

WARM UP

1. What is your favourite water activity? (i.e. water skiing, boating, fishing, swimming, parasailing.)
2. How does a large body of water make you feel, and why? (Note to group leader: This can include how you feel when in the water, or looking at the water, let the people. Some people fear large bodies of water. Others are in awe of them.)
3. What's the scariest weather or natural disaster you've experienced?
4. Who is the first person you contact when you're going through a challenge in life?

WORD

Key Scripture: Mark 4:35-40 (41) Companion Text: Matthew 8:18 23-27

³⁵ As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." ³⁶ So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). ³⁷ But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water.

³⁸ Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"

³⁹ When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

⁴¹ The disciples were absolutely terrified. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "Even the wind and waves obey him!"

Mark 4:35-41

¹⁸ When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake.

²³ Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴ Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat.

But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵ The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

²⁶ He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

²⁷ The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

Matthew 8:18, 23-27

Today's lesson will cover the account of Jesus calming the storm. While some of us may have experienced severe weather like the disciples, our lives are full of the "storms of life"—challenges that we face that our reduce confidence that God will show up.

1: God, are you sleeping?

The Gospel written by Mark captures Peter's testimony of when they crossed to the other side and a huge storm hit. Peter was a fisherman, so he knew storms. For him and the other fisherman disciples to be scared for their lives, it had to be a massive storm. Yet, they found their leader sleeping in the back of the boat.

Have you ever been in the middle of a crazy situation and wondered: God can you see this or are you asleep? Perhaps you've seen a news update of something terrible and you wonder why God did not step in. Many, if not all of us, have had these thoughts. Even those who lived during Jesus' time thought this too.

Jesus woke up and calmed the storm. This terrified the disciples because they knew only God could control the wind and waves, and they did not realise yet Jesus's identity of being fully human (and needing to sleep) and fully God (being able to command the created order).

Today, God can calm storms in our lives—weather ones and challenging circumstances ones. However, sometimes He lets the storm carry on. Why? Paul's letter to the Romans gives us a clue:

“We can rejoice when we run into problems and trials, because we know that this suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit...” *Romans 5:3-5*

God knows the storm is coming, and sometimes the storm is what we need. We may never get answers to some of our why questions, but we can have confidence that God is able and powerful enough to handle difficult things, and His presence through the Holy Spirit is with us. In this way, God suffers with us when we go through tough times.

2: There were other boats

Peter's memory of this event (in verse 36) includes that **there were other boats** who went with them across the water. They, too, would have been impacted by the incredible storm. They also benefited from the disciples waking up Jesus to calm the storm around them. Protection covered all the boats.

Today, God's protection in a believer's life can bring blessings to those around them. It makes us wonder who is watching our life and how we react and respond to the ups, downs, and mundane moments of life. Our storm effects more than just our own life. It is easy to get introspective and forget there are others going through the same thing, whether they are following Jesus or following the crowd.

3: Can we trust enough to get to The Other Side?

Then [Jesus] asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Mark 4:40

Jesus knew the disciples were afraid and lacked faith and trust in him. As humans we often have trust and memory issues. Trust can be compared to a leaky bottle that needs continual refilling. How can we refill this trust bottle, since the Bible tells us 365 times to not be afraid (or fear not), and to trust in the Lord? We trust by faith.

Faith can sometimes look like: God I don't know how to do this; I've tried and tried, but I fail. God can you help me? Simply asking for help reveals that we stop trusting in our own effort and rely on God to move by His power. Is God calling you to another side? Perhaps to see your storm a little differently, or to observe who-else is around and impacted too?

The author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote:

"... without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." Hebrews 11:6

Let's believe in His existence together and that He rewards those who seek him with His constant presence through the Holy Spirit. These can be the stepping stones of our faith as we face the challenges life throws at us together.

APPLICATION

1. What's something you've learned from today's lesson? Why does that stick out to you?
2. Describe a situation where you've wanted to "wake-up God?" Worded differently, describe a time when you felt God was "sleeping on the job." What did you do?
3. Who is someone who could be watching your life and/or experiencing the same life/work/school challenges? How can you share the hope of Jesus with them?

Prayer

1. Pray for and invite God peace, presence, power and protection to permeate all aspects of our lives through the His Spirit.
2. Ask the Lord to open your eyes to see how your life and the challenges you face (storms) impact the people around you (the other boats).
3. Prayerfully confess Ps. 121:4-5 to grow your faith: "Indeed, he who watches over Israel (his people) never slumbers or sleeps. The LORD himself watches over you! The Lord stands beside you as your protective shade."