



**Sermon Based Small Group
Leader Discussion Guide**

Sermon Title: Facing the Realities of our Fears

**Sermon by Dr. Michael Quicke
Week of August 8, 2010**

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Session Objectives	<p>By the end of the session, group members should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a tendency towards faith or fear in the face of difficulties. • Discern whether they are passive listeners to God’s Word or those “who have ears to hear,” and be changed by God’s truth.
Personal Connection	<p>(For the group leader, in preparation for leading the study) How does my story connect to the reading?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the Icebreaker questions so that you can share your responses with the group. • Be prepared for the possible wide range of responses to this and other questions in the study. Everyone’s response is valid. • Ask God to convict you if you have been passively listening to His message instead of actively hearing with ears of faith and receptivity. Faith comes through “hearing.”
Ice Breaker	<p>Have you ever been truly afraid? What was your initial reaction to this fearful situation? Did your reaction startle you?</p>
Big Idea	<p>The way we react to circumstances tells us a lot about ourselves, what we really believe and where we place our trust. The miraculous account of Jesus calming the storm reveals truths about Jesus’ disciples while holding up a mirror to each of us.</p>

Sermon Text	Mark 4:35-41
<p>Digging Deeper: Learning more about the lesson</p>	<p>Time may not allow the group to answer all 8 questions, but try to get to your choice of 5.</p> <p>Read Mark 4:35-41</p> <p>A. The disciples' reaction:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why couldn't the disciples believe in the power of God in this situation? 2. What adjectives does the Gospel writer use to describe the disciples' reaction to Jesus' miraculous act of calming the storm? <p>B. Jesus' response:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. What makes a person able to sleep in a tossing boat in the middle of a storm? Think of various explanations. <p>Jesus first rebuked the wind and waves, and then he rebuked his disciples for their lack of faith.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. How does Jesus' response to the disciples strike you: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Bewildering b. Lacking compassion c. Completely understandable d. Too gentle <p>The Context:</p> <p>To better understand Jesus' probing questions, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" it is helpful to understand the situation in context of what preceded it. At first glance, the events on the sea seem disconnected from Jesus' teachings as recorded earlier in the chapter. Mark 4 contains largest single collection of Jesus' sayings in this Gospel. These sayings were taught primarily in parables.</p> <p><i>A <u>parable</u> is a story used to illustrate a point by comparison. It is a word picture, common to the audience's experience, that concretely communicates an abstract concept.</i></p> <p>Help for the Leader</p> <p>Jesus had spent the day teaching the gathered crowd from a boat tethered offshore. The teachings appear in Mark 4: 1-34:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vv. 1-20 The Parable of the Sower and its explanation vv. 21-25 A Lamp on a Stand vv. 26-29 The Parable of the Growing Seed

vv. 30-34 The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Examine these four groups of sayings for common themes:

1. The power of small beginnings;
2. We are responsible for our faithfulness, but God is responsible for the outcome;
3. God is all-powerful in all life's situations;
4. Passive listening does not lead to spiritual growth. The Word of God will take root and grow when the listener comes with attentive ears to hear the message of truth.

Reflect: Is the Word of God taking root and growing in your life?

The disciples had listened to these truths, repeated by their Master in a variety of ways, when they set out across the sea.

A note about truly hearing: Jesus knew that people could only be free from fear when they comprehended his teaching with ears of faith. He called them to listen (v. 3), to “have ears to hear” (vv.9, 23), and, to the disciples, to comprehend the “mystery of the Kingdom” by understanding the parables (vv. 11, 13). Listening to the Teacher all day without the ears of faith would do the disciples no good, as they would soon discover. With faith, the seed of the Good News could, and still can, be received, bearing fruit even in the face of the storm.

Resuming the Study with the Group

On the stormy sea:

Perhaps Jesus' rebuke of the disciples' lack of faith stemmed from their accusatory tone when requesting his help, or it could have been their complete lack of comprehension about his teaching that day, or, perhaps their inability to remember all of the miracles he had already done in their presence.

Leader: According to Mark's Gospel, by the time we get to chapter 4, Jesus has performed miracles multiple times in public or private settings, but all in the presence of others: healing the sick (1:30, 1:34, 1:41, 2:11, 3:5); casting out demons (1:26, 1:34, 1:39).

<p>Taking it Home</p>	<p>How will I live it? Apply it?</p> <p>Dr. Quicke referred to our Lord as a “side-by side Jesus,” someone who asks “questions that lead into truth about ourselves.”</p> <p>5. When troubled, to whom do you first call out? Upon what do you rely for relief when difficulties arise?</p> <p>Share:</p> <p>6. Please share a story of a real-life storm through which you have come or are currently struggling. How did you respond?</p> <p>Note: Simply listening to and knowing Scripture is not enough to lead a life a life of faith. As we have seen today, it takes hearing with ears of faith and applying that knowledge to life. Studying the bible together, discussing how to apply its truth to our lives, and being accountable to each can help us live what we believe. This is why we encourage sharing.</p> <p>Leader: please encourage the group to share during this time. This can be a time of true encouragement as group members support each other’s past or present experiences and reactions surrounding them. Even though this account did not put the disciples in the best light (these fishermen were panicked by a storm, they accused the Lord of not caring for them, and they showed a complete lack of faith), they made sure to include this account for believers.</p> <p>7. Walking in faith means discovering truth about our self and about God. What attributes of God’s character have you discovered in the midst of your life storms?</p> <p>8. Has a particular Bible verse served to remind you of this truth in bleak times?</p>
<p>Additional Study</p>	<p><u>A Significant Metaphor</u></p> <p>To the persecuted Christians of the Early Church, the storm-tossed boat became a meaningful symbol representative of their historical circumstances. Images of boats can be found scratched into the walls of the Catacombs, burial place of many early Christians, under the streets of Rome today.</p> <p>9. How is the account of Jesus calming the storm relevant to our circumstances today? To our country? To our world?</p>

Dr. Quicke quoted Charles Jefferson, a noted preacher of the early 20th century as delivering this message in a sermon (read aloud as a group):

God seems to be asleep – see the world

In places of hunger, violence in our cities, God seems to be asleep

The criticism against the church is ferocious, God seems to be asleep

The attack on Christianity is violent and venomous, God seems to be asleep

They say advanced thinkers have given up on Christianity. God seems to be asleep

BUT don't you know the boat has not gone down?

Don't you know that brilliant men have written about the end of the church in every generation but *the boat has not gone down?*

The waves are breaking into the boat *but the boat has not gone down?*

It's not going down because Jesus is in the boat.

Next time you feel the sea surge beneath you, ask God to increase your faith by replacing that image with a boat, a boat that Christ shares with you in the storm.

Prayer & Praises

Facilitator Tip: *Some people are comfortable praying out loud, while others prefer to pray silently. Either is okay. The point is to connect people to God and with each other in a loving, supportive environment.*