

Small Group Guide THEOLOGY FOR UNEXPECTED STORMS

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. Jim Shaddix

February 2, 2014

Mark 4:35-41

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciple-makers, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

GETTING STARTED

Before Small Group

Weekly Readings for February 3-9

<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
Genesis 35-36 Mark 6	Genesis 37 Mark 7	Genesis 38 Mark 8	Genesis 39 Mark 9	Genesis 40 Mark 10	Genesis 41 Mark 11	Genesis 42 Mark 12

Where We Are In The Story ~ Old Testament (Genesis)

As the first book of the Bible, Genesis explains that God is the all-powerful Creator who cares about His creation even when they disobey Him, and it teaches that God takes evil and transforms it for His glory (Gen. 50:20). Written by Moses when Israel was wandering in the wilderness, Genesis 12-50 specifically emphasizes the development of the nation of Israel by focusing on their founding fathers – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This week's readings focus on the life of Jacob and Joseph. Genesis 35 records the loss of family members, but despite death and man's sin, God's promises to continue. Genesis 36 provides a genealogy of Esau's line. This chapter emphasizes that Esau is Edom (Gen. 36:8, 9, 19, 43), which is important because Esau's descendants developed into a powerful people group, the Edomites, who would later oppose Israel when they returned to the Promised Land after the Exodus. Genesis 36 also demonstrates how God keeps His promise to bless Abraham as the father of many nations (Gen. 12:1; 15; 17).

Family fights and famine in Genesis 37-42 provide opportunities for God to demonstrate His faithfulness, protection, and provision. The story of Joseph is instructional in how it emphasizes obedience to God's instructions, the contrast between the righteous and the wicked, the sovereignty of God in the midst of suffering, and the ultimate blessing of the righteous. Despite persecution from family, slavery, false accusations, and imprisonment, Joseph continues to profess faith in God and acts righteously.

Genesis 38 focuses on Jacob's son Judah, and Judah's statement to Tamar (his daughter-in-law and his one-night stand) about her being "more righteous" is often a source of confusion to readers (Gen. 38:26). Why is Tamar "more righteous" in this story, especially when she has committed incest? Genesis 38 is not stating that incest is acceptable to God, for Judah makes the assertion about Tamar's righteousness, not God. To understand this chapter, one must grasp the practice of a levirate marriage. This practice requires the brother of a deceased man to marry the man's widow and to produce a child who can carry on the deceased man's name. This practice enables both the family name to continue and the widow to receive care, especially in such societies where women must rely on men to provide for them. Tamar was more righteous than Judah in that she sought justice when Judah did not fulfill his legal responsibilities to her. While Tamar goes to

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desperate lengths to obtain what was her right according to the law in her day, Scripture does not condone deception and illicit sex. This bizarre story provides the history of Judah's origin, which is important because the Messiah would later come from the tribe of Judah (Matt. 1:3).

Where We Are In The Story ~ New Testament (Matthew)

As the shortest and the earliest of the four Gospels, The Gospel of Mark focuses on Jesus' identity, and Mark 1:1 introduces Him as human ("Jesus"), the Messiah ("Christ"), and the Son of God. Although Mark emphasizes Jesus' identity, he consistently records Jesus *silencing* those who state Who He is. By focusing on this question of Jesus' identity, Mark demonstrates Who Jesus is and how He fulfills the promises of the prophets. Mark 6:1-8:26 focus on Jesus' public ministry, particularly His power and challenges to His authority. This sixteen chapter Gospel includes twenty accounts of miracles that Jesus performed, which underscores that Jesus is the Son of God, and half of these miracles occur in Mark 6-12.

Mark 8 presents a shift in this Gospel, for in Mark 8:31, Jesus begins teaching His followers about His purpose, death, and resurrection. Peter's confession in Mark 8:29 reaffirms this Gospel's theme – Jesus' identity as the Christ, the Promised Messiah. More than any other Gospel, Mark also presents Jesus as the Suffering Servant prophesied in Isaiah 53, and Mark 10:45 points to this in its reference to the Son of Man giving His life as a "ransom for many." In contrast to the selflessness and sacrifice of Jesus, the disciples argue over who among them is the greatest (Mk. 9:33-37) and request positions of power (Mk. 10:35-45), and the religious leaders attempt to bait and trap Jesus with their questions (Mk. 11:27-33; 12:13-34).

During Small Group

Welcome – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

Looking Back – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

Looking Up – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

Pray for Our Lives: Praise God for His sovereignty in the joys and hardships of life. Ask God to help us rightly understand His goodness to us, even in circumstances that we might not welcome. Pray for the people around you who are walking through difficulty. Ask God to give you love and wisdom to help you understand how to best serve them. Praise God for His great plan of redemption and the fact that we will be with Him for all of eternity without suffering or sorrow. Ask God to give us all faith to trust Him and His steadfast love.

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Pray for Our City: This week we are praying for our members' various outreach efforts to internationals in Birmingham, especially as classes begin again at all local universities. We are also praying for Shades Valley Community Church and Jonathan Haefs, Pastor.

Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Mid-Termers Jeremy and Amanda H. serving in Southeast Asia. Jeremy and Amanda were sent out last year to serve a two-year commitment teaching in a local university in Southeast Asia. Through their involvement with students, they are able to build friendships and share the gospel. Join us this week as we pray for Jeremy and Amanda H. This week we are also praying for the Shaikh peoples of Bangladesh. For more information and ways to pray, visit brookhills.org/thisweek.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

Theology for Unexpected Storms Mark 4:35-41

Two problems...

- Physical: A raging storm (Mark 4:37)
- Spiritual: A resting Savior (Mark 4:38)

One reaction...

- Frustration with Jesus (Mark 4:38)

JESUS DOES WHAT ONLY GOD CAN DO!

(Mark 4:39; cf. Mark 2:1-12; Job 38:8-11; Psalm 65:5-7; 104:5-7; 107:29-30)

Two questions...

- "Why are you so afraid?" (Mark 4:40)
- "Have you still no faith?" (Mark 4:40)

One response...

- Jesus is God and, therefore, worthy of your trust, obedience and worship. (Mark 4:41)

P – Praise Jesus as the God of the universe, Lord over all creation.

R – Repent of any failure to believe who Jesus is or what He has said.

A – Ask Jesus to help you in a current crisis, acknowledging His deity.

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Y – Yield yourself afresh to Jesus' lordship over your current crisis.

Message Summary

In this familiar passage where Jesus crosses the Sea of Galilee with His disciples, there are two problems: one physical in the form of a sudden storm and one spiritual since Jesus is sleeping during the unexpected storm. The reaction from the disciples towards Jesus is that of frustration since their lives were in danger and He was taking a nap. In verse 39, we see Jesus do what only God can do by rebuking the weather and is, therefore, able to ask His disciples why they are so afraid and why they have so little faith. If we truly believe that Jesus is God, then we will trust Him to be with us through the storms of life. Since Jesus is God, He is worthy of our trust, obedience, and worship. The truth of Christ's deity should cause us to praise Him because He is God, repent to Him when we think and act as if He were less than God, ask for His help through the unexpected storms in life, and yield to His Lordship even through the hardest storms.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Ask the group if anyone is going through a storm that they would be willing to tell the group about. Take some time to pray for those in your small group who could be in the middle of an unexpected "storm" in their life. Maybe you are going through one right now and you need strength to trust Christ through it. Pray for transparency during your time together and that God would open up hearts and build trust among your group to go beyond the surface. Trust in God's Word through unexpected and challenging situations, even ones that may come up during your time together.

Think through what your theology, or view of God, is when it comes to Jesus. How does your view affect both your posture, either humble or prideful, and your perspective, either biblical or worldly, when it comes to the divinity of Christ? This is important because it will determine how you approach Jesus in the unexpected storms of life that come. If we view Him as God, then we will trust, obey, and follow Him through it, even if He does not immediately stop it like He stopped the storm in Mark 4. If we struggle with submitting to His Lordship and trusting Him as God, then that can easily lead to frustration toward Him because He is not doing what we think He should be doing.

We should not run too quickly to the theology that Jesus is some sort of spiritual counselor or healer helping us through the spiritual storms of life. As a group, discuss why. If you spiritualize the storm, then you spiritualize the man which makes Jesus some sort of Jedi master or cosmic Amazon.com where you can pick and choose what you want to order. The reality is that Jesus does not always calm the storm. He promises to walk through the storm with us and eventually get us to the other side. If we trust Him, then we have no reason to be afraid because He is God. Without sounding trite or insensitive, how would we explain these truths to someone who is wrestling with them? How do we practically respond with faith when God does not respond the way that we want, particularly in difficult circumstances? Discuss how God can be both good and gracious yet not heal every person or provide the way we would like 100% of the time.

Make every effort to focus on the simple yet profound point from this passage in the Gospel of Mark that Jesus is God and is worthy of our trust, obedience, and worship. This truth should give us strength and confidence that Jesus will eventually get us where He said He was going to take us and that He will be with us the whole way no matter how long it takes. It should also give us a healthy fear of Him as Lord and Savior who is worthy of our praise.

As we are continuing to learn and apply principles regarding prayer and studying Scripture through this

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sermon series, ask the group members if they would like to share anything that they have been learning as they study the Word. Do they have any questions about the REAP (read, examine, apply, pray) principles learned in the previous sermon? As they studied Mark 4 in particular, was there anything that they read or learned about this passage that they would like to share with the group? If someone has not been able to keep up with the reading plan, encourage them not to feel like they have to catch up on all the days or passages that they missed but to jump in with that day's readings. Remind everyone that the point is to be in the Word and to not get discouraged and quit if they miss a day.

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- Describe a time when an unexpected challenge, like the snowstorm this week, invaded your life. Examples might be conflict in a relationship, loss of employment, news of you or a loved one having an illness, etc. What was your reaction to that challenge?
- How did you respond to Jesus within that situation? Was it with frustration or anger because He was not doing what *you* thought He should be doing? How should we respond if such frustration or anger is present?
- Read Mark 4:35-41. What is the difference between the fear that the apostles were experiencing earlier in the passage and the fear they had towards Jesus described in verse 41? Include in your discussion the differences between being afraid versus a "healthy" fear of God. How will our reactions differ as we encounter physical and spiritual circumstances?
- Your view of God will determine your theology. What would you say your theology, or view, of Jesus as God is right now? How does that view match up with the challenging situations you have had in your life? Do your words and actions align?
- Why does God allow storms to occur in our lives? How can storms in our life sanctify us (make us more like Christ)?
- Have someone read these four passages: Job 38:8-11, Psalm 65:5-7, Psalm 104:5-7, Psalm 107:29-30. What do these passages have in common when it comes to the uniqueness, power, and ultimate sovereignty of God?
- Read Hebrews 11:1. In your own words, how would you define biblical faith? Give some examples that would contrast non-biblical faith of "leaping into the dark" versus biblical faith which can be described as leaping into the light.
- Have someone recite from memory or read Matthew 28:18-20. How does our view of God or Jesus affect obeying the Great Commission? Discuss how disciples of Christ can grow as we remember that He is God and worthy of our full trust, obedience, and worship.
- Spend the rest of your time together in concentrated prayer using the P.R.A.Y acronym to guide you:
 - Praise:** Jesus, I praise you as God
 - Repent:** Jesus, I repent of viewing you as less than God
 - Ask:** Jesus, please take me to the other side of this storm or make your presence real to me through it if you chose not to take it away
 - Yield:** Jesus, you are God, and I am not. Even though I do not always understand, I will trust, obey, and worship you through this storm