

“Memo to the Hard-Hearted and the Slow to Understand” Matthew 16:1-12

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Ask yourself: Where do I fit in this story?

- **Jesus’ message to closed hearts:** Without an open heart, you’ll see the facts about Jesus but miss the most reasonable conclusions about those facts.

And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. ²He answered them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ ³And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. ⁴An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” So he left them and departed.

Matthew 16:1-4 (English Standard Version)

. . . “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Matthew 12:39-40 (ESV)

“When you look from the perspective of a scientist at the universe, it looks as if it knew we were coming. There are 15 constants—the gravitational constant, various constants about the strong and weak nuclear force, etc.—that have precise values. If any one of those was off by even one part in a million, or in some cases by one part in a million, million . . . there would have been no galaxy, stars, planets or people.” (From “The Language of God” by Francis Collins)

APPLICATION TIP

- Sincerely offer up this prayer: “God, open my heart to see the signs.”
- Read “Making Sense of God” by Timothy Keller with an open heart.

➤ **Jesus' message to believers who are slow to understand.**

When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶Jesus said to them, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ⁷And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, "We brought no bread." ⁸But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? ⁹Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹¹How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ¹²Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Matthew 16:5-12 (ESV)

- When a disciple remembers her experience with Jesus and processes its relevance, her faith is strengthened. (See Matthew 16:7-11a)
- The stronger a disciple's faith, the better she'll be able to recognize and resist teaching and teachers that dilute and corrupt the message of the Kingdom. (See Matthew 16:11b-12)

APPLICATION TIP

- Consider experimenting with "The Examen" this quarter as a way of processing life with Jesus.

(You can find a printed copy at the Info Center this weekend and it can also be found at our Lighthouse app. Simply hit Sermon Notes, then the January 14 sermon. A .pdf will be available.)

- Prayerfully ask yourself: Is there an "intruder alert" going off right now in my life that I am ignoring?

The Examen

The Examen is an ancient practice of daily reflection. The idea is to spend 10-15 minutes at the end of the day with this activity. It is designed to sharpen your sensitivity to the nudges and promptings of the Spirit; to help you discern the way that God is working in your life.

The goal is to develop a heart that is discerning God's presence and voice in each day. By looking backwards, we often gain insight about how He was working or drawing us, and that builds our faith and reliance on Him.

If you want to experiment with The Examen, do the following:

- 1) Place yourself consciously in God's presence, asking for His light as you review the day that has just past. Become aware of the Spirit of Jesus, inviting Him to show you the day in reflection.
- 2) Then ponder the following questions:
 - **What have I to be thankful for?** Think concretely and specifically, whatever the Spirit brings to mind.
 - **Where did I notice God being present during the day?** How has He been working in me? Did I hear His voice—His invitation—in some way? How did I respond?
 - **What strong moods—feelings, urges, etc.—did I experience, what attitudes lay beneath them, and how did I handle them?** Can I discern the origin of these feelings? Did I turn to God in them? Anything need correction?
 - **For what do I need to ask forgiveness and/or where does my heart need to be strengthened?** If needed, seek God's forgiveness.
 - **With what do I need God's help and guidance tomorrow?** Ask Him to be involved in your life in the coming day.

Simply put: Before you go to bed look over the day and see where you need to be thankful. Ask the Spirit of God to show you what He wants you to see. Ask Him also to reveal where He has been present in your life throughout the day—either in you or in others—and what He has been asking of you. Reflect upon your moods during the day. See if there is any underlying attitude that needs correction. Ask the Lord for forgiveness for those moments when you did not respond to his love. And, in closing, think about the following day and ask God for whatever help and guidance you need.