

## Small Group Guide

Based on the Sermon: Presence, Faith, and the Desires of Our Heart

### OVERVIEW

This week's sermon walked through the account of Jesus walking on water in Matthew 14, alongside parallel accounts in Mark 6 and John 6. The message challenged us to examine the quality of our presence with God, the depth of our faith, and the true motives behind why we follow Jesus. We were also reminded that a heart surrendered to Christ will find its desires transformed over time.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

Being physically present does not mean we are spiritually engaged. God wants our full attention, not just our attendance.

Jesus modeled the discipline of prayer and receiving from God before pouring out in ministry. We need that same rhythm.

Peter's greatest missed opportunity on the water was not that he sank. It was that fear kept him from fully enjoying what God had made possible.

Hard hearts limit what God can do in and through us. Unforgiveness, self-will, and spiritual complacency all contribute to a hardened heart.

The crowd that followed Jesus after the feeding of the five thousand was following Him for the wrong reasons. Jesus sees through our motives and invites us into something deeper.

Delighting in the Lord is what transforms the desires of our heart, not simply asking God to fulfill the desires we already have.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**Opening Question** Take a few minutes to check in with your group. On a scale of one to ten, how present and engaged have you felt with God this past week? What has been competing for your attention?

### Section 1: Being Present vs. Being Engaged

The sermon opened with the idea that it is possible to be physically present

somewhere while being mentally and spiritually checked out. Where in your spiritual life do you feel you are going through the motions rather than being genuinely engaged?

Jesus intentionally sent the disciples ahead and went up the mountain to pray, even after an exhausting day of ministry. What does this tell us about the priority Jesus placed on his time alone with God? What gets in the way of you doing the same?

The pastor mentioned a song about missing time with God and said it is one of the easiest promptings to bypass when God says to slow down and spend time with Him. Have you experienced a season where you drifted from that rhythm? What brought you back?

## Section 2: Faith, Fear, and Walking on Water

When Peter stepped out of the boat, he was the only one willing to try. The others watched from safety. In what area of your life is God calling you to step out, but fear is keeping you in the boat?

The sermon suggested that Peter's biggest regret may not have been sinking, but that fear kept him from fully experiencing the miracle. Is there a moment in your own life where you look back and realize fear cost you something significant? What did you learn from it?

Read 2 Peter 1:3 together as a group, where Peter writes about God's divine power providing everything needed for a godly life. Discuss what it means to "add to your faith." What does that look like practically in your daily life?

The disciples in the boat were described as having hardened hearts because they had not understood the lesson of the loaves. What do you think it means to have a hardened heart in the context of faith? What are some ways a heart becomes hardened over time without us noticing?

## Section 3: Why Are You Really Following Jesus?

Jesus told the crowd that followed Him to the other side of the lake that they were not seeking Him because of what they witnessed, but because they ate the bread and were filled. That is a hard word. Honestly, what are the primary reasons you follow Jesus? Are any of those reasons more about personal comfort than genuine devotion?

The sermon pointed out that American Christianity can sometimes produce a "designer Jesus," one who blesses us, removes our difficulties, and requires little of us in return. How do you guard against shaping your understanding of Jesus around what is convenient rather than what is true?

The pastor said, "I have the privilege of serving at the king's request." How does viewing your relationship with Jesus through the lens of service rather than consumption change the way you approach your faith day to day?

#### Section 4: The Heart's Desire

Psalm 37:4 describes the promise that God will give us the desires of our heart when we delight ourselves in Him. The sermon made the point that as we delight in God, He changes what we desire. How have you seen your desires shift over time as you have grown in your relationship with Christ?

Jeremiah 17:9 describes the heart as deceitful above all things. How does that reality affect the way we should approach our own motives, our prayers, and our expectations of others?

#### PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

For Your Prayer Life Set aside intentional time this week not just to bring requests to God, but to receive from Him. Begin your prayer time by simply being still and asking God what He wants to say to you before you say anything to Him.

**For Your Faith** Identify one area where God has been prompting you to step out in faith and you have been hesitating. Take one concrete step in that direction this week, however small, and bring it back to the group next time.

**For Your Heart** Ask God to reveal any area of hardness in your heart, whether it is unforgiveness, self-reliance, or spiritual complacency. Write it down. Confess it to God and, if appropriate, to a trusted person in your group.

**For Your Community** The sermon encouraged church members to share insights and takeaways on the church's social media page. If something from this week's message struck you, consider posting it. It may be exactly what someone else needs to hear.

**For Your Study** Read through Psalm 34 this week, which was recommended for extra reflection. Note the promises you find there and bring one that stands out to you to share with the group.

## CLOSING REFLECTION

Close your time together by going around the group and having each person finish one of the following sentences:

"One thing I want to stop being afraid of is..."

"One way I want to add to my faith this week is..."

"The desire of my heart that I want God to transform is..."

Then close in prayer, asking God to move you from merely being present to being fully surrendered, from fear to faith, and from seeking what He can give to seeking who He is.