

Jesus has an identity issue.

He's had that identity issue even while he was with his disciples. In Matthew 16, Jesus asked the disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' They had several different responses; but then Jesus asked them directly, 'Who do *you* say that I am?'

It seems that everyone has their own picture of who Jesus is; and most often the Jesus they envision is someone that looks a lot like them.

I recently came across this listing of different images of Jesus. It is actually rather comical; but that is because it is so true. Give it a listen:

There's the Republican Jesus—who is against tax increases and activist judges, for family values and owning firearms.

There's Democrat Jesus—who is against Wall Street and Wal-Mart, for reducing our carbon footprint and printing money.

There's Therapist Jesus—who helps us cope with life's problems, heals our past, tells us how valuable we are and not to be so hard on ourselves.

There's Open-minded Jesus—who loves everyone all the time no matter what (except for people who are not as open-minded as you).

There's Touchdown Jesus—who helps athletes run faster and jump higher than non-Christians and determines the outcomes of Super Bowls.

There's Guru Jesus—a wise, inspirational teacher who believes in you and helps you find your center.

There's Boyfriend Jesus—who wraps his arms around us as we sing about his intoxicating love in our secret place.

There's Good Example Jesus—who shows you how to help people, change the planet, and become a better you.

Each of these examples of Jesus is a reflection of the current mood or the projection of our own desires. Sadly, most people don't know who Jesus is- the one revealed in the Gospels- because we spend more time creating a Jesus we like rather than seeking to discover the one who is revealed in the Gospels. So over the next four weeks we're going to help you answer the question: Who is Jesus?

The reason we need to know 'Who' Jesus is is because, 'Who you believe someone is impacts your relationship with them.'

Have you ever watched the TV show Undercover Boss? It is always fascinating to see the relationship that people have with the CEO when they don't know who he/she is. Certainly a lot of the employees who have been featured on the show would have acted differently had they known upfront that the person they were working with was the CEO. Who you believe someone is impacts your relationship with them.

So, who you believe Jesus is impacts your relationship with him.

And while it is nice to think about Jesus as our friend; it is equally important to remember that first and foremost Jesus is our Lord. And making the confession that 'Jesus is Lord' will make a major impact in your relationship with Jesus.

Now the word Lord is not one that we are familiar with; but the implications behind the word are life changing. Let me share with you three distinct ways that people were impacted by the word Lord, especially in Jesus day.

The word Lord was common in society during Jesus time. When you addressed someone and wished to honor them you would call them lord; much the same as we do today when we say, 'sir' or 'your honor.' So the meaning behind lord was a way of honoring someone more important than yourself. In a time when many people were servants; the word lord was a form of respect. It acknowledged that someone was above you and that you were willing to serve them above yourself.

There were also some political implications of the word lord. The word Lord was often associated with Caesar. A common phrase used during the time of Jesus was Caesar is Lord. To say, Caesar is Lord, was to acknowledge that Caesar was the supreme ruling authority.

When Christians began to be persecuted by the Romans they were often given the opportunity to avoid punishment by confessing Caesar is lord rather than the early creed of the disciples, Jesus is Lord.

There was also a religious component to the word Lord. Have you ever noticed when you are reading the Old Testament that the word Lord is always spelled with capital letters? That is because it is a reference to the Hebrew name for Israel's God. If you know anything about the Jews they would not dare to speak the personal name of God, Yahweh, and so they used the Greek word Adonai, which means lord. So for a Jewish believer to say Jesus is Lord it was the equivalent of saying Jesus is God!

So the word Lord implies far more than we can first imagine. But the big question today is what are the implications of Jesus is Lord to you and me?

Well here a few thoughts I gleaned from pastor Matt Miosky from the Gathering in St. Louis who recently spoke about this very same topic.

1. If Jesus is Lord, then you are not! The implication of the Lordship of Jesus in our lives means that your perspective on life begins with Jesus at the top of the 'pecking order.' If we are truly going to live out Jesus is Lord, then you are not as important as you think you are!

2. If Jesus is Lord, then you are declaring your commitment to Jesus. Many people get close to Jesus but never get around to really committing to Jesus because they don't want to be held accountable. You see this in a lot of things people get involved in. They hang around the outside, never really committing because they don't want to be that involved.

When I was a soccer coach I knew a lot of parents who would hang out in the parking lot and watch practice; but no matter how many times I asked them to help or get involved most of them said they couldn't commit.

People do the same thing with Jesus. So understand this; to say Jesus is Lord is not a surface declaration but a real commitment that changes everything about our life- your priorities, commitments, and everything about your life.

3. If Jesus is Lord, then your world view is changed. Bob Dylan said it in a song, 'You Gotta Serve Somebody.' [*you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed You're gonna have to serve somebody, It may be the devil or it may be the Lord But you're gonna have to serve somebody*] Jesus said as much in Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

If you are going to declare Jesus is Lord; then you have a choice to make. You can orient your life to serving and loving Jesus; or you will make something/someone god. [I saw this tweet yesterday from Lecrae which I think summarizes this very well:

Everyone is living for something, and that something is your master [Lord]. If your something isn't Jesus, what is it? If you are not living for Jesus; then what: yourself, your money, kids, job (anything can be or can become your idol). Jesus told us it is either/or; not both/and.

4. If Jesus is Lord, then your whole life is under the authority of Jesus. I've mentioned many times that we compartmentalize our lives. We like to think that one area doesn't have any bearing on the other areas of our life. But when we say Jesus is Lord we can't leave portions of our life outside the authority of Jesus Lordship. Many people try; but they fail because Jesus doesn't want to just be lord of part of your life- Jesus wants all of your life!

Jesus is Lord of your entire life, or he isn't lord at all.

5. If Jesus is Lord, then we give up our autonomy. When we say Jesus is Lord our lives are accountable to Jesus. If Jesus is Lord then every decision we make, every choice in our life, every opportunity we take is accountable to Jesus. That means that we need to examine our actions in light of our commitment to Jesus. If we say Jesus is Lord, then we will be accountable to Jesus for how we live our lives.

If we go back to Jesus discussion with his disciples about his identity I want you to think about the two questions Jesus asked. The first one was very general, "Who do people say that I am?" But then Jesus gets specific; he gets real personal. Jesus asks the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?"

The challenge to each of us is to understand that we each need to make a decision about who Jesus is; and specifically, "Is Jesus *your* Lord?"

Is Jesus *your* Lord?

Who you believe Jesus is impacts your relationship with him.

(Who I believe Jesus is impacts my life!)

Who you believe Jesus is impacts your life; how you relate to him, how you act and react to all of life is determined by your answer to the question,

Is Jesus *your* Lord?