

Talk About It

Small Group Discussion Guide

God Encounters

June 15 & 18, 2023

Start Talking

Did you grow up referring to carbonated beverages as soda, pop, or Coke?

Main Idea

Pastor Ken shared the part of the Apostle Peter's story when he had a God encounter with Jesus, walking on the water in the fourth watch of a stormy night. Peter stepped out of the boat and was successfully walking on the water as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. But when he shifted his attention to the storm and the waves, he began to sink and cried out for Jesus to save him.

We face many storms in life that can either break us or make our faith even stronger. The question is not whether the storms will come, but what can we do to remain strong when they do.

Personalize It

1. What have been some of the bigger storms in your life, and how was your faith impacted during and after?
2. When storms come—job loss, financial strain, a broken relationship, death of a loved one—are emotions healthy, unhealthy, or possibly both? How?
3. How does pre-emptive obedience make our faith more storm-resistant?
4. Pastor Ken said that when a pitcher struggles to throw strikes, the problem is either mental or mechanical. What does each of those terms mean? How do they apply spiritually?

LET'S DO IT! Commit to a step and live it out this week

1. Suffering has a purpose. Resolve this week to see it as an opportunity. Pray for God to reveal what He is trying to teach you through the challenge.
2. Jesus encouraged people to not be afraid, to take heart, to be strong and courageous—to snap out of it. What can you do when doubt starts to creep in so that its power is diminished?
3. In what area can you become more faithful—faithful attendance at weekend worship, faithful in your Small Group, faithful on your Difference Maker serve team, faithful in your daily Bible reading, faithful in prayer—so that when the challenges come, your faith can better preserve you?
4. The writer of Hebrews encourages us to get rid of sin, which so easily entangles, run with endurance, and fix our eyes on Jesus. In which area are you weakest when the storms come? Strongest?

Pray

Lord, we know that there are many storms in life. You even promise that in this life we will have trouble. We also know that we don't always handle them the best because our focus, if we are being honest, is usually on avoiding the suffering, not seeing opportunities and Your purpose for it. Help us to seek You

even more in those times. Help us to become diligent in habits that will build a faith that is not easily shaken by life's storms—close to You in worship, in Your Word, in prayer, and in service. Help us to be empathetic and caring and encouraging when someone close to us needs it. Thank You for being sovereign over everything that happens, and the promise that we can run to You because you know those who take refuge in You (Nahum 1:7). Help us most of all to keep our eyes fixed on You no matter what. We love you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Scriptures

Matthew 14:21-23 (NLT)

About 5,000 men were fed that day, in addition to all the women and children! Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home. After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone.

Matthew 14:28-33 (NLT)

Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." "Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?" When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

James 1:2-4 (NLT)

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NLT)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up."