

Bible Study: The ABC's of signs and wonders.

You will get more out of this study if you read the verses and ponder the questions several times a day. You'll also get more out of the study if you discuss it with others. Jesus says where two or three are gathered together in his name, he is there with them.

Monday Matthew 16:1-4 (NRSV)

The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test Jesus they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He answered them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And 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. An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." Then he left them and went away.

Jesus did signs throughout his ministry. But he refused to do signs on demand for skeptics. He told them they wouldn't get a sign except for the sign of Jonah. The book of Jonah is only four short chapters; it's worth reviewing!

What do you think Jesus means about the sign of Jonah?

Tuesday John 14:11 (NRSV)

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

Matthew 24:24 (NRSV)

False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce great signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

Jesus told people they should believe in him because of the works he was doing. But he also said in the end times false prophets would do great works in an attempt to deceive even the elect.

Are signs trustworthy?

How can you tell the difference between a true sign from God and a counterfeit?

Wednesday John 4:46b-48 (NRSV)

Now there was a royal official whose son lay ill in Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."

Jesus confronted the faith of the royal official. Jesus said the official wouldn't believe until he saw some physical evidence.

In some ways this attitude might seem exemplary. For instance, it might keep the official from being fooled by things that were untrue. But appearances can be deceiving, so relying on physical evidence can lead to its own errors.

Why do you think Jesus challenged the royal official?

What are some signs and wonders you've seen pointing to God's ability in your life?

What are some signs and wonders you've seen pointing to God's ability in the world?

What kinds of proof do you need to believe in Jesus' ability to heal?

Thursday John 4:48-50 (NRSV)

Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my little boy dies." Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live."

Jesus continued to confront the man about his level of faith. Jesus challenged him to believe that Jesus could heal his son before he saw any sign of his son getting better.

Do you believe in healing before you can see evidence of it?

Friday John 4:50b-53 (NRSV)

The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way.

As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him that his child was alive. So he asked them the hour when he began to recover, and they said to him, "Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him." The father realized that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he himself believed, along with his whole household.

Signs often come after we need them, more as confirmation more than as guideposts. In this case, the man got a sign that his son was recovering long after he trusted Jesus' word that his son would live.

The above text says the man believed the word Jesus spoke and started on his way. On the way, when he learned his son was recovering, the text again says he believed.

What do you think the difference is between the two times he believed?

Saturday Acts 4:29-20 (NRSV)

"And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

How to be a Christian (in four easy steps)

- 1) *Talk to God about what's up.*
- 2) *Do whatever God tells you.*
- 3) *If you don't hear anything specific, use the resources at hand and do what God and Jesus have told you to do in the Bible.**
- 4) *Repeat.*

**Jesus told his followers lots of things, but here's a reminder of the basics:*

Love God with everything you've got.

Love those you see in need in the same measure as you love yourself. (Some specific ways Jesus trained his followers to love people in need were to announce good news to the poor, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons, and raise the dead.)

What needs of the world to you want to talk to God about?

What are you hearing God tell you?

What action will you take? When?

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