

FIRM FOUNDATION

Discussion Notes

PEBBLE ROCK

We opened the service looking at Bristol's history of racism, from slavery to the inequality today.

- How much of this history was new information to you?
- Has it changed how you think about racism today or inspired you to new action?

Read Matthew 16:13-20

Philip explained that the name Simon means 'reed' which is easily blown around by the wind, whereas Peter (Petros in the Greek) means pebble which is obviously far more sturdy. This is a powerful encounter that Peter has with Jesus that changes his life and gives him a new identity.

- Have you had a stand-out moment like Simon Peter has here where Jesus changes your life?
- How has meeting Jesus changed your identity today?

However, Jesus doesn't want Peter to build his life solely on this experience. Instead, Jesus says that 'on this rock I will build my church'. Philip explained that here the word 'rock' is Petra, which means a huge rock. This 'Petra' doesn't refer to our experience but instead it is about our conviction of who Jesus is.

- Philip said that it is important that our faith is built on the conviction of who Jesus is (Petra) rather than just our experience of Jesus (Petros). Do you agree?
- If so, why is it important that we don't just rely on our own experiences?
- How do we move from having a faith based on just our experiences to having one based on our conviction of who Jesus is?

Philip pointed out the significance of this passage taking place in Caesarea Philippi. This was a huge rock face and a temple to the Emperor of the Roman Empire. Jesus is telling us that when we have faith in him it will outlast all the other things we can have faith in. This was shown to be true as the Empire fell and the Church grew because of the conviction the disciples had about Jesus.

- What are the "Roman Empires" of today that are falling around us?
- How can we resist the temptation to put our faith in other places?

Philip said that people who have a pebble faith keep it to themselves whereas people with a rock faith tell other people.

- Do you agree? If so, why?