

Sermon Reflections

What You Need to Believe (Matthew 16:1-17)

Summary: Beware of unbelief. Follow these twin directives to drive out doubt and unbelief from your heart.

1. Recognize Your Blind Spots (vv. 1-4)

- Recall a time when someone revealed a blind spot in your behavior or character by telling you about it. How did you respond at first? Questions? Surprise? Denial? Anger?
- When it comes to issues of faith, our presuppositions or working assumptions cause us to preclude certain alternatives. Take for example an evolutionist who does not believe in God. Such a person will be blind to the glory of God in creation because he has excluded God's creative agency as an explanation. How had the Pharisees and Sadducees adopted similar assumptions, and how did it affect their interactions with Jesus?
- Even the most startling events can fail to penetrate an unbelieving heart: a living man disgorged by a great fish; a living man stepping out of the tomb. After Jesus displayed the "Sign of Jonah," even some of the disciples doubted (Matt 28:17) and many of the Jewish leaders (priests) came to faith. (Acts 6:7) What do you take away from these (surprising) results? What does it reveal about the work of God in salvation/faith?
- See 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 and Romans 1:18-23. What do these passages add to your understanding of spiritual/faith blind spots and unbelief?

2. Remember His Faithfulness (vv. 5-12)

- There are many lessons that God has to teach us repeatedly, over and over. For each of us, there are areas where we struggle to trust Him. What are some areas in which you have grown less anxious as you have grown in faith? What are some areas for which much more growth remains? How can we help one another in these areas?
- Our perspective shapes the way we receive and interpret the things we experience. What is the impact of setting our minds on earthly things? (Romans 8:5-10) What is the impact of a heavenly perspective? (Colossians 3:1-4)
- What can you do to overcome your "spiritual amnesia" around God's faithfulness to you, and resist unbelief? What will help you remember? See Hebrews 3:12-13 and Psalm 77:11-13.