

Respond | 10 MINUTES

Review the outline for the video teaching and any notes you took. In the space below, write down your most significant takeaway from this session.

Pray | 10 MINUTES

End your time by praying together, asking the Lord to help you trust in him when you are in life's storms. Ask if anyone has any prayer requests. Write those requests in the space below so you and your group members can pray about them in the week ahead.

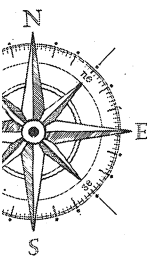
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SESSION TWO

Personal Study

As you discussed in your group time this week, in this life you will encounter storms, but you can take courage because the great I AM promises to be with you in the midst of your trials. As you explore this theme in this week's personal study, be sure to write down your responses to the questions in the spaces provided, as you will be given a few minutes to share your insights at the start of the next session if you are doing this study with others. If you are reading *In the Footsteps of the Savior* alongside this study, first review chapter 5 in the book.



- Day 1 -

FINDING JESUS IN THE STORM

When Jesus appeared to the disciples on the boat, he was walking on water. Initially, this terrified the disciples: “‘It’s a ghost,’ they said, and cried out in fear” (Matthew 14:26).

A belief in ghosts or spirits was common in antiquity. So it’s little surprise that when the disciples saw someone doing something that humans can’t do—like walk on water—they were convinced an apparition was walking toward them.⁷ It was only after Jesus spoke that the disciples knew it was him (see verse 27). Even then, they were uncertain, so Peter asked for proof: “Lord, if it’s you, tell me to come to you on the water” (verse 28).

It’s easy to scoff at the disciples. How could they *not* have known it was Jesus? But how often have we missed Christ in our midst, especially when we’re distracted by the storm around us? Jesus doesn’t always show up the *way* that we think he will. He doesn’t always show up *when* we think he will (remember the disciples had been battling the storm for hours before Jesus appeared). And he doesn’t always *look* the way we think he will look. But that doesn’t mean he doesn’t come. It just means we have to be looking for him.

This is hard to do when we’re anxious, stressed, or afraid of whatever the storm we’re facing has brought into our lives. We’re distracted by the fear and anxiety and fixated on what’s going wrong. Even if Jesus is showing up, it’s easy to miss him. But Jesus is the key to getting through the storm. If we lose sight of him or fail to trust in him, our storms will be that much more intense. But if we’re aware of him and trust he is with us even as the waves rage, we can weather any storm. His presence brings us peace. His voice brings us hope.

READ | John 20:11–18

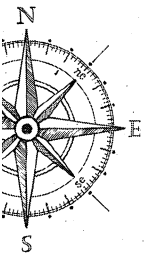
REFLECT

1. When Jesus was crucified, his followers were devastated. Their Savior was gone. They had seen him die. They had buried him. They were certain of his death. They had lost

all hope. But then, as we see in this passage, Jesus revealed himself to Mary. She had known him during his ministry. She was in the throes of grief after he died—a storm that many of us know all too well. Why do you think Mary didn’t recognize Jesus at first?

2. Mary not only failed to recognize Jesus but also mistook him for the gardener who kept up the tombs. At what point *did* Mary recognize Jesus?
3. In the midst of Mary’s sorrow, she heard Jesus’ voice . . . and recognized it was him. Has it ever taken you a while to realize Jesus was with you in a storm or at another point in your life? What allowed you to finally recognize Jesus’ presence with you?
4. What would it be like to hear Jesus speak your name in the midst of whatever storm you are facing? How would it change the way you feel about your storm?

PRAY | The Jesuit Prayer of Examen is a daily practice in which you are invited to examine the events of your day, give thanks, and note where you encountered God. For your prayer time today, go through these five steps of the prayer to help you notice where God met you today: (1) put yourself in God’s presence; (2) pray for grace to see how God is working in your life; (3) go over events, conversations, and moments that stick out to you; (4) reflect on these events, conversations, and moments; and (5) ask God to help you be aware of his presence tomorrow.⁸



- Day 2 -

WHAT STORMS REVEAL

It's one thing to encounter a storm when you've done something wrong. Your behavior or choices led you to the consequences you are now reaping. But it's another thing to encounter a storm after doing *exactly* what God told you to do. Why would he lead you this way when he knew you would encounter darkness, sickness, or death? Why did he tell you to make that move, take that job, or start a family when he knew the heartache that would follow?

The disciples were likely wondering this as well that stormy night. Jesus was the one who told them to cross the sea: "Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side" (Matthew 14:22). While Jesus prayed on the mountain, they were hit with wave after wave. They must have wondered why Jesus told them to cross the sea.

It's natural during storms to ask the *why* question. *Why did this happen? Why am I having to endure this trial? Why did God tell me to go this way?* But there's something interesting to note about the story. After Jesus climbed into the boat and the waves died down, we read, "Those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God'" (verse 33). This is the first account in Matthew of the disciples worshiping Jesus. They had felt in awe of him and were amazed by him (see 8:27), but they had not worshiped him until now. They were finally seeing him for who he truly was: their God who was worthy of worship.

It's hard to know the purpose of our storms when we are right in the middle of them. But in each one, Jesus is telling us something about himself—revealing more of who he is to us—so that in the next storm we will know who is there with us: the Son of God, who is worthy of our worship.

READ | John 1:1–14

REFLECT

John opens his Gospel with this "great prologue" that describes how Jesus chose to take on human flesh and dwell among us. (Note that the term *Word* in this passage

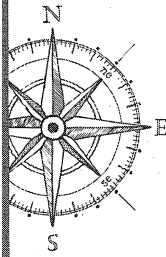
refers to Christ.) What does John say about who Jesus was, is, and always will be (see verses 1–5)?

2. John goes on to state that Jesus is "the true light that gives light to everyone" (verse 9). Yet some did not recognize that light and chose instead to live in darkness. But what promise is given for those who do choose to "believe in his name" (verse 12)?

3. Think about a storm you have been through that made you ask the *why* question. How has God illuminated his purposes in having you go through that trial? What new truths did you learn about God and yourself after going through that storm?

4. The disciples' *why* questions melted away when they recognized *who* was with them in the storm. In what ways do you need God to reveal his presence to you today?

PRAY | Read through John 1:1–14 for your prayer time today. Underline whatever stands out to you about Jesus' character. Meditate on those descriptions of Christ.



- Day 3 -

KEEPING YOUR FOCUS

We live in a world where at any given moment a dozen different distractions are demanding our attention: phones, email, YouTube, podcasts, news, audiobooks, and the like. With all these distractions, it can be difficult to find a moment of quiet in our day. What's more, when we are in a trying situation in our lives, it's all too easy to turn to these distractions . . . either for help, or guidance, or to numb our emotions or put off dealing with what is right in front of us.

In this week's story, we saw that Peter made a bold request of Jesus: "Lord, if it's you . . . tell me to come to you on the water" (Matthew 14:28). Jesus told him to come, and Peter obeyed and stepped over the side. In so doing, Peter accomplished what no other person in Scripture had done before, not even the great prophets like Elijah: *he walked on water.*⁹

Peter was partaking in a miracle of Jesus! But then he heard and felt the wind howling around him. He was reminded that he was in the midst of a raging storm. He saw that the waves were big . . . much bigger than he was. He forgot that Jesus was *bigger*.

It can be difficult for us to keep our focus on Christ in the midst of a storm. We're battling the waves around us. We're paddling desperately to get to the other side. We're trying to navigate the anxiety, fear, and all the other emotions that we are experiencing. It all seems so *big*, and we forget that Christ is bigger. He is greater than the storm. He is the I AM. He is our courage, our strength, our hope, and our peace. All we have to do is put down the phone, take our eyes off the anxiety for a moment, and look up at him. For just like he did with Peter, he is offering us his hand.

READ | Hebrews 12:1-3

REFLECT

In Hebrews 11, the chapter before this passage, the author provides a detailed history of the heroes of the Jewish faith who followed God wherever he led them: Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Joseph, to name a few. The author's point is that because of these

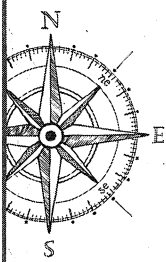
great examples who've gone before us, we can do the same when we focus on Christ. According to verse 1, what should we throw off so we can run the race of faith?

2. What do you think it means for Jesus to be the pioneer and perfecter of our faith?

3. What tends to distract you from focusing on Jesus, especially during trying times?

4. Think about something you're worried about today. How could you instead focus on Jesus? How could you "throw off" whatever is keeping you from focusing on him?

PRAY | End your time in prayer. Ask Jesus to forgive you for being so easily distracted from him. Ask him to help you look to him—and only him—to calm your fears and anxieties. Thank him for reaching out his hand to you and pulling you up when it feels like you're sinking.



- Day 4 -

PEACE IN THE STORM

As soon as Jesus stepped onto the boat, “the wind died down” (Matthew 14:32). This isn’t the only time in Scripture that Jesus calmed a storm. In the Gospel of Mark, the disciples and Jesus found themselves in another storm on the Sea of Galilee. The disciples begged Jesus for help. As a result, “[Jesus] got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm” (4:39).

Sometimes, this is what Jesus does with our storms. He brings miraculous peace, healing, and restoration. All is resolved. But more often, the peace that Jesus offers does not *end* our storms. Instead, he offers us peace *during* the storm and *in spite of* the storm. The problem persists, the illness lingers, the situation remains unresolved. But this doesn’t mean Jesus isn’t there. In him, we can have inner peace even when our outer world is dark and stormy.

We often look for peace in places we can never find it. We think that if we just had more money, or had different friends, or were just in a different place in life, *then* all the unsettledness that we feel inside would go away. But what happens when those problems are finally solved? Another one just pops up in its place, and we are no better off than we were before.

What we need is the peace of God. The kind of peace that God offers is not a mere solution to a problem nor an offer of worldly contentment. Rather, the peace that God offers is *an ongoing state of mind*. An undercurrent to our turbulent lives. A voice saying that no matter what is happening on the outside, we can have peace on the inside.

READ | John 14:25–27

REFLECT

Jesus tried to explain to his followers that he wouldn’t be with them forever and that he would one day be reunited with his Father in heaven. This troubled the disciples, who couldn’t understand when or how Jesus would do this. They wanted

their rabbi and friend to stay with them. So Jesus reassured them. How did he do this? What did Jesus promise the disciples would receive once he had left the earth?

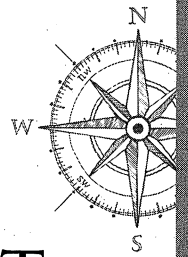
2. What does Jesus reveal about the Holy Spirit? What are some of the gifts he would provide to the disciples—and to us?

3. When you feel unsettled, whether due to a storm in your life or discontentment, to whom or what do you tend to turn to find peace? What has been the result?

4. Jesus told his disciples, "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (verse 27). What is troubling your heart today? What peace do you need from the Holy Spirit?

PRAY | In your prayer time today, ask Jesus for his peace—not the peace the world offers, but the peace that only he can offer. Sit and wait in silence for a few minutes. Allow Jesus' peace to wash over you. Note how you feel after this time of prayer and meditation.

Day 5



CATCH UP AND REFLECT

Use this time to go back and complete any study and reflection questions from previous days this week that you weren't able to finish. Make a note below of any revelations you've had and reflect on any growth or personal insights you've gained.

Spend the next two days reading chapter 4 of *In the Footsteps of the Savior*. Use the space below to record anything in the chapters that stands out to you or encourages you.