

POP GOES THE FEAR

Lesson Plan on calming the storms in our lives

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Search for a picture online of A cartoon depiction of Jesus calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee.

Pre planning: Jesus Calms the Storm on the Sea of Galilee

The account of Jesus calming the storm provides a starting place for many people who need assurance of God’s control over forces that seem out of their own control. The disciples in the sinking boat faced overwhelming fears. But when Jesus so quickly calmed the storm, their fears were quickly replaced with awe and worship.

Many of us—especially children—carry the burden of fear, perhaps not realizing that we can run to Jesus for safety. But Psalm 91 tells us that a person “who dwells in the shelter of the Most High...will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day.” As we present our fears to our heavenly Father in prayer, we, too, can be assured of the comfort that comes from trusting the one who loves us and who has the power to protect us in all circumstances.

Jesus Calms the Storm

Bible Background: Mark 4:35-41

Jesus’ suggestion to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee sounds to us like a simple procedure. However, several factors made such a journey difficult. First, few inhabitants of the west side of Galilee ever ventured to the east side. That side was inhabited mostly by non-Jews who worshipped a variety of gods, which naturally made God-fearing Jews uncomfortable. Second, the boats Jesus’ disciples used were small fishing boats. They were not intended for traversing the middle of the lake, which was 14 miles long by 8 miles wide. And finally, the geography surrounding the lake made it susceptible to sudden storms that could turn a calm lake into a violent sea.

Note that Jesus and his followers weren’t all in one boat, though that is a common perception. Many lives were at stake when a furious storm arose. However, many of the

disciples were experienced fishermen and expert sailors. So one might expect that they would handle things on their own. The fact that they turned to Jesus for help likely meant that they were at the end of their means—they had tried everything they knew to combat the storm and had failed. At the point of pure desperation, they woke Jesus with screams of terror.

When Jesus awoke, he immediately demonstrated that he was in control. There was no hint of worry or concern in his words. He simply said, “Quiet!” He then said, “Be still,” a term that literally means “muzzle yourself and continue to be silent.”

Life Application

We have the benefit of knowing how the story of Jesus’ calming the storm ends. But imagine the disciples’ amazement when the raging waves instantly became calm. Even today, with our advanced technology, we don’t have any control over the weather and can’t always forecast it very accurately. In Jesus’ day, controlling the weather was known strictly as the domain of God. In the instant the storm ceased, the disciples began to realize more fully who Jesus was. He had demonstrated his power in healing people, but never before had he done anything of this magnitude.

Jesus then asked some pointed questions. He seemed surprised that the disciples’ faith was so weak. After all they had seen, they hadn’t fully grasped who Jesus was or what he was capable of. But now they had seen something so powerful, so awesome, that they were terrified to think about who Jesus really was.

The disciples’ terrified response is understandable when we consider God’s power and purity in light of our own weakness and imperfection. But the disciples came to learn that no matter how bad a situation seemed, the first thing they needed to do was turn to Jesus.

Easy Prep for the following activities:

Oil and Water: Gather a 12-ounce clear plastic cup and two small paper or foam cups for every four children. Put 2 inches of white vinegar in each clear cup, 1 tablespoon of baking soda in one of the small cups for each group, and 1 tablespoon of cooking oil in the other small cup for each kid.

Pop Goes the Fear: Inflate 8 to 10 large balloons, and set them aside in a trash bag. On a table, place a felt marker and a piece of cardboard through which you’ve pushed a few straight pins.

- **Bible lesson**

One night after a long day of preaching to the people, Jesus decided to get into a fishing boat with his disciples and go across a sea to the other side. Leaving the crowd behind, Jesus and his friends got into the boat. When they had sailed to the middle of the sea, a storm began to kick up waves. The boat rocked back and forth and up and down over the waves. The storm grew stronger and more furious. Jesus had fallen asleep almost as soon as the boat left the shore. Even though the sea was tossing the boat around, he was still asleep. But his disciples were beginning to get really afraid. They tried lowering the sail and throwing out the anchor, but nothing worked. They bailed out the water, but still the storm raged. The boat was close to sinking.

Finally, they couldn't stand it any longer. Jesus was still sound asleep, so they woke him up. They said, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

With that, Jesus stood up in the boat and shouted out, "Quiet! Be still!" Signal for everyone to be quiet. The storm died down, the waves grew calm, and the boat Jesus was on stopped sinking.

Jesus looked at his disciples, who were now soaking wet and shaking with fear. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Didn't you believe that I would take care of you?"

The disciples were no longer afraid, but they were amazed. They turned to each other and asked, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Questions for discussion

1. What do you think the disciples were most afraid of?
2. How did Jesus calm the storm?
3. How did Jesus calm the fears of the disciples during the storm?
4. What fears do you have?
5. Can Jesus calm your fears? How do you think he does that?

OBJECT LESSON

Oil and Water

In this activity, the kids will be mixing materials to create a harmless chemical reaction. This activity can be messy, so be prepared with towels. Set out the supplies you prepared before class.

Have kids form groups of four. In each group, assign two children to be in charge of materials. They'll be responsible for getting the materials. The other two kids will be in charge of cleanup. They'll make sure all items are put away after the experiment.

Say: Let's try this experiment to see what happens when we let Jesus take care of our fears. Let's pretend that the clear cup represents you. The white powder represents the things that scare us. The oil in the other cup represents Jesus.

One person in your group will sprinkle the white powder into the large cup. While you watch what happens, think about how you feel when you're scared. Then have another person in the group pour in the oil. Watch what happens and think about Jesus. Ready? Go ahead.

Have kids try the experiment. After everyone has experienced the fizz of the baking soda and vinegar and the calming effect of the oil, invite everyone to share their reactions.

What scares you

Why do you think people get scared?

Is it wrong to be scared? Why or why not?

How was this science experiment like the way Jesus calms our fears?

What happens when we let Jesus deal with our fears?

Why do you think Jesus doesn't want us to be afraid?

Say: Jesus loves us more than we can imagine. He wants us to feel safe and secure. Jesus calms our fears because of his love. Whenever we're afraid, we can ask Jesus to be with us, to comfort us, and to calm us. Jesus will be with us just as he was with the disciples when they were scared.

POP GOES THE FEAR

Be careful when doing this activity with young children. Keep them away from the straight pins and balloon pieces for safety. To avoid choking hazards, be sure to pick up pieces of any broken balloons promptly. Balloons may contain latex.

Bring out the balloons and the cardboard with pins you prepared before the session.

Say: We've seen from the things Jesus said and did for his disciples when he calmed the storm that he desires to protect us from fearful situations. What fears do you have? If you would like to share a fear, I'll write it on one of the balloons.

Use the felt marker to write on balloons several things kids say they're afraid of. Then set the balloons aside. When each balloon has been labeled, show children the piece of cardboard with the straight pins. Set the cardboard on the table so the pins stick up.

Say: Think of these pins as being like Jesus. Our fears are written on the balloons. Let's see what happens when the fears get close to Jesus.

Drop one of the balloons onto the pins so the balloon pops.

Say: Jesus has the power to destroy our fears just as a pin can destroy an inflated balloon. As each balloon pops, let's praise God for destroying our fears with his Word.

One by one, drop the balloons onto the pins. As each balloon pops, lead children in thanking God for his power and love.