

## **Group Study Guide**

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

*A Purpose for Our Pain*

Mark 4:35-41 and I Peter 1:3-9

February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018

### **Main Point**

Suffering is not meaningless in the lives of believers. God uses the fiery trials of life to prove the authenticity of our faith. Today we will read a story in the gospel of Mark about a time the disciples found themselves caught in a terrible storm and how Jesus calmed the storm by quieting the waves and winds. Then we will study a passage from I Peter that shows how God can use the storms of our lives to strengthen our faith to God's glory.

### **Getting Started**

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Share about a time you or your family faced a difficult trial.

*Are you more mindful of God amid trials or during peaceful times?*

*What did you learn from that trial? How are you different because of it?*

We tend to view the trials and suffering in our lives as inconvenient at best and evil at worst. According to the Bible, however, trials and the suffering that accompanies trials are opportunities for spiritual growth because Jesus has designed these times to strengthen our faith and make us more like Him.

### **Observation**

Have a volunteer read Mark 4:35-41.

*What does the fact that Jesus willingly placed Himself in harm's way in the boat tell us about Him?*

*How should Jesus' presence in the boat changed the disciples' attitude toward the storm? How might knowing that Jesus is with us in the midst of our difficulties strengthen us to face them?*

*Where was Jesus during the storm (v. 38)? What does that tell us about Him?*

While the disciples were beginning to fear for their lives, Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. This doesn't mean that Jesus doesn't care about the fate of His disciples but rather that He was still in control. Jesus didn't sleep because He didn't care, He slept because He wasn't stressed.

*How did the disciples react to finding that Jesus was asleep amid the storm?*

*Have you ever been tempted to think that God didn't care about you amid your suffering?*

*How might knowing that the storm didn't worry Jesus give us strength and hope in the midst of trials?*

*How might remembering what God did for us through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross help us overcome the temptation to doubt God's love for us?*

Romans 5:8 says, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." The cross is final proof that God loves us. We don't have to guess about whether He loves us. We don't have to worry about whether we have done enough good things to deserve His love. We can know that God loves us because He did not spare His Own Son but gave Him up so that our sins could be forgiven, and we could have a relationship with Him forever.

*What is significant about the way Jesus calmed the storm (v. 39)?*

Jesus spoke to the sea and said, "Quiet! Be still!" and the wind died down and it was completely calm. Jesus spoke, and the wind and the sea obeyed Him. Jesus calmed the storm the same way God created the universe, by His word (John 1:1-5). When Jesus commands nature with His voice, He is communicating that He is God and that He is sovereign over nature.

*How did Jesus' disciples respond to this miracle (v. 41)? Why do you think they responded that way?*

*How does Jesus make us able to approach God without fear?*

There are many examples in the Bible of people fearing for their lives (Isa. 6:5) when they realize they are in the presence of God because God is holy and cannot allow that which is sinful into His presence. Jesus, however, makes us able to approach God without fear by offering to forgive our sins through His sacrifice on the cross.

Have a volunteer read 1 Peter 1:3-9.

*What does Peter say brings great joy in verse 6 (see vv. 3-5)?*

Trials and difficulties can be a blessing because they often force us to cut ties with the things of the world and run to Christ. When we face trying times, God challenges us to consider where we have been turning for hope and joy. In these moments, believers will turn to Christ to strengthen their faith and deepen the joy they have in Him.

*Peter indicates in verse 7 that God has a plan for the trials that He lets believers face. What is that plan? What is God doing in the hearts and lives of believers as He lets them face trials?*

*How might trusting Christ in the midst of trials result in “inexpressible and glorious joy” (v. 8)?*

Peter says that trials show the proven character of your faith. He compares trials to purifying gold in a furnace. To make higher quality gold, a craftsman would heat the gold in a very hot furnace so that the impurities would rise to the surface and the craftsman could remove them to make the gold more precious and valuable. In other words, God allows us to go through trials in order to draw us closer to Himself and so that Christ would be more precious to us than anything else.

### **Application**

*What difficult situations and circumstances are you or your family currently facing?*

*How might God be using that situation to strengthen your faith and deepen your relationship with Him?*

*How might studying God’s Word make you more prepared to face the storms of life?*

*Who do you know that needs to be reminded that God is in control? How might you encourage them to trust Christ amid their difficulties this week?*

### **Prayer**

*Dear God, thank you for saving me! Lead me to enjoy the benefits of my salvation here on earth and to share with others what you have done for me. Help me see past the hurt of trials and sufferings to the eternal inheritance you have reserved for me in Christ. I want to set my mind on you, not on the things of this earth.*

### **Commentary**

Mark 4:35-41

4:35. “That day” refers to the same day that Jesus delivered His teaching in verses 1-34. “When evening came” is typical of Mark’s dual references in which the second-time marker is more specific than the first. In this case, the words indicate that Jesus had been teaching all day and they help build suspense for what follows, since a storm on the water at night is more frightening. “The other side of the sea” refers to the eastern side, which was Gentile territory. Parallel accounts of this passage can be found in Matthew 8:23-27 and Luke 8:22-25.

4:37. The Greek term for “furious squall” is used here and in Luke 8:23 to describe the fierce windstorm, whereas Matthew 8:24 used a phrase that means “sea-quake.” The Sea of Galilee lies almost 700 feet below sea level. It is surrounded by highlands. To the northeast is Mount Hermon, which rises over 9,000 feet above sea level. When the cold

air from Mount Hermon meets the rising warm air from the sea, it often results in a storm that sweeps down on to the lake from the heights. Because fishing boats of the day had low sides, the boat was already being swamped.

4:38. Jesus, tired from a long day of teaching, was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. Boat owners reserved the seat at the stern with carpet or cushions for the comfort of special guests. The cushion implies the boat only had one cushion on board. Jesus used it as a pillow for His head. Mark often showed Jesus' humanity with such details. Jesus did get tired and needed sleep. His sleeping on this occasion also suggests His confidence in God (Ps. 4:8).

That storm's severity terrified even experienced fishermen. They rudely awakened Jesus. Their cry carried a sharp tone of rebuke: "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" Apparently, they did have some faith, however, as evidenced by the fact that they awakened Jesus. Their scolding of Him for sleeping indicated they thought He might do something about their situation if He was awake. Their reproach, however, showed they did not know who Jesus really was.

4:39. Only Mark recorded the words Jesus used, "Hush, be still," or "be muzzled."

4:40 Jesus reproved His disciples for the lack of faith expressed in their terror and panic. This rebuke represents the first of a series of such rebukes in Mark's Gospel (see also 7:17-18; 8:17-18,21,33; 9:19). Mark's inclusion of the disciples' rebuke of Jesus, omitted by Matthew and Luke, showed his usual candor (see Matt. 8:24-27; Luke 8:22-25). Jesus' questions indicated the disciples should have had faith rather than fear.

4:41. "They were terrified" is literally "they feared a great fear." The great storm that Jesus turned into great calm now led to great fear. Their terror is understandable considering the teaching that only God can make the wind and the sea obey Him (cp. Ps 65:7; 89:8-9).

This miracle over nature no doubt reassured first-century readers of Mark's Gospel who were suffering for their faith. Although Jesus might not always appear to be present or to care, He was with His followers. The Son of God would go with them into the storms of opposition and trial. His disciples need never doubt or fear.

#### 1 Peter 1:3-9

This section begins with praise to God for the privileges He has bestowed on believers. Peter encouraged his readers by reminding them that through the resurrection of Christ, God had caused them to be born again. The result of this new birth is that they have acquired an eternal inheritance reserved in heaven. Believers will be delivered to heaven, their eternal home, through their faith in the gospel.

1:3-5. Peter informed his readers that God rebirthed (Gk *anagennaō*) them to an inheritance that will never perish, be defiled, or fade—indeed a sure salvation.

1:6-9. Peter further encouraged his readers with the fact that Christians can “rejoice” in this imperishable inheritance and sure salvation, though they are tested by persecution and suffering while in this world.