

Semicontinuous

1 Sam. 17:32–49

Ps. 9:9–20

Complementary

Job 38:1–11

Ps. 107:1–3, 23–32

2 Cor. 6:1–13

Mark 4:35–41

Living Our Discipleship

Goal for the Session Youth will acknowledge God's power over chaos and fear and see ways to live with that knowledge.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Mark 4:35–41

WHAT is important to know?

— From "Exegetical Perspective," Efraín Agosto

Once the storm abates, Jesus turns to his disciples and asks two fundamental questions that lie at the heart of this pericope: "Why are you afraid? Do you not yet have faith?" (v. 40). Questions about faith and fear plague the disciples throughout Mark's narrative (see 5:36; 6:50; 10:32; 16:8). The Gospel of Mark ends with a note of fearfulness in the heretofore faithful women at the tomb (16:8). Such an ending challenges Mark's readers with the question of where their faith will take them—to paralysis or to action. Here in Mark 4:40, the question lies before the disciples on the boat after they have witnessed a horrific storm becalmed by the command of Jesus, their teacher: Will you exercise faith or fear?

WHERE is God in these words?

— From "Theological Perspective," Mark D. W. Edington

The bruising storm is a recasting of the watery chaos from which creation is brought forth by God. It is the prerogative of the divine Creator to bring order out of the water's chaos. Further, unrestrained water is death-dealing; water contained within its limits is life-giving. Thus Jesus is to be seen through the lens of this account as *doing things reserved to God*—ordering chaos, conquering the force of death, assuring the endurance of life. "Jesus has shown godlike superiority over the elements," and from this we are meant to surmise the plain answer to the disciples' reply: "Who then is this?"

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From "Pastoral Perspective," Michael L. Lindvall

Although we often confuse them, saying, "there's nothing to be afraid of" is a very different thing from saying, "do not be afraid." The hard truth is that fearsome things are very real: isolation, pain, illness, meaninglessness, rejection, losing one's job, money problems, failure, illness, and death. As we grow in faith, we come to understand that even though such fearsome things are very real, they do not have the last word. They do not have ultimate power over us, because reigning over this world of fearsome things is a God who is mightier than they. Time and again in Scripture the word is, "Do not be afraid." It is, you might say, the first and the last word of the gospel.

NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From "Homiletical Perspective," Beverly Zink-Sawyer

It is easy to forget that God's all-powerful word is still spoken amid the noise and chaos of our lives and world. And like Jesus' word of peace spoken over the raging storm, God's word still destroys the forces that threaten to do us harm and still calms our deepest fears. "One little word," the word "above all earthly powers," as Martin Luther's great hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," puts it so well, can "fell" whatever darkness threatens to undo us.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Mark 4:35–41

Focus on Your Teaching

Given the tumultuous nature of adolescence, it is easy for young people to identify with the image of raging storms. Frequently, the inner or outer chaos can seem overwhelming. The miracle of this week's Bible story may not be the calming of the storm, but Jesus' faithful calm in the midst of the storm. You can help young people understand that faithfulness doesn't necessarily mean running to Jesus in hopes that the crisis will go away. Faithfulness more often means running to Jesus during crisis and learning from him the source of his calm.

Calming Spirit, quiet my own fears so I can support young people to have faith in your presence. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- colored markers
- newsprint
- candle, matches

For Responding

- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2, pens
- option 3: current newsmagazines and newspapers

For Music Connection

- Internet access

In biblical times, the sea was a symbol for chaos and sometimes for death. Its unpredictability made it threatening.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Welcome youth as they arrive. Invite group members to form pairs to play a game. In each pair, one person will be the "Car" (keeps eyes closed) and one person will be the "Driver" (stands behind the Car). The Drivers will steer by putting their hands on the Cars' shoulders and telling them which direction to go. Have the Cars and Drivers move around the space for a time, then switch roles. After the game, discuss the following questions:

- ✪ What were some of the things you were afraid of when you were a Car?
- ✪ What other activities have you done in which you sometimes felt afraid? What caused your fear?

In this week's story, we hear about a time when Jesus' disciples were afraid. Pray:

God of peace, open our eyes to discover your presence as we explore your Word for us today. Amen.

EXPLORING

Remind the group that the readings for the past two weeks have come from the Gospel of Mark. The readings from Mark 4 describe Jesus' parables, or stories, about the kingdom of God. These teachings took place beside a lake known as the Sea of Galilee.

This week's story takes place later on that same day, as Jesus and the disciples got ready to cross the Sea of Galilee in a boat. Read Mark 4:35. Explain that the Sea of Galilee is actually a freshwater lake. It can be a dangerous place because it is prone to sudden windstorms. Being a shallow lake, the winds can whip up huge waves quickly.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Fear on the High Seas). Choose two readers and ask the rest of the group to provide the sound effects as the youth participate in this dramatic reading based on Mark 4:35–41.

Invite group members to imagine what this experience was like for the disciples. Explain that many of the disciples were fishers and used to being in boats. Ask:

✧ Why do you think they were so afraid?

Look together at the end of Mark 4:38.

✧ When the boat began to take on water, why do you think the disciples asked Jesus, “Don’t you care that we are perishing?” instead of asking, “Can you help us save the boat?”

Ask a volunteer to read Mark 4:39 and discuss together reactions to Jesus’ actions.

✧ What do we learn about Jesus through his response to the storm?

Read Mark 4:41.

✧ Why do you think that witnessing the calming of the storm was more frightening for the disciples than the storm itself?

Ask a volunteer to read Mark 4:40. Note Jesus’ first question and invite group members to name some things that the disciples might have feared. Then notice the second question that Jesus asks the disciples.

✧ How did Jesus seem to expect them to act?

Point out that Jesus doesn’t tell the disciples that there was nothing to be afraid of.

✧ What is the difference between the statements: “don’t be afraid” and “there’s nothing to be afraid of”?

Jesus is disappointed that the disciples did not seem to have any faith. In the Christian life, fear is the opposite of faith. Faith is about trusting in God, even in the midst of fearful times. We can learn from Jesus’ faithful calm in the midst of fear.

Draw a large storm cloud shape on a sheet of newsprint and invite youth to use colored markers to add words or pictures to represent their own thoughts and fears during chaotic times. Ask:

✧ During these times what can help us to remember to trust in God’s power?

RESPONDING

Choose one or more of the following learning activities:

- 1. Meditation** Youth will proclaim God’s power over chaos and fear by participating in a guided meditation. Ask youth to sit or lie down comfortably, with their eyes closed. Have them take several deep breaths as they consciously relax their muscles and joints. Say: “Jesus’ quiet presence created a peaceful space and helped calm the disciples’ fear. Imagine that Jesus is saying these words to you: ‘Peace, be still.’ Breathe deeply, feeling that peace inside you, letting go of your fears and worries.” Then ask youth to repeat the phrase silently as they breathe slowly, dropping a word each time (“Peace, be still . . . Peace be . . . Peace . . .”). Provide space to continue this meditation as time permits.

EASY
PREP

Option: Play a recording of meditative music in background.

- 2. Writing Prayers** Youth will proclaim God's power over chaos in the world and fear in their lives by writing their own prayers. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Storm Prayers) and review the instructions together. Provide time for youth to complete their prayers. Invite those who wish to read their prayers for the rest of the group.
- 3. Newsworthy Proclamations** Youth will proclaim God's power over chaos in the world and fear in their lives. Distribute copies of newsmagazines and current newspapers. Form pairs to review the headlines and choose some stories that reflect situations of fear and chaos in the world that are of concern to youth. Have the pairs take turns standing in front of the rest of the group to name a situation and proclaim their faith in God's power to address that situation by finishing the following sentence: "We don't have to be afraid of . . . because with God's power we can . . ."

CLOSING

Gather in a circle. Ask the group to recreate the sounds of a building storm by rubbing hands together, snapping fingers, clapping thighs, and then suddenly dropping into silence when you raise your arms and say: "Peace! Be still!"

Light a candle and place it in the middle of the group. Spend a few moments in silence, looking at the candle flame and remembering the story of Jesus bringing calm in the middle of chaos. Invite youth to repeat the words of the following prayer after you, line by line:

*God of peace and stillness,
may we feel your calming, powerful presence
in the stormy and chaotic times of our lives. Amen.*

■ ENHANCEMENT

MUSIC CONNECTION

The hymn "It Is Well With My Soul" was written by Horatio Spafford, who experienced many tragedies, including the loss of his children during a storm at sea. Click on the first link in the sidebar to listen to a video clip of the hymn and learn more about the story. (Option: listen to other recordings.) The words of this hymn express the faith that in the midst of loss and fear, we can feel God's peace and power and know that "all is well with our souls." Ask:
✠ What songs do you know that express this same kind of faith?

Listen to the hymn (stop at 2:39):
www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQDvTqV5Dq0
Other recordings of the hymn:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6NMIFoaESM
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vaar6lj55ig

Fear on the High Seas (Based on Mark 4:35-41)

Reader 1:

Jesus had been teaching all day by the Sea of Galilee. There was such a huge group of people crowding around him that Jesus got into a boat and finished his teaching from there. At the end of that day, Jesus said to the disciples, "Let's go across to the other side of the lake." Other boats came along too.

Sound crew:

Make small noises of waves splashing against the side of a boat by rubbing hands together quietly.

Reader 2:

A huge storm came up and the winds were wild. Waves poured into the boat, threatening to swamp it.

Sound crew:

Rub hands and snap fingers, gradually getting louder.

Reader 1:

Jesus was in the stern of the boat, sound asleep! The disciples shook him. "Teacher," they said, "don't you care that the boat is going down? We're going to die!"

Sound crew:

Louder noises: slap hands on thighs and stomp feet.

Reader 2:

Jesus got up and ordered the wind and the waves to be quiet. "Peace! Be still," he said. The wind stopped and everything was calm.

Sound crew:

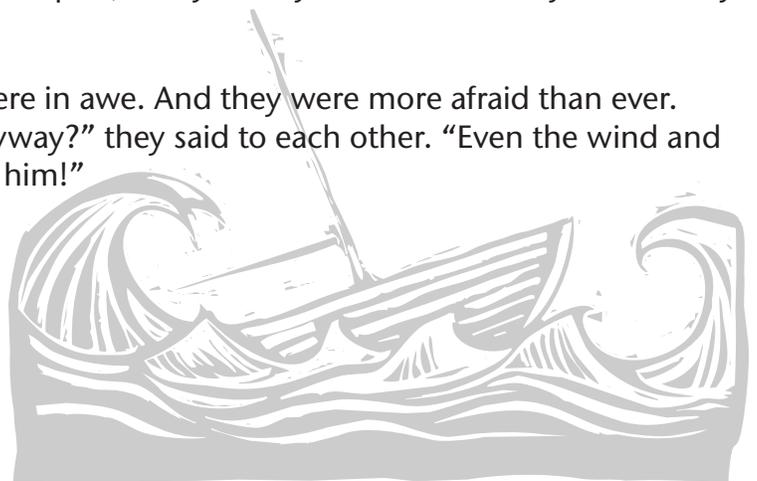
Gradually slow down movements until noise dies away to a gentle sound.

Reader 1:

Jesus asked his disciples, "Why were you afraid? Don't you have any faith?"

Reader 2:

The disciples were in awe. And they were more afraid than ever. "Who is this anyway?" they said to each other. "Even the wind and the waves obey him!"



Storm Prayers

Sometimes frightening and stormy things happen in our lives: illness or injury, rejection, failure, pain, threats and bullying, heartbreak over the loss of a relationship, the death of someone or something that we love. There are lots of things to be afraid of, but our faith in God can help us to make sure that fear doesn't hold all the power or have the last word.

Follow these suggestions to write a prayer to use during the stormy, scary times in your life:

1. Make a list of words or phrases that describe some stormy or frightening experiences you are facing these days.
2. Think about the story of Jesus facing the stormy waves and his power to bring peace and calm.
3. Write an acrostic prayer (*see example*) to God using a word from the Scripture reading. In the prayer describe a stormy experience and ask for the faith and power to face your fears.
4. Fold your prayer into a paper boat shape.

Sample prayer:

Sometimes I'm scared of rejection,
There's nothing to be afraid of, they say, but
It hurts when I don't feel good enough.
Let me know, O God, that you are there.
Let me feel your presence, giving me power to have courage.

