



Small Groups

Small Group Discussion Guide

When Fear Takes Over
Part 5 of "Hope for the Heavy Heart" Series
Mark 4:35-41

Pastor Brian Howard
(Discussion Guide by Erin Rodewald)

October 17-18, 2020

Christian author Max Lucado writes, "During difficult storms in life, it is easy to become so focused on the problem—whatever is causing the storm—that we miss what is happening in the midst of it." In Mark 4:35-41, the disciples were caught up in a storm of such magnitude that it left them paralyzed with fear and despair. Funny thing is, Jesus was right there in the boat with them, yet their fear was so complete, they lost sight of His power and promise. At times, just like the disciples, we can become overwhelmed by fear. But the good news is this: When God speaks, reality changes.

Opening Question: When you were a child, what were you most afraid of?

Read aloud Mark 4:35-41

In this story, Jesus instructed the disciples to put out to sea and make way for the other side. When they encountered a ferocious storm, Scripture tells us Jesus slept and the disciples grew increasingly fearful. "Don't you care if we drown?" they cried.

I. Your storm is not evidence that your Savior is absent

- 1. In their moment of fear, the disciples seem to have forgotten who was in the boat with them. Do you think Jesus knew what was happening? Why do you think he took so long to respond?**
- 2. Can you relate to the disciples in this story? Have you experienced a time when you felt like you were alone in the boat, fighting the storm alone?**
- 3. Read Romans 8:35, 37-39. What is the promise of this passage?**

II. Fear is not an indictment of your faith

Psalm 56:3 "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you."

Fear is real. Feeling fear is not an indictment of our faith and does not diminish our faith. To keep fear from controlling us, we need to name it. "What you will not identify will only intensify." We learn from the example of the disciples tossed on the sea that the true question is not "Will I ever be afraid?" but rather, "What will I do with my fear?"

1. What keeps us from naming and identifying our fears?
2. What are some signals in our lives that reveal when fear is taking up too much mental, emotional, or physical space in our bodies?
3. Share some ways to turn down the volume on fear and keep it from spreading. What are some ways to feed your faith instead?

III. God's word is the greatest weapon against fear

Mark 4:39 "He [Jesus] got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be Still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm."

Isaiah 43:1-3, 5 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...Fear not, for I am with you..."

1. Jesus immediately responded to the disciples' cry by commanding the wind and waves to stop. He demonstrated His mastery over the universe not by *doing* anything but by merely *speaking*. What words does Jesus speak to you in times of trial? What are some of your "go-to" scriptures when you are feeling afraid?
2. Psalm 33:8 says, "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!" What do you think went through the minds of the disciples at the moment they witnessed Jesus calm the storm?
3. How does a "fear of the Lord" quiet the other fears in our heart?

IV. The way we navigate storms will witness to the world.

The disciples were not alone that night when the storm nearly overtook them. Jesus was with them, but there were others too. Mark 4:36 tells us that "there were also other boats with him." These others were watching to see how the disciples would handle the storm.

1. Who might be watching how you navigate the storms of life? What can our reliance on Jesus teach others about how to handle fear?
2. As you close your session today, encourage each other by offering up your fears to God in prayer. As Pastor Brian recommended, commit to memorizing scripture that will fortify your faith, starting with Hebrews 1:3

"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."