

# SMALL GROUP GUIDE

# MIRACLES

FROM THE GOSPEL OF MARK

## CIRCLE 01/04: **JESUS MOVES**

Sit down and grab some popcorn; the movie is about to start! The theater goes black and audio roars through the auditorium. Pre-film trailers flash action-packed scenes on the silver screen while everyone whispers, "Oh, I want to see that," to their friends. Movie trailers are designed to trigger excitement by previewing a highlight reel of an upcoming film. Do you know that Jesus's ministry has a highlight reel too? It's called the Book of Mark.

Mark, a member of Paul's missionary team, uses dramatic, direct, and compelling language to retell supernatural stories from the ministry of his friend, Jesus. Unlike the other gospels that focus on the messages Jesus preached, Mark zooms in on the miracles that Jesus performed. Readers of Mark's gospel, originally Gentiles living in Rome, found themselves vividly reliving the miracles of Jesus. As you study the Book of Mark, reflect on how the supernatural power of Jesus plays into your personal relationship with Him as well.

Early in Mark's gospel, Jesus launches into ministry in Capernaum, a small fishing village in Galilee. Jesus made quite an entrance in Capernaum that drew a lot of attention. His first move was to cast out a whole bunch of demons. Next, He healed many people outside the synagogue. Then He cured a man who was cursed with leprosy. Don't you see how this book comes across like a highlight reel? It's action-packed from page to page. As Jesus continued performing miracles, he earned celebrity status, and crowds began to follow Him. That brings us to this stunning story at the beginning of chapter two.

### **READ: Mark 2:1-9**

"A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?'"

It's a cool and quiet evening along the coast, but there is a lot of commotion coming from a house in the center of the village. Jesus is speaking there, which has caused a massive crowd to fill the rooms and spill out into the streets. This creates a big problem for five guys who desperately want to catch a glimpse of this miracle worker. They arrive at the crowded street, dumbfounded at the density of the crowd. They need to see Jesus, but they can't just shove their way through the congested crowd. Why? Because one of their friends is paraplegic. This means that he can't walk, let alone push through a crowd of people. This paralyzed man is fortunate to have some good friends, though, because they hatch a plan to get him a front-row ticket to see Jesus.

I am sure the paralyzed friend is politely saying, "It's okay, guys. Today is just not the day." However, his friends won't let this opportunity pass. They carry him to the roof above Jesus's head and begin ripping it apart piece by piece. Roofs during this time were made of mud and sticks, not boards and nails. Imagine these guys at work! They are clawing and digging, risking filth and splinters to get to Jesus.

I imagine that dirt, rocks, and debris are beginning to fall through the ceiling, inevitably interrupting the sermon. Finally, a little light peeks through the cracks as a man gets lowered through the newly-formed skylight. Wrap your mind around the faith of these men. They knew that a touch from Jesus would lead to a miracle, so they put in the work to experience it. When Jesus witnessed their faith, He moved in a mighty way.

We can learn three powerful traits of faith from these friends.

### **Faith Takes Risks**

Look at how much risk and discomfort these guys go through for their friend! They broke through a roof right in the middle of a massive, public presentation. They used their bare hands to claw through clay. Their fingernails become muddy and maybe even a little bloody. Why were they willing to face the repercussions and embarrassment? Because they have faith that Jesus can help their friend. I am sure there were a million reasons for them to stop, but they keep tearing off the roof, shingle by shingle. Just like these friends, let your faith move you towards action.

Faith takes risks. Those risks may be uncomfortable, awkward, or even a little unexpected, but they'll be worth it. There are often miraculous results on the other side of your risk. It's risky to talk to your friends about Jesus, but the outcome is worth the discomfort. It's awkward to ask a friend for prayer, but Jesus hands on to every word. It's uncomfortable to talk to someone about sin in their life, but you can point them towards forgiveness. Jesus

almost always leads you outside of your comfort zone, so strive to foster risk-taking faith. You won't believe what unfolds as a result.

### **Faith Leads to Results**

Their faith resulted in a confused and quiet room gawking at a paralyzed man lying before Jesus. Jesus breaks the silence by saying, "I see your friends faith. Your sins are forgiven." I'm sure quiet whispers filled the room. First, doesn't Jesus see this man is paralyzed? That's the healing he's there for. Second, only God can forgive sins. Who is this guy to make that kind of claim that his sins are forgiven? Jesus takes this moment to show that He doesn't just heal us physically; He can also heal us spiritually.

Christ's simple sentence leads to scorning. Some religious leaders shouted from the crowd, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming!" They had no idea that they were standing before God in the flesh. Jesus didn't just have the power to heal the man; He had the power to forgive him of his sins. Which, when you think about it, is an even bigger miracle than healing his legs. Cleansing someone from spiritual sickness is the greatest miracle of all, and that's the primary reason for His arrival. Jesus has the power to spiritually heal you, your friends, and everyone you have ever met. Take the risks that introduce people to the supernatural power of Jesus — spiritual healing will be the result.

The faith of these friends is rewarded. Jesus picked up the paralyzed man by his shoulders. His legs shook and his toes began to wiggle. The crowd gasped as the paraplegic picked up his mat and walked for the first time.

That is a taste of what risky faith can do. When you step out in faith, amazing things unfold. When Jesus saw the faith of these men, a miracle happened. Faith is a catalyst for the miraculous. Faith can lead to healing. Faith can lead to a breakthrough. Faith can lead to unthinkable things. Are you missing out on something because you refuse to move in faith? Amazingly, risky faith doesn't just lead to amazing things for you — it can trigger amazing things for the people around you too.

### **Faith Helps People**

This man encountered healing because of the help of his friends. How powerful is that? Ripping off a roof for a friend is awkward, unsafe, risky, and uncomfortable. However, look where it led. A paralyzed man was able to walk. Every shaky step around that room was a little step on a long journey towards following Jesus. Can you imagine the story he got to tell for the rest of his life? It was made possible by some faithful friends.

When was the last time you stepped out in faith to help someone experience Jesus? I am not suggesting you go destroy a roof, but you need to take some uncomfortable steps for the benefit of those around you. Pick someone up for church. Pray with your friends in public. Personally introduce people to Jesus and watch miracles unfold.

Mark wants you to see the world through the lens of Jesus. Your streets, school, and social circles are all stages that Jesus wants to perform the supernatural on. There are struggling people around you; bring them to Jesus. There are spiritually paralyzed people in your school; introduce them to the life-changing power of the gospel. Your risky faith just might result in a miracle for them! With Jesus, we don't just get to preview miracles; we get to participate in them. You can help make miracles happen today. So take that crucial step, even if it feels risky.

## **TALK IT OUT**

*Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.*

Icebreaker: Introduce yourself and share your highs and lows from the week (the best part of your week so far and the lowest part of your week).

Q1: What was the physical miracle performed by Jesus in the story? What was the spiritual miracle performed by Jesus in this story?

Q2: What is the significance of Jesus healing this man spiritually before healing him physically?

Q3: What role did the paralyzed man's friends play in his healing?

Q4: What are some ways that God calls us to take risks?

Application: What can you do this week to boldly help someone grow closer to finding physical, emotional, relational, or spiritual healing?

## **READING PLAN**

*READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY*

Matthew 4:23-25

Matthew 8:5-13

Matthew 9:1-8

Matthew 9:27-31

Mark 1:40-45

Mark 4:35-41

Psalms 77

Do the following with each passage:

**ASK**– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

**READ**– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

**REFLECT**– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

**RESPOND**– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

## CIRCLE 02/04: **JESUS CALMS**

The Apostle Mark was an extremely well-spoken man with a natural gift for foreign languages. Thus, he served as an interpreter on both Peter's and Paul's missionary journeys. After spending time with Peter in Rome, Mark really hits his stride. As a gifted storyteller, Mark filled Roman amphitheaters with people eager to hear his action-packed stories of Jesus. The Roman people encouraged him to write it all down because they wanted to share this message with their friends and family. Consequently, the Gospel of Mark was written.

Mark focuses on Jesus's supernatural power in every single story. Today, we will look at a passage where Mark explains Christ's power over nerve-wracking situations. Towards the beginning of his Gospel, Mark shares countless examples of Jesus's divine power paired with His deep compassion. Jesus heals people to prove His power over sickness. Jesus casts out demons to prove his power over darkness. Now, let's look at a story where Jesus silences a storm to prove His power over the nerve-racking situations in our lives.

### **READ: Mark 4:35-39**

"That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 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?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

Even Jesus felt introverted at times. After delivering a series of sermons on the shore of a lake (4:1), Jesus was ready to escape the crowds. He encouraged the disciples to make their way to the other side of the water in a rowboat. You inevitably think of a little fishing spot with calm water when you think of a lake. That is not what the disciples are experiencing here. The Sea of Galilee is a massive body of water that spans over 64 square miles and can reach over 300 feet in depth. The topography of the hills surrounding the massive lake created a wind tunnel that invited strong storms to swiftly and severely blow through. These squalls were destructive and often fatal for people aboard tiny fishing boats.

The exhausted team piled into a tiny wooden boat and set sail to the opposing shore. Once the land had disappeared from their sight and the city became nothing more than an orange glow, a severe storm swallowed them up. Winds howled, waves began crashing

over the rails, and the sails began to shred. Every wave jolted them like the buck of an angry bull. They could hear cracking and creaking coming from the cedar planks keeping them afloat. They needed help, so they looked over at Jesus, but they noticed He was taking a nap next to a net.

Irritated, the disciples shook Him while screaming, "Don't you care that we are about to die?" Jesus could have ignored them. He could have waved them away and continued His nap. He could have frustratedly snapped His finger to stop the storm. He could have scolded them for their ignorance. He didn't do any of that, though. Seeing the fear in his friends' faces, Jesus spoke to the storm, saying, "Quiet! Be still!" Suddenly, the storm stopped and the water looked as clear as crystal. The disciples turn to each other and ask, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (Mark 4:39).

This is a crucial question you must grapple with too: Who is Jesus? He's not just a person who changed human history. He also has the power to change your life. Mark presents Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. He is so much more than a significant preacher; He's a personal savior. Honestly evaluate your view of Jesus. If Jesus is who He said He is, then He is worthy of your complete devotion. A storm was no match for Jesus.

While most people only see one miracle in this passage, there are actually two.

### **Jesus Can Calm a Storm**

First, Jesus calmed the storm. With shocking serenity, He hushed the storm by saying, "Peace, be still." The clouds cleared, and the waves turned into ripples. I imagine that Jesus went right back to His nap, but I cannot confirm that. The dumfounded disciples said, "Who is this that even the wind and waves obey Him?"

This proves the power of Jesus over scary situations, but it goes so much deeper than that. If Jesus truly has the power to calm a stormy sea, then imagine what He can do to your soul. While the calming of the visual storm interests us, His calming of spiritual storms should astonish us.

### **Jesus Can Calm Your Soul**

Mark teaches that Jesus has the power to calm spine-chilling storms, even ones happening within your own life. We all experience metaphorical storms — loneliness, loss, and letdowns. This story shows that Jesus is right there through your storm, listening and ready to act. Within your storm, move closer to Jesus, and He will keep you safe. As waves



crash over the rails and you feel like you're about to sink, be sure that Jesus is in the boat with you. Draw near to Him.

A famous saying goes, "A calm sea never made a skilled sailor." Sometimes Jesus allows the storms to rage because He wants to strengthen you. He knows that hunkering down with Him will grow your faith and make you a more skilled sailor. You will always face trouble and trials. One storm passes, and then another one looms on the horizon. It is best to learn how to sail through your storms with Jesus aboard your ship because you will become stronger after surviving the storm.

What storm are you facing now? Certain circumstances feel like crashing waves and crushing winds. Your feelings may feel like a flood trying to drown you. That's okay. It's an inescapable part of life. Whether your storm is big or small, Jesus will be your shelter. You can't seek shelter unless you're close, right? Ensure that Jesus is riding it out with you because He can cultivate calm within the chaos.

Mark wants you to know that the same God that calms storms has the power to calm your soul. Are destructive thoughts keeping you up at night? Ask God to calm your storm. Is anxiety making it hard to thrive in life? Draw close to your perfect shelter. Does it feel like you're sinking and cannot get your head above water? Cry out to Jesus, He will pick you up and calm the chaos.

## TALK IT OUT

*Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.*

Icebreaker: Introduce yourself and share your highs and lows from the week (the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week).

Q1: What's one thing that stood out to you from tonight's message?

Q2: How did the disciples react when they saw Jesus miraculously calm the storm?

Q3: How does the calming of the storm relate to the calming of our souls?

Q4: How can someone draw near to Jesus during a metaphorical storm in life?

Application: What big or small storm are you currently facing? How can you commit to doing one thing this week to draw near to Jesus?

## READING PLAN

*READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY*

Matthew 20:29-32

Mark 7:31-41

Mark 10:46-52

Luke 4:31-37

Luke 4:38-39

Psalms 139:13-14

Psalms 9

Do the following with each passage:

**ASK**– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

**READ**– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

**REFLECT**– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

**RESPOND**– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

## CIRCLE 03/04: **JESUS INVITES YOU TO PARTICIPATE**

"What game are you playing, buddy?" I ask my nephew as a cartoon throws a football across his computer screen. "Oh, I am not playing. I am just watching someone play my favorite game." Wait, is he seriously just watching someone play a game? How sad and bleak. He must just need someone to play with him. With optimism in my voice, I announce, "Grab a controller; I will play your game with you, man." With this gesture, I will be the uncle of the year, no doubt. "No, I am good. I'd rather watch him play it." Ouch.

This one is a head-scratcher for me. Why would he just watch the game when he can actually grab a controller and play? At the risk of sounding old, wouldn't it be more fun to play the game yourself than watch it be played by someone else? I feel critical until I realize that I do this all the time. I watch life, opportunities, and potential experiences pass by me while I merely spectate. This demonstrates a central truth in the Gospel of Mark — God's Kingdom is not a spectator sport. Jesus doesn't want you to be a spectator. He wants you to be a participant.

Mark is a powerful account of the miracles of Jesus, but there's also a deeply personal message within his words. He accomplishes something special in his gospel. Mark wants his audience to see that we are invited to participate in the miracles of Jesus. Mark showed the participation of the paralyzed man's friends as they carried him to Jesus to receive healing. Mark describes Peter walking on water alongside Jesus. In today's story, Mark shows how the participation of a young boy leads to a miracle for thousands of people.

Here's what happened. Over 5,000 hungry people were following Jesus around the countryside of Capernaum. This city had a population of 15,000. This may seem like a small town to you, but Capernaum was actually one of the most populated cities in the entire nation. Jesus had drawn a crowd of over five thousand people. Wrap your head around that! Over one-third of the whole city gathered to hear a message from the messiah.

Even though Jesus was exhausted both physically and emotionally, He had compassion on the crowd (6:34). I imagine his voice shook at first, but He quickly got into the groove of preaching to a packed house. Okay, it wasn't a house. It was a field,

but you get the point. As the sun began to set, people started to get a little restless. They whispered, "This sermon is fantastic, but I am getting a little hungry." The disciples realized the rumbles of grumbling stomachs and encouraged Jesus to dismiss everyone to go out into the city for a snack (6:36). The good restaurants were about to close, and they were all about to be stuck with mediocre fast food on their way home. Jesus had a different plan, though. With a little generosity, something amazing was about to happen.

**READ: Mark 6:35-44**

By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish." Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand."

This story teaches us three valuable lessons about our invitation to participate in the miracles of Jesus.

**Small Gifts Can Have a Big Impact**

Jesus used this opportunity to teach His disciples when He said, "Give them something to eat." Confusion washed over their faces since that would cost half a year's salary. They did what anyone else would do in this situation and asked if anyone had some food they were willing to share. Maybe there was a caterer in the crowd with a massive truck full of fruit or something. A little boy spoke up over the commotion and explained that his mom had packed him a Happy Meal — five pieces of bread and some fish.

Joyfully, the boy announced, "Jesus, you can have this." It wasn't a big gift, but it was all the little boy had. In the hands of Jesus, a small gift is more than enough. Take a look at what happens! Jesus held the boxed lunch, blessed it, broke it, and multiplied it, over and over and over again. Everyone shared a feast and had a full belly when all was said and done.

The feeding of the five thousand was a domino effect triggered by the donation of a young boy. The miracle of multiplication started with participation. Jesus could have easily made it rain chicken nuggets and honey mustard, but He didn't do that. Instead, He invited a young kid and twelve followers to play a part in His miracle. God doesn't just want you to witness His purpose; He invites you to take part in it. God doesn't just want you to see miracles; He wants you to participate in them.

### **Don't Compare Your Contributions**

I am sure the boy considered staying silent. A stadium-sized crowd needed to eat; how would his fish and bread make a difference? That didn't matter to him, though. The little boy just wanted to contribute whatever he could to Jesus.

We can easily let comparison get in the way of our contribution. We often think that others are more gifted, more wealthy, or even more worthy. That's all nonsense. When you give your gifts to Jesus, He will bless them and multiply them. Regardless of the size of your contribution, other people will benefit when you take small steps in generosity.

### **God Blesses You When You Bless Others**

What miracle does God want you to participate in today? Maybe you need to give generously to help others in need. Maybe you need to sacrifice your Saturday to serve at a local outreach. Maybe you need to take some time to write music, create a blog, or pursue a passion that you can use to point others to Jesus.

Whatever it is, participation is required. The Kingdom of God is not a spectator sport. You need to get some skin in the game. God's giving you an invitation to participate. Are you ready to help make a miracle happen? When we participate, God replicates. God will bless you and bless others in the process.

Mark describes hundreds of miracles that fill our minds with awe. While powerful, they can also be personal. Jesus moves us to bless others. Jesus blesses others in extraordinary ways through the faith-filled movement of ordinary people. Are you seeing what Mark is saying here? All of those people were blessed when a little boy participated in faith. The potential for God-triggered miracles is all around you, so step out and help make miracles happen. We can all serve, give, share, and participate in God's Kingdom. A miracle might be on the other side of your next move. So get out there and move!

## TALK IT OUT

*Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.*

Icebreaker: Introduce yourself and share your highs and lows from the week (the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week).

Q2: Summarize the miraculous story of Jesus feeding the five thousand.

Q3: What is the significance of Jesus having disciples and a young boy play a role in this miracle? What does that imply for us?

Q4: Have you ever experienced God using someone to meet your needs? How did you respond?

Q5: Do you think you make yourself available to be used by God? How could you begin to participate in His purpose even more?

Application: What's one thing you can do this week that would allow God to bless someone else through you?

## READING PLAN

*READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY*

Luke 6:11-17

Luke 8:26-38

Luke 14:1-6

Luke 17:11-19

Luke 22:47-51

Acts 1:9

Psalm 112

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

## CIRCLE 04/04: **JESUS WALKS ON WATER**

Have you ever had a storm shove you off course? You didn't dream of experiencing emotional pain. You didn't plan on your parents getting a divorce. You didn't imagine you'd suddenly be single, trying to heal after heartbreak. It's difficult to be blown off course by storms because it reminds us that life is out of our control.

We talk a lot about thriving in life, but sometimes just surviving the storm is our only goal. I feel you because I have been there too. We had clear-cut plans, dreams, and goals, but now we are struggling just to keep our heads above water. You're not even concerned with success anymore; you just want to survive. Fortunately, Mark shares a story that proves that miracles are not just possible; they're actually all around us. We need to open our eyes so we don't miss the miracles.

At this point in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus was seeking some peace and quiet. There was a rhythm to His rest. Jesus would go away to get some quiet time, and then something would come up that required His attention. After feeding over five thousand hungry people with supernatural Fillet-o-Fish sandwiches, He was ready to head up to the mountainside to reflect, rest, and reset. Jesus encouraged His disciples to get in another boat to make a short sail to Bethsaida, the next stop on their journey.

### **READ: Mark 6:45-51**

"Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed."

In a familiar scene for Jesus' followers, a storm swept across the sea. Their boat bobbed up and down like a buoy. Winds went against their sails. Waves rammed into their walls. The current began pulling them away— rendering them out of control. The next thing they knew, they were off course in the middle of a sudden storm. Strive to feel the desperate fear of the disciples as their boat began to take on water. What were they going to do with Jesus nowhere in sight?



Light breaks through this dark scene when Jesus comes walking on water towards the disciples. There is no bridge, ramp, or life raft. Jesus was walking atop the crashing waves like they were firm stones. Tragically, they almost miss it. Interestingly, Jesus didn't calm the storm immediately in this story like the disciples had seen Him do in the past. In this circumstance, Jesus let the storm rage while drawing closer to the disciples. Jesus walking on water us three life lessons about the storms in our lives.

### **Jesus Sees Your Storm**

With walls of water crashing over His body and wind pushing Him like a linebacker, Jesus walked on water towards the disciples. The passage doesn't say He shouted advice from the shore, nor does it say that Jesus stopped the storm. He saw that they were struggling, so He stepped in.

He didn't just help them during the storm; He joined them in the storm. He treated the terrifying waves like stepping stones moving towards His friends. Whenever your problems feel like storms throwing you off course, know that Jesus is moving towards you. What are the waves in your life right now? Maybe they're heartbreak, loss, despair, helplessness, stress, or loneliness. When waves are crashing over your head, remember that they're under His feet. Jesus may not stop the storm. However, He promises to be with you in the storm— and the waves don't phase Him.

### **Don't Let Storms Distract You**

Strong storms are captivating to watch from our windows but terrifying to experience outside. There is something soothing about being in a shelter. I cannot imagine anything more disorienting than encountering that kind of turbulence on a little boat. That's what unexpected problems do, though. They make us feel disoriented. When the thunder was booming and the rain was blinding, the disciples almost missed Jesus walking towards them (6:45). They were so focused on their fear that they almost missed the miracle right in front of their eyes.

Don't miss the miracle. Don't let distractions dominate you because you might miss what God is doing. When you position your focus on your problems, you will feel hopeless and helpless. However, when you proactively choose to look past your problems, you will begin to see Jesus more clearly. He's right there with you. Even when your eyes aren't on Jesus, His eyes are always on you.

## **Your storm Won't Destroy You**

As we have seen, Jesus can easily calm storms. He did it once for the disciples already. Why did he not immediately calm this storm like he had done in the past? He was certainly able, but it's possible that Jesus wanted to teach his disciples a bigger lesson. He didn't want to remove the storm; He wanted to teach them how to survive the storm. How do we do that? We survive storms with the supernatural support of Jesus. With Jesus on your side, your storm won't sink you. It'll actually strengthen you.

This isn't to say the pain you're encountering isn't important. It's actually the opposite. Sometimes sadness feels like a severe storm. Sometimes tragedy feels like a tidal wave. Sometimes hurt can feel like a hurricane. Please hear me. Your pain is important and it matters to God.

We are encouraging you to shift your focus because you can't fight these feelings on your own. You need supernatural intervention—you need Jesus. He's miraculously walking on water through your storm and into your arms. Stick it out and take courage; Jesus is near.

If you're in the storm of sadness, Jesus is near. If you're in a storm of stress, Jesus is walking towards you. If you're in a storm of uncertainty, Jesus wants to give you clarity. He may not remove the storm immediately, but you will get through it. Here's the cool thing. You will be stronger on the other side of the storm. Hold on. Look towards Jesus. Worship while you weather the storm. You won't just survive; you'll thrive.

Mark elaborates on Christ's supernatural power. But it goes so much deeper than that. Jesus is both powerful and personal. He has the power to calm storms, but He can also calm souls. He can heal physical pains, but he can also heal your spiritual sickness. Jesus can feed thousands with a few pieces of fish, but he can also supernaturally provide for you. It would be a shame if we failed to see the deeply personal message within the powerful pages of Mark. If Jesus can calm a storm, heal a paralyzed man, feed a small army, and walk on a stormy sea, then imagine what He can do in your life.

## TALK IT OUT

*Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.*

Icebreaker: Introduce yourself and share your highs and lows from the week (the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week).

Q1: Summarize this miracle of Jesus walking on water. How could this be a metaphor for struggles in life?

Q2: How do you typically respond to life's storms?

Q3: Jesus didn't immediately calm this storm. Why do you think that is important for us to understand?

Q4: What distractions keep you from looking to Jesus when you're going through challenging times?

Q5: How could drawing near to Jesus during tough times change the way you respond to everything life's throwing at you?

Application: What's one thing you can do to shift your focus off your problems and onto Jesus?

## READING PLAN

*READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY*

John 4:46-54

John 5:1-15

John 9:1-12

John 11:1-15

John 15:38-44

Psalms 105

Psalms 11:2-4

Do the following with each passage:

ASK- God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ- the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT- on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND- to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.