

Matthew *A New Perspective*

7. A New Experience

Matthew 16.13-17.13

Aim of the Study: This study looks at some of the experiences the disciples had with Jesus and thinks about how experience influences our faith and the value and limitations of that.

To Start With:

- What has been the best day of your life so far? Why was it so awesome? (If you felt so inclined you could get people to draw that day!)

Engaging with the Text

1. How sure are you that the gospel is real? Why do you have that confidence?
2.
 - a. How important do you think experience is in the Christian faith? Where and how do you tend to experience God?
 - b. Charismatic spirituality values experience and encountering God. What are the positive and negative things about having a faith which values experience as well as knowledge? (What criticisms do people tend to have of an experiential faith - and how far do you think those things are justified?)
3. Put yourself in Peter's shoes:
 - Read *Matthew 16. 13-20*. How do you feel at this point?
 - Now read *16.21-23*. How do you feel now?
 - Finally read *16.24-28*. What about now?
4. When has God corrected you in some way? How did he do it and how did you respond?

(NB. People may have a variety of experiences, from people correcting them, to prophetic words, sermons and bible passages)

5. Get people to close their eyes and visualise events while one person reads *Matthew 17.1-13*; read it slowly so that people can engage their imaginations. Then ask them to discuss:
 - What struck them most.
 - How they imagine this affected Peter, James and John.
6. Ask each person to briefly share a time when they have had a profound encounter with God. What happened and how did it change them? (If the group is large you might want to break down into smaller groups so everyone has time to share).

Reflect and Pray

Spend some time thanking God for the reality of his presence with us. Ask him to continue to reveal himself to us in ways that are helpful in the growth of our faith and mission. If people are uncertain or anxious about 'experiences' of God pray that he will reveal himself to them in a way they can understand.

