroom.

In the last few weeks, we have talked about getting out of the classroom and sharing our faith, becoming teachers. We have tackled the very difficult topic of regret and how God wants us to see our regrets as teachers, so we can graduate from condemnation and live free in Christ and pursue the life God has for us.

This week, we will be looking at labels. Labels are helpful when you are at the grocery store, they help you know what you're buying, but what about when they are on people? What if you are mislabeled, but feel that you just can't overcome the label that has been put on you? Maybe you truthfully deserve the label because of the life you live. Whatever label you carry around, God promises to give us a new label when we have Jesus Christ in our lives.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Isaiah 62:2:

What does it mean that "the old life is gone; a new life has begun"?

If we know Christ, why do you think we struggle believing that "the old life is gone"?

How do you react to thinking about the fact that God gives us a “new name”?

Grow

God gives people new names. It is part of who he is to redeem and restore. In this process he gives new names with new purposes that will point to only God’s glory. Abram and Sarai desperately desired children, but couldn’t have them for so long. God gave them new names, Abraham and Sarah, which means the Father and Mother of many nations. Why? Because God had a purpose and eventually the promise came true with the birth of a little boy named Isaac.

Jacob, whose name meant “trickster” or “swindler” wrestled with the Lord and was given a new name, “Israel” which meant “wrestled with God” or “God will prevail.” Jacob desired to be blessed and was given a new name.

Simon son of Jonah, one of Jesus’ followers, was unpredictable and lived a difficult life as a fisherman. But Jesus declared something quite amazing to Simon...

Let’s read: Matthew 16:13-20

The Holman New Testament Commentary helps us understand the importance of Jesus’ declaration:

You are Peter parallels **You are the Christ**. Peter’s given name was Simon, but Jesus had nicknamed him Peter, meaning “rock” (John 1:42). Peter was actually the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic “Cephas.” The New Testament authors, under the inspiration of the Spirit, translated “Cephas” to “Peter” for their Greek-speaking readers. Jesus’ words presented a deliberate wordplay in the text, and it is probably the most controversial statement in Matthew: **You are Peter** (Greek, Petros, “rock”), **and on this rock** (Greek, petra) **I will build my church**. Upon this statement the Roman Catholic Church has based its doctrine of Peter being appointed the first in a long line of popes. Jesus’ statements of Peter’s authority in the next verse provide the basis for the Roman Catholic Church’s erroneous teachings regarding the authority of the papal office.

And, equally in error, many Protestants have reacted against the Roman Catholic interpretation by going to the other extreme, allowing the “rock” (petra) to mean anything but Peter himself.

Matthew’s record of Jesus’ wordplay on Peter’s name is significant. Petros is a masculine singular noun. Petra is feminine. And while clearly related, they represent a distinction. The masculine singular form refers to Peter as one singular rock. The feminine form may be understood to represent bedrock or a rock quarry. It is reasonable to understand Jesus’ statement to mean that Peter was one rock among a rock quarry (the disciples). It was upon this quarry of disciples (cf. “living stones,” 1 Pet. 2:5) and their understanding of Peter’s confession that Jesus would build his church.

This interpretation fits with the apostle Paul’s statement in Ephesians 2:19-22—that the church is “God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole [stone] building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord ... a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

What Jesus was saying is that Peter would be a “first among equals” in the history of Jesus’ church. Peter would be the initial spokesman among those who would

become the custodians of the revealed truth about Jesus' identity—the heart of the revealed gospel. Peter was the first to proclaim the truth about Jesus. In fact, in the Book of Acts, Peter is the first spokesman for the fledgling church before the entire world.

Although a lengthy commentary on the verses, what stands out to you about the importance of Jesus' declaration?

Jesus uses all kinds of people with lots of imperfections to build the kingdom of God. Is there one imperfection or struggle you have that makes you doubt God's calling on your life?

Move

A.W. Tozer once wrote, *"The bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts."*

As we read and dig into God's word, he reads us at the same time. God reveals himself to us. We realize that we are not perfect, but the good news is that Jesus Christ is perfect. So regardless of the label you feel you carry around, God promises that his grace is bigger than your labels.

2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV)

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Can you describe a time in your life where God's power was made perfect when you felt most weak? Why?

Why can being honest about our weaknesses to God help give us strength?

How and why is "grace" so important to continually remember?

Pray

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

To Go

Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT)

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

* Great additional reading by A.W. Tozer is "Knowledge of the Holy." It is a Christian