

Discussion Guide

WEEK OF 5.12.24

Series: Gospel of Mark

Text: Mark 6:45-56

How to use this guide: This discussion guide is designed to help you facilitate a conversation around the Bible text. Begin your discussion with prayer. Then, read this week's passage. Next, work through some of the questions together. The goal is not to ask every question, but to have a good, free-flowing discussion. Do your best to ask at least one question from each section (introduction, understanding, and application), but beyond that, let the Holy Spirit guide your conversation. Also, if you heard some point from the sermon that you'd like to discuss, feel free to add that to your group's discussion.

QUESTIONS FOR INTRODUCTION

In what ways has your faith been challenged this week? How did you respond?

- **Up to this point in the Gospel of Mark, in what ways has Jesus chosen to reveal Himself as the Messiah whom they were expecting?**

READ MARK 6:45-56.

Now let's focus on **MARK 6:45-47.**

- **Why do you think Jesus chose to separate Himself from the crowd and disciples after this miracle of feeding the five thousand? What does this teach us about ministry to people?**

READ MARK 6:48-52.

- **Why do you think Jesus wanted to "pass by" the disciples in the boat as He walked on the stormy waters? When the disciples saw someone walking on the water, what was their reaction? Why (see v. 52)?**
- **Explain Jesus response to the disciples' reaction to seeing Him. How does this reveal who Jesus is?**

This same event is described in Matthew 14:28-33, but Matthew added Peter's request of asking Jesus to command him to come to Him on the water. Peter's reaction is similar to our reactions. When we are demonstrating our faith; we take our eyes off of Jesus because something distracts our focus. We let distractions interfere with our faith and our fear dominates.

When have you had a similar response to something that frightened you, how were your fears calmed? How did you calm your fears? How did the Word of God help you overcome your fear?

- **What signs did Jesus show in this passage that He is the Messiah?**

READ MARK 6:53-56.

- **What did the people in these crowds believe to be true about Jesus? What type of power did they believe He had?**
- **Point out the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen." How was the crowd's faith revealed in this story?**
- **Why was Jesus concerned with both the physical and the spiritual welling being of the people?**
- **What can we learn about our ministry to others through Jesus' example in this story?**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- **How does it affect a person who claims to trust in Christ if he or she does not grasp Jesus' identity as Messiah? His power? His love and compassion?**
- **In what way is Christ calling you to share your few resources in service to Him? What does this tell you about what Jesus wants us to do in our ministries?**

QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

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- How have you been personally reminded of Jesus' love and compassion for you lately?

COMMENTARY

Mark 6: 45-56

6:45 After this miracle, everyone was exhausted. *Bethsaida*. Also known as Julias, especially after AD 30, but the Gospels, which preserve early tradition prefer its traditional local name. Jesus sent the disciples in the boat on ahead to Bethsaida. He dismissed the crowd—no small feat, considering there were at least five thousand people—and they flocked to Jesus like moths to a light. There may be another explanation for his sending the disciples away. In John's record of this miracle (John 6:15), the people tried to seize Jesus and make him their king. They had seen miracle after miracle, but none like this. They reasoned that if Jesus could feed this many people on a few pieces of bread and fish, he must be the Messiah. Jesus may have sent the disciples away to keep them from getting caught up in the middle of this nationalistic spirit regarding the Messiah....In addition, Luke's Gospel tells us that before this miracle occurred, John the Baptist's disciples had come to Jesus and told him of John's death. Jesus' mind would have been filled with sorrow for the death of his cousin and friend. Jesus was prompted to seek out time of prayer for these very reasons.

6:47 "*middle of the lake.*" The lake is not large (13 miles long and 8 miles wide at its widest point), and the disciples were probably crossing at a much narrower point. Nevertheless, progress was delayed by contrary winds (v. 48).

6:48 In the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, Mark notes that the people sat down on "green" grass (v. 39). The grass is green in Palestine only in mid-April. That point becomes important now. This was the time of Passover, which was always held during a full moon. The full moon let Jesus see clearly what was happening on the lake. He could see the disciples struggling with the oars against the crashing waves. Also, the light of a full moon would have allowed the men to see Jesus walking on the surface of the lake. Jesus came out to them shortly before dawn, which is the fourth watch of the night, the same time that the crossing of the Red Sea took place (Ex 14:24). Jesus was filled with compassion for them. He left his prayers and his own troubles behind and set out to help them.

"*about to pass by.*" This phrase could evoke God's activity in Ex 33:22; 34:6 and applies to God also in Job 9:11, one of the same passages that refers to God treading on the sea (Job 9:8, God treads on the sea also in Ps 77:19; Hab 3:15). Together with Jesus' "I am" statement (see v. 50; translated "It is I") the narrative leaves no doubt as to Jesus' divine identity (see note on v. 50).

6:49 "*ghost.*" Despite widespread Jewish teachings about heaven and the future resurrection, on a popular level many people believed in ghosts and certainly spirits more generally. Some people in antiquity believed that the souls of those who died unburied at wandered near the site of their demise.

6:50 "*It is I.*" the NIV's translation is legitimate and fits the context, but the words in Greek here also mean "I am," evoking Ex. 3:14 and (especially in the Greek version) Isa 41:4; 43:10; 48:12; 51:12. Together with the context of Jesus treading on waters and being "about to pass by" (v. 48), this experience reveals Jesus' deity (see note on v. 48).

This phrase "*pass by*" *them* does not mean that Jesus was going to pass by and ignore his disciples in the boat. The phrase is also used in the Old Testament when God "passed by" Moses, revealing himself to him. Jesus' appearance would serve as a reassurance to the disciples. He had sent them out on the water; he would see them through their troubles.

Sailor stories about ghosts and supernatural figures were numerous. There was a Jewish superstition that ghosts seen at night foretold destruction and disaster. No wonder the disciples were afraid. The disciples were frightened by the sight of Jesus walking on the lake because they thought He was ghost, and therefore a

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harbinger of chaos or doom. But Jesus calmed them by assuring them, “*It is I*”. His presence brings His people peace in any storm (Isa 41:10; John 16:33).

Jesus did not let them labor long in their distress. He immediately spoke a word of comfort. The wind died down and the sea became calm. The parallel story in Matthew tells of Peter getting out of the boat and walking toward Jesus. If Mark was the recorder for Peter, why is this not mentioned here, in Peter’s Gospel? Perhaps Peter wanted the focus of the story to be on the actions of his Lord rather than Peter’s actions.

6:51 A second miracle occurred as soon as Jesus climbed into the boat with His disciples; the strong wind that opposed them all night suddenly stopped. The disciples should have begun discovering that their Teacher was no ordinary man, yet the next verse indicates how slow they were to understand the meaning behind His miracles.

6:52 Mark connects the disciples’ failure to understand with their hardened hearts. People’s failure to recognize Jesus’ identity and mission is never just a matter of limited information or reasoning skills; quote often, “*lack of understanding*” reflects a stubborn heart. The disciples did not understand Jesus’ miracles. If they had understood the miracle of the feeding of the multitude, they would have understood Jesus walking on the water. They should have understood that Jesus is the Lord of creation. He had primacy over the Sabbath, the purity laws, the bread they ate, and the water upon which they sailed.

6:53. *Gennesaret*, also called *Gennesar*, is a fertile plain about one mile wide and three miles long at the northwest corner of Lake Galilee. There may have been a village by the same name, but there is no evidence for that. Why the boat came to Gennesaret rather than Bethsaida is not explained, but Mark’s location of the landing has led some to conjecture the existence of another Bethsaida on the northwestern shore.

6:53-56. Mark notes that when they landed, they were again besieged by people. Jesus could not go anywhere now without being recognized. They went through the countryside, telling everyone that Jesus was present. The sick were brought out in droves for him to touch or for them to touch him. News of Jesus’ previous miracle had preceded him. Rather than chronicling this part of Jesus’ ministry in detail, Mark says only that wherever Jesus went, people ran to Him, hoping to be healed and blessed. And all those who touched Him in faith were healed.

6:54. Mark deliberately contrasted the recognition of the crowds and the failure of the disciples to recognize Jesus.

6:55-56. Some have tried to see magic in the touching of Jesus’ garments, but the statement needs to be read in light of 5:25-34, where faith was the cause of the healing of the woman who touched Jesus’ garments. The edge of His cloak probably was the tassel that pious Jews wore in accordance with Numbers 15:38-41 and Deuteronomy 22:12. The word translated healed is again the one often translated “saved.” Mark probably saw in physical healing a sign of spiritual healing.

Many of the people in the crowds sought only to touch the edge of Jesus’ cloak, probably meaning the tassels on the edge of His garment. More than likely this is a reference to His prayer shawl. In fact, they begged Him to let them touch His cloak. They had faith that the simple touch would bring healing, and it did. Such was the compassion and authority of Jesus. The crowd’s begging may have been intensified because they knew other leaders who would not allow themselves to be touched. Many of the Pharisees, for example, would have been horrified at the thought of rubbing shoulders in a crowd like this.