

LESSON FOUR

FAITH THROUGH TRIALS

*He said to them, "Why are you so fearful?
How is it that you have no faith?"*

MARK 4:40 NKJV

REFLECTION

Storms are unpredictable. At times we see them coming, hiding in dark, rolling clouds that fill the horizon. If they come in the dead of night, we don't see them, but we hear the booming thunder and driven rain. Think back to the worst storm you remember experiencing. Maybe you were in your room listening to it, or out in the woods hiking, or maybe driving through it. Think about the awesome power of nature and your sense of helplessness. What were your feelings throughout the storm?

SITUATION

Jesus and the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee. Some of them were fishermen and knew the lake well. They were used to being out on the water, fishing, even throughout the night. They also knew about storms. It's difficult to know who was more scared when the wind and the waves got ugly: the fishermen who knew what was coming, or the landlubbers who had never seen such a storm before. The degree to which you can get "in the boat" with the disciples in this Bible passage will determine the impact it will have on your life.

OBSERVATION

Read Mark 4:35–41 from the New International Version or the New King James Version.

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

³⁵ That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." ³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just

as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

NEW KING JAMES VERSION

³⁵ On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." ³⁶ Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. ³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. ³⁸ But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

³⁹ Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" ⁴¹ And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

EXPLORATION

1. What were the conditions on the sea that caused the disciples to fear the storm?

2. How did the disciples react to the wind and the waves? How did Jesus react?

3. What does the disciples' question to Jesus reveal about their faith in him?

4. How did Jesus calm the storm? Why do you think he calmed the storm in this way?

5. What were the disciples' attitudes about Jesus after he calmed the storm?

6. Do you have the tendency to remain afraid rather than ask Jesus for help? If so, why?

INSPIRATION

And then there was the storm. The tie-yourself-to-the-mast-and-kiss-your-boat-goodbye storm. Ten-foot waves yanked the disciples first forward and then backward, leaving the boat ankle-deep in water. Matthew's face blanched to the shade of dumplings. Thomas death-gripped the stern. Peter suggested they pray the Lord's Prayer. Better still, that the Lord lead them in the Lord's Prayer. That's when they heard the Lord.

Snoring.

Jesus was asleep. Back against the bow. Head drooped forward. Chin flopping on sternum as the hull bounced on waves. "Jesus!" Peter shouted.

The carpenter woke up, looked up. He wiped the rain from his eyes, puffed both cheeks with a sigh, and stood. He raised first his hand, then his voice, and as fast as you could say "glassy," the water became just that. Jesus smiled and sat, and Peter stared and wondered, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (Mark 4:41).

We used to look at such scenes in elementary school. To keep us occupied, the teacher would pass out drawings with the question at the bottom "What's wrong with this picture?" Remember them? We'd look closely for something that didn't fit. A farm yard scene with a piano near the water trough. A classroom with a pirate seated on the back row. An astronaut on the moon with a pay phone in the background.

We'd ponder the picture and point to the piano or pirate . . . and say, "This doesn't fit." Something is out of place. Something is absurd. Pianos don't belong in farmyards. Pirates in classrooms. . . . And God doesn't chum with the common folk or snooze in fishing boats.

But according to the Bible he did. "For in Christ there is all of God in a human body" (Colossians 2:9 TLB). Jesus was not a godlike man, nor a manlike God. He was God-man. (From *Next Door Savior* by Max Lucado.)

REACTION

7. In what ways can you identify with the fearful disciples on the sea?
8. What do you think is the purpose of the “life storms” you experience?
9. How have you reacted to one of the “life storms” you’ve experienced recently?
10. How has God proven himself faithful to you during a difficult time?
11. What does this story teach you about Jesus and the way he works in your life?
12. How could you use this event from Jesus’ life to encourage someone who is experiencing a troubling time?

LIFE LESSONS

In the boat with Jesus were seasoned fishermen and inexperienced seamen. The storm overwhelmed them all. When “life storms” come, what you *know* can only help to a certain point. Experience tells you that you’ve got to keep bailing. But having a friend with you who has experienced a storm already may offer you some hope of surviving. When life storms come, your best hope lies with *who* is in the boat with you. Is there anyone other than Jesus you would want in your boat during a life storm of any kind?

DEVOTION

Jesus, let me make it official. You always have a space in my lifeboat. In fact, please accept control. Let me live today and every day based on the fact that you’re in charge. Teach me to let you steer my boat through any passage in life. And teach me to trust you when my only hope is in the one who can speak to storms and quiet the waves.

JOURNALING

Based on what you’ve from this lesson, what can you do to face future “life storms” with more confidence and faith in Christ?

FOR FURTHER READING

To complete the book of Mark during this twelve-part study, read Mark 4:35–5:20. For more Bible passages about enduring trials, read Matthew 11:28–30; John 15:18; 16:33; Romans 5:1–5; 8:28; 2 Corinthians 6:3–13; Philippians 3:7–11; James 1:2–4.