

life group study guide

January 25, 2015



The Power

READ: Mark 4:33-41

OPENING:

The beginning of Jesus' ministry included healing, calling disciples, answering the Pharisees questions, and teaching. People wanted to hear what Jesus was saying. In Mark 4, you see Jesus teaching a large crowd—a crowd so great that he had to go out into a boat in order to speak. The seekers lined the shore and became students at the water's edge.

Jesus spoke in parables, trying to get the crowds to understand as much as they could about the kingdom of God, while explaining more specifically to his disciples what the parables meant. In the midst of these lessons, however, came moments of greater understanding. With words, Jesus painted a picture of what the Kingdom of God looked like and felt like. With miracles, Jesus revealed the reality of that kingdom through the power of his Presence. Miracle-moments popped up all over the pages of the Gospels as signs, pointing to the undeniable divinity of Jesus.

DQ: Imagine if God only taught. Imagine if God only displayed. Why was the two-pronged approach of telling and showing so effective?

Both teaching moments and action moments seemed to have been important--moments to explain and enlighten; and moments to wow. Don't you love that God used both?! If he only wowed us, would we understand God's true purpose in the world. If he only taught us, would we fully believe in His words?

THE STORM:

Throughout the gospels, Jesus displays his power and Lordship over the physical limitations of illness and death, over the supernatural, and over creation. Today's passage shows us once again that He has power over creation.

DQ: Share about the worst storm you have been in? Where were you? How long did it last? Was there a real threat to your safety? Were you scared? What damage was done? How did you come out of the storm?

Listen to the descriptive phrases (found in the various gospel accounts and different translations) to describe this particular storm:

without warning; furious squall; fierce storm; raging waters; high waves breaking over the boat so that it was nearly swamped; of hurricane proportions; they were in great danger.

DQ: What do you think about this storm?

- Was this just a natural storm?
 - Bible notes tell us that because of the location of the Sea of Galilee (in a basin surrounded by mountains), it was susceptible to sudden, violent storms.
- As some have suggested, could the storm have been an attempt by the kingdom of darkness to discourage Christ's arrival on "the other side"—an attempt to thwart the Light of the World's journey into a very dark place to dismiss and destroy a legion of demons? (check out the beginning of Mark 5).
 - This seems possible as we see the way Christ rebuked the wind and waters almost as if they were disobedient. Could they have been temporarily acting up while the Son of God was sleeping?
- Or did God plan this squall in order to give Jesus an opportunity to display his power, and in turn increase the disciples faith?

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DQ: My biggest question about this account -- how could Jesus sleep through a furious squall of hurricane proportions that was about to sink his boat? Jesus must be an extremely sound sleeper!

- Was He exhausted?
- Was He so fully trusting in his Father's care for him that he fears nothing?

THE DISCIPLES FEAR & FAITH

The disciples thought they were going to die! This was the end! They went to wake him up. Hear how the three different gospel accounts record this moment.

- Teacher -- don't you care if we drown? (Mark)
- Lord save us! We're going to drown. (Matthew)
- Master, Master, we're going to do drown. (Luke)

In those written lines, we can sense their alarm. How can someone be sleeping through this? How can he not be afraid? How can our leader (teacher, Lord and Master) be so unaware and uninvolved in this crisis? Shouldn't he be helping? Can't he save us?

Isn't it interesting that Jesus responds to their cry of fear and desperation immediately, even though He himself appears to have perfect trust in the Father. He is not alarmed. He knows that God is going to take them through to where they are supposed to go. But Jesus calms the storm. Not out of His fear or for His safety. But for them. Because of their great fear.

DQ: How do the actions and the response of Jesus in this situation teach more about his character and his relationships?

But Jesus doesn't just calm the storm and respond to their fear. He **challenges** both their fear and their faith. *You of little faith, why are you so afraid?* Where, my disciples, is your faith in the midst of this storm? How can you let your fear trump your faith? This challenge seems to be of utmost importance.

There is a huge opportunity for application here. Is the storm raging inside of me more dangerous, more alarming than the storms raging around me? Do those storms need more attention than the storms of this world? Could it be that Christ is way more interested in quieting the winds and waves of fear found deep inside of me? And does He want to do that through the calming force of faith – faith in His sovereignty, His power, His presence.

DQ: Ask, discuss, share with your group the answers to some of the questions below.

- Do you more often want God to calm your storm, or to challenge your fear and faith?
- Does fear ever trump your faith in the midst of a storm?
- What other response could the disciples have had in this story?
- How could they have displayed their faith in the midst of their furious squall?
- How can you respond in faith instead of fear in the midst of your storm? What would that look like?
- Do we rush off after God has calmed a storm for us, or do we listen for our rebuke as well?
 - What do we miss if we don't allow Jesus to question the fear that resides deep inside of our hearts, or the diminished size of our small faith?
- When you see Jesus questioning the disciples, and consider he might question you too, what is your emotional response--do you feel relief, frustration, confusion, etc.?

TERRIFYING JESUS

He rebuked the winds—and it died down.

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He spoke to the waves – quiet, be still.
From the chaos and danger of a furious squall to complete calm.
To being nearly drowned, to being rescued.

And watch the effect. We've already heard that the disciples were *afraid* for their lives in the midst of the storm. But Scripture tells us they were *terrified* by the power of Jesus. The disciples must have been much more afraid *after* the storm was calmed than during it. For just a moment, they got to see humanity take a back seat to divinity. Their friend who was just as human and common as they were, just took control of creation. What they couldn't fully grasp yet was that the one who had spoken creation into being, just spoke to creation again – in power and sovereignty. And it listened to its Maker!

The disciples were terrified **and** amazed!! *Who is this? Even the wind and waves obey him!* There are two points here to consider.

1. This is a great question for the disciples to be wrestling. They are still trying to figure out who Jesus truly is. *Who is this?* They are of "little faith" because a person can't have great faith, strong faith, true faith until he/she figures out *the object* of their faith. Your own faith is only as strong and valid as the object in which faith is placed. The first step in having truly strong faith is being sure that the object in which you place your faith is trustworthy.
 - a. DQ: Do you consider the disciples slow in figuring out Jesus' identity as the Son of God (and therefore worthy of their trust and faith)? Or do you think it makes sense that they are still figuring it out?
 - b. DQ: How about you? Do you still have questions about who Jesus is or has he proven himself real and trustworthy?
2. Even at this point in their new journey together, the disciples have seen and heard amazing things from Jesus. And they are still asking *Who is This?* In a few more chapters, Jesus will turn the tables and ask them, *Who do you say that I am?* **CHECK OUT Mark 8:27-30** and see how the disciples respond? Have they become more sure? What has changed?

PROPHETS VS. JESUS

In the disciples' defense, in the Pharisees' defense, in defense of Jesus nay-sayers today, the Bible is full of prophets who also did crazy-big miraculous things. For example, Elijah brought the dead back to life too, healed leprosy and more. How were the disciples to know that Jesus truly was the Messiah? How at this point would they know he is the Son of God and not just another prophet?

- *In the first place, it isn't so much the miracles which make Jesus God, but the divine claims of Jesus which the miracles serve to validate. Jesus made certain statements that no other true prophet before him ever did, and then performed supernatural miracles to back up the truthfulness and validity of those claims. Thus, the miracles do not make Jesus God, but rather it is Jesus' own claims which demonstrate that he at least believed he is God. The miracles only served the purpose of providing divine validation for Christ's claims. No prophet or apostle ever made the claims that the Lord Jesus made, and none of their miracles were done to validate their claims of being Deity. The prophets went out of their way to show that they were nothing more than fallible human beings whom God empowered to carry out his specific purpose and will. This is quite unlike the Lord Jesus.*

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- *Secondly, Jesus has authority to grant others the ability to perform miracles. The NT is replete with examples of people performing miracles in Jesus' name. There is not a single instance in the entire Holy Bible where persons performed miracles in the name of prophets, apostles and/or saints.*
- *Third, even though it is true that specific prophets performed some of the same kinds of miracles that Jesus performed, no single prophet performed all of the miracles that Jesus did. Nor did any one individual prophet perform as many miracles as Christ performed.*

CREATION

Jesus's miracles established his deity. And as many of his miracles established his power over the created world, they also highlighted his connection to creation. Read the following passages and see how they connect with the account in Mark 4.

Psalm 107:23-32

- Here, the Lord spoke and stirred up a tempest, before calming the storm. The sea-faring men were at their wits end, they cried out to the LORD in their trouble and he rescued them. *He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. (v. 29-30)*

Proverbs 30:4

Isaiah 40:12-26

Job 38:4 – 39:30

- Certain passages in Job--echoed in Proverbs and Isaiah-- remind the people of the might and majesty of Creator God. God overwhelms Job with a description of his greatness and reminds Job that the wisdom that directs the Creator's ways is beyond the reach of human understanding.