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A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

## Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- 1 Sayings such as "*Red sky at night, sailor's delight. Red sky in the morning, sailors take warning!*" are ancient and commonplace. What do such adages reveal about man's ability to observe and reason?
- 2 Read Matthew 16:1-4. It applies this ancient wisdom to something more important than the weather. According to v. 1, Jesus' adversaries request from him "a \_\_\_\_\_ from heaven." Had they seen any signs recently? (Hint: See the final eight verses in the previous chapter.)
- 3 **How can** they ask this?! Were they **blind?! (Need a hint? See John 9:39–41.)**
- 4 They'd already seen many **earthly** signs, such as healings, resurrections, and feeding of thousands, **but now** they want a "sign **from heaven**". What does that suggest to you about their honesty?
- 5 { In v. 4a, what descriptions does Jesus use for them?  
Look up those two words at <webstersdictionary1828.com>. What do you learn?
- 6 In v. 3b, of what does Jesus charge them? What's wrong with that? What does it reveal about them?
- 7 How does v. 4b reveal both mercy and judgment?
- 8 What is God's "ultimate sign from heaven"?
- 9 Read Matthew 13:10-15. What two groups are mentioned in v. 10-11? How are they distinguished?
- 10 Who all had originally received Jesus' teaching (see Matthew 13:2-3)?
- 11 Understanding regarding the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" must be "granted" (see v. 11). **Who** grants it? (Hint: see Matthew 11:25-27.)
- 12 **How** does one **come to be** among those "to whom it **has** been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" **rather than** among those "to whom it **has not** been granted"?
- 13 Mark 4:10-13 recounts the same incident, but gives **one critical additional insight** Matthew doesn't. Mark 4:10 says that **both** Jesus' "followers" and the "Twelve" received the mysteries of God's kingdom. What does it take to become Jesus' "follower"? Are you a follower? How can you know if you are?

- 1 Unlike other weeks, **this** “starter question” actually is quite important. You’ll want to make sure the following observations are made:
  - human beings are very good at observing natural phenomenon, such as the color of the sky
  - we’re also very good at making rational deductions: *“Hmmm, every time the morning sky is red, a horrible storm blows in!”*This removes the excuse, *“But God, I didn’t know or understand what you expected of me!”*  
This truth is central to the rest of today’s questions.
- 2 Yes, they’d seen tons of signs; signs of all sorts (healings, feedings, knowing their unspoken thoughts, etc.).
- 3 Yes, they were **spiritually** blind. John 9:39-41 and 2 Corinthians 4:3-4
- 4 As the man born blind said (John 9:24-34)—even an “earthly” thing such as curing blindness **has to be** from heaven!
- 5 “an evil and adulterous generation”
  - “evil” means “wicked, corrupt, perverse”
  - “adultery” is “idolatry, or apostasy from the true God”
- 6 You know how to make observations and rational deductions in the natural realm (weather), but you’re not doing the same in the spiritual realm. This is wicked and idolatrous!
- 7 **Mercy:** I’ll give you one more sign (and it’ll be a doozie!)  
**Judgment:** You get **only** one more—you’d better respond!
- 8 The resurrection. Predicted by the OT, by Jesus himself, and attested by many post-resurrection appearances.
- 9 “you” and “them”
- 10 “a large crowd”
- 11 **God** must grant knowledge of himself. ***If he doesn’t give it, you don’t get it.***
- 12 By wanting to badly to understand that you will dog Jesus’ steps and ask him to explain himself!
- 13 To be a “follower”, one must **follow!**  
So, **are you** “following”? What evidence is there that you are following Christ?

## Sermon Summary Key Text: Mark 8:10–26

Recently we studied Jesus' two miraculous feedings of thousands of people with just a few loaves and fish. Now, twelve men in a boat found that they only had one loaf of bread. You would think that they would connect the dots and trust him. Instead, they flunk the test and so Jesus gave the disciples a do-over. Jesus and his disciples got in their boat and traveled to the west side of the Sea of Galilee where they were met by some angry Pharisees who were ticked off at Jesus because he had pointed out their hypocrisy (Mark 7: 1-23). They didn't appreciate his criticism. What right did this upstart rabbi have to criticize them? So now they demand that Jesus prove his divine authority by giving them "a sign from heaven" (apparently healing a paralytic, casting out demons, calming a storm, raising the dead, walking on water, and feeding multitudes wasn't good enough)! Honestly, no amount of evidence would have been sufficient for these skeptics—they just kept raising the bar. This deeply grieved and disappointed Jesus. How tragic that the religious leaders of God's chosen people should be so hardhearted and spiritually blind! We see the same things happening among religious leaders today. The United Methodists are undergoing a split right now because in hard-hearted unbelief they have abandoned biblical authority and replaced it with their own ideas about truth and morality.

Sadly, it appears that the disciples were nearly as blind as the Pharisees (v. 13-21). Believers need frequently to pause and remind ourselves of God's past faithfulness. Doing so will encourage our faith in the present. As disciples, we need to learn that lesson. But the main lesson Jesus wants to teach his disciples has to do with leaven (yeast). In the Bible, yeast is consistently used as a metaphor for evil and corruption (Exodus 12:18–20; 23:18; 34:25; Leviticus 2:11; 6:17). Evil, like yeast, although small and hidden, quickly influences the whole. Undetected or unchallenged, false doctrine (Galatians 5:1–9), unjudged sin in the church (1 Corinthians 5), and hypocrisy (Luke 12:1) spread and infect many.

We can never be too careful about identifying and correcting false teaching. A small departure from biblical truth has a corrupting influence on both society and the church. One such false teaching today is "gender fluidity". It has become an unquestioned dogma that individuals have the right to define themselves as anything they wish. This doctrine of demons (1 Timothy 4:1) is obviously delusional and is destroying lives. (Imagine urging someone suffering from anorexia to diet or even to consider gastric bypass surgery! Those who wrongly perceive themselves to be overweight need help in understanding themselves correctly, not in losing weight.) All false teaching hurts people and corrupts culture. We must have the courage to lovingly oppose it. This is especially true regarding false teachings about God, Christ and salvation because those errors have eternal consequences. Jesus didn't often say "Beware," but when he did, it was critically important (v. 15)!

Next, Mark records a miracle not found in the other Gospels (v. 22-26). This unique miracle—blindness healed gradually, in stages—is an illustration of the disciples' own spiritual blindness (cf. 8:18). Sight is a common metaphor for understanding. This blind man was a great picture of the disciples' spiritual blindness. The disciples learned some valuable lessons on this trip, lessons that they remembered and applied later in their years of ministry. We need to learn these same lessons, specifically:

- 1. Don't seek after signs.** Choose rather to live by faith in God's Word. All the evidence we need is seen in the Cross.
- 2. Trust Jesus to meet your needs.** How quickly we forget God's past faithfulness!
- 3. Avoid the corrupting influence of false teaching wherever you find it.** God's Word defines what is true, right, and loving. Revelation knowledge is always a return to reality.
- 4. Fear God rather than man.** Courageously stand by biblical convictions, no matter the push-back. Love demands that we tell the truth.
- 5. Allow Jesus to work in your life, in his way and on his timetable.** Expect variety in how he deals with us. He is a wonderful counselor and knows just what each of us need.

## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

*"Five Question Bible Study" (see below) is useful for studying any topic.  
Let's use it to explore spiritual sight...*

**Monday**—Read Isaiah 6:1-13.

**Tuesday**— Read Jeremiah 5:20–25.

**Wednesday**— Read Matthew 13:10-16.

**Thursday**— Read John 3:16-21.

**Friday**— Read John 8:38–45.

**Saturday**— Read John 7:15-18.

Need blank copies for doing more  
"Five Question Bible Study"?  
e-mail: [Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com](mailto:Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com)

### Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]