

# POWER OVER NATURE

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 4:35-41

## CONTEXT

Jesus taught in parables to a large crowd of people by the Sea of Galilee. Using the natural amphitheater-like acoustics of the lake, He sat on a boat near the shore while the crowd listened. That evening, Jesus decided that He and His disciples should cross to the other side of the sea in the boat, taking time to rest after a long day with the crowds. A powerful storm broke through the calm night, however, testing the disciples' faith in Jesus. Who indeed was this Man whom they had left everything to follow?

## KEY CONCEPT

**We can have faith in Jesus because He is God, sovereign over all things, including nature.**

As you examine Mark 4:35-41:

- Take comfort that Jesus knows everything and is never surprised or anxious.
- Recognize that Jesus, being God, is sovereign over all things, including nature.



## TIMELINE

Jesus Appoints His Twelve Disciples (Mark 3:13-19)

Jesus Teaches Parables on the Kingdom of God (Mark 4:21-34)

Jesus Heals Two Daughters (Mark 5:21-43)

Jesus Teaches and Explains the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-20)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
Jesus Calms a Storm  
(Mark 4:35-41)

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand (Mark 6:30-44)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                     |                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Mark 4:35-41 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Luke 8:22-25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Mark 5:1-13  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Luke 8:26-39 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Mark 5:9-20  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 44     |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## JESUS IS NOT ANXIOUS ABOUT WHAT WE ARE ANXIOUS ABOUT (MARK 4:35-38).

**Underline the disciples' reaction to the storm, and highlight Jesus's reaction.**

**35** On that day, when evening had come, he told them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the sea." **36** So they left the crowd and took him along since he was in the boat. And other boats were with him. **37** A great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. **38** He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher! Don't you care that we're going to die?"

Jesus and His disciples decided to take a boat across the Sea of Galilee after a long day teaching the crowds. Sometime during the night, "a great windstorm" blew up, producing powerful winds and dangerous waves that began to swamp the boat (v. 37). Yet despite the perilous environment outside the boat, Jesus slept soundly within.

### PLACE STUDY

**THE SEA OF GALILEE:** At almost 700 feet below sea level, the Sea of Galilee is the lowest freshwater lake on earth. Surrounded by steep mountains and hills, it can encounter powerful wind events when the cool air from the higher regions rushes down upon it, producing violent winds and waves.

These details mirror Jonah's turbulent voyage on the Mediterranean Sea from Joppa to Tarshish, where the prophet also was found sleeping through a storm (Jonah 1). Unlike the rebellious prophet fleeing from God's mission, however, Jesus slept peacefully within the perfect will of His Father. And indeed, He did sleep. Jesus, sharing the same fullness of humanity that we have, needed sleep the same way He needed food and water. Just like every human being, Jesus experienced temptation, felt pain, and was susceptible to death. It was because of this shared humanity that Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses as sinful human beings, yet in His experience of human weakness, Jesus never sinned (Heb. 4:15).

**LEADER NOTE:** There is a connection between sleep and faith in the Old Testament. For example, David prayed, “I will both lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, LORD, make me live in safety” (Ps. 4:8). Being fully man, Jesus was susceptible to injury and death like the disciples, yet He rested peacefully through the violent storm, knowing it would not harm them apart from His Father’s will. Jesus trusted the Father’s sovereign plan; thus, anxiety did not grip His heart as it so often does ours.

**How can the fact that Jesus is fully man bring comfort to us during times of difficulty?**

Jesus may have been sleeping peacefully during the storm, but the disciples definitely were not. Ironically, the disciples, several of whom were professional fishermen, came to Jesus for help when the waves began to spill over into the boat. Abrupt storms on the Sea of Galilee were not uncommon, so the disciples’ concern about this particular storm must have been warranted. The danger was real, and so was their fear. Previously, the disciples had witnessed Jesus’s use of supernatural power for the welfare of others in the healing of diseases and ailments and the casting out of demons. But their question for Jesus on the waterlogged boat in this storm exposed the doubt that often arises when believers experience difficulty: “Don’t you care?” (Mark 4:38).

**LEADER NOTE:** The Greek phrasing of the disciples’ question in verse 38 implies a positive answer, more like: “You do care that we are perishing, don’t you?”<sup>1</sup> They knew that Jesus cared, and yet, what they perceived as His failure to act led them to doubt. The same is often true of believers today. We strongly believe God is all-powerful, all-good, and loves us completely—until suffering comes. Suffering tests whether our stated belief is what we actually believe or not. In other words, suffering tests and reveals the quality of our faith.

**How can you ensure that what you believe about God on sunny days does not unravel on stormy days?**

#### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

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“The ship carried his humanity, but the power of his Godhead carried the ship and all that was in it.”<sup>2</sup>

—Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306–373)

Notes

## JESUS CONTROLS ALL THINGS, SO WE CAN TRUST HIM IN ALL THINGS (MARK 4:39-41).

**Identify the source of the disciples' fear before and after the miracle.**

**39** He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Silence! Be still!" The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. **40** Then he said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" **41** And they were terrified and asked one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

Jesus seemed surprisingly passive up to this point. Once awakened, however, His actions and words produced profound results. Jesus spoke to the sea and "rebuked" the wind as He previously had rebuked a demon, showing His authority over the natural as well as the supernatural realms (v. 39; see 1:25).

In the Old Testament, as an act of the Lord's judgment upon His idolatrous people, the prophet Elijah prayed it would not rain on the land, and for three-and-a-half years, it didn't. Then Elijah prayed again and it rained (1 Kings 17:1; 18:41-45; Jas. 5:17-18). Unlike Elijah, Jesus commanded the elements directly by His divine power. He silenced and stilled them with the same voice that spoke creation into being. God alone controls the winds and seas (Job 28:25; Ps. 107:25-30; Nahum 1:3-4), so they obeyed Jesus immediately. In the stillness of the subsequent moment, the disciples faced the truth of Jesus's deity.

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus's command to the wind and sea was quite forceful, utilizing the same Greek words that were used of the exorcism in Mark 1:25: "rebuked" and "be silent" (translated "be still" here in 4:39; "silence" is another Greek word altogether). So in commanding the wind and sea to "be still," literally Jesus was saying, "Be muzzled!" Like the Almighty God who awoke—who rose up to act—to part the Red Sea (Isa. 51:9-10), so too did Jesus awake and speak with authority and put the chaotic sea in its place.

### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**JESUS'S DEITY:** Within the person of Jesus Christ, there are two natures—the divine nature and the human nature. Scripture teaches He is fully divine and fully human. His divinity is on display in passages that describe Him as being equal with God (John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:1-3). The New Testament also points to the deity of Christ by showing how He possesses attributes that God alone possesses (Mic. 5:2; John 1:4), how He performs works that only God performs (Mark 2:5-12; John 10:28; 17:2), and how He Himself claims to be the Son of God (Matt. 26:63-64; John 8:58; 10:30; 17:5).

### Why does Jesus's divine nature demand a response from each of us?

Notes

After rebuking the wind and sea to silence and stillness, Jesus turned to gently rebuke His disciples. He identified the source of the disciples' doubts and fear: not the presence of a storm but the absence of faith. Jesus noted that His gospel seeds had not yet produced in them a faith that endured testing (Luke 8:13).

Failing to understand Jesus's limitless power and sovereign care over the storm, the disciples' hearts produced fear rather than faith. They were even more terrified after the miracle. Although the storm exerted a strength that overwhelmed the disciples' own, Jesus's power over that force was more potent than any power on earth. But did they need to fear Jesus's power? In the sense of respect, yes, but beyond that, the One who wielded power over wind and sea had not come to condemn them but to save them (John 3:17).

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus's teachings and miracles led to an all-important question: "Who then is this?" (Mark 4:41). Unlike the crowds, the disciples were afforded front-row seats to Jesus's explanation of the parables and the calming of the storm. Yet they still struggled to understand and trust this miracle-working Messiah. Today's readers have the benefit of knowing about Jesus's death and resurrection as they see this story play out, so we can know the purpose, the result, and the goal of all Jesus's works in the Gospels. Still, doubts and distractions can threaten to erode our faith as well. Regardless, the most important questions we will answer remain: "Who then is Jesus? Will I put my trust in Him?"

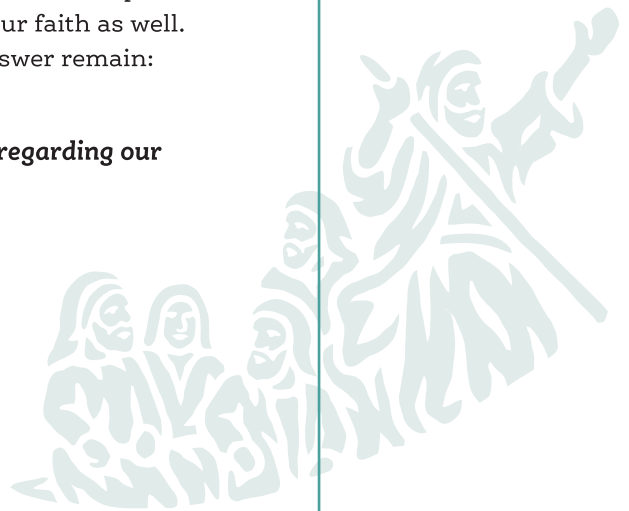
**What is the relationship between faith in Jesus and fear regarding our circumstances in life?**

#### CHRIST CONNECTION

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Jesus demonstrated His deity by calming the storm. As God, He is omnipotent and sovereign over all.



Notes



## ARRIVAL

**ENGAGE:** As your group arrives, ask: “When have you seen immense power showcased by someone or something?” Answers may include a heavyweight lifter lifting a car or a large towboat pulling a cruise ship. Answers can even include a magician, through tricks, changing a dollar bill to a 100 dollar bill.

**TRANSITION:** When we see power revealed before us, we tend to be in fear or in awe. In today’s passage, Jesus showed His disciples His power over nature, not through trickery or human power, but through His divine power that is sovereign over all.

## CONTEXT

**REVIEW:** Display **Pack Item 2: Jesus’s Ministry Map** and point out where the events of the Bible passage took place. Say: “The first three chapters of the book of Mark share stories of Jesus healing the diseased and casting out demons. The disciples had experienced Jesus’s power. Yet in the last few verses of chapter 4, Jesus showed the disciples that He didn’t just have power over disease and sickness but over creation itself. Jesus wasn’t just a good teacher—He is God.”

## RECAP

**RECAP:** Ask: “Would anyone like to share something that stood out to you this week as you prepared for the session?” If some in your group were unable to prepare ahead of time, summarize the passage to get everyone caught up.

**TRANSITION:** Often life’s storms can cause us to panic, and they can distort our vision. But where we see danger, Jesus sees opportunity. He can use times of chaos to reveal His glory. Today’s group activity will contrast the human perspective of the disciples with Jesus’s perspective on their storm-tossed situation.



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## Notes



ask volunteers from the smaller groups to call out their findings. Allow time for group members to write down the conclusions and Scripture references in their PSGs.

**SUMMARIZE:** Display **Pack Item 5: Who Then Is This?** and read the verse to your group. Say: “The disciples realized that Jesus is not just any other man—He does what God can do because He is God the Son. The disciples looked at the storm around them and saw danger and potential death, and they were right to. And then they turned to Jesus, as they should have, though not out of faith but out of fear and desperation. Jesus, the incarnate Maker of heaven and earth, calmed the storm because all of nature is governed and sustained by His sovereign and mighty hand. The wind and sea obeyed Jesus. If we have the right perspective on Jesus, then so too should we.”

## DEBRIEF

**What will faith in Jesus’s power over creation mean for our perspective on the natural phenomena in our world, whether beautiful or dangerous?**

## SUMMARIZE

Jesus is God, and He can handle any storm, literal or metaphorical, that comes our way. Knowing He can calm a real storm reminds us that He has control over everything—creation, the world, our nation, our lives. We can trust Him with everything.

## HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 39). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Head** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** One of humanity’s greatest temptations is to worship a God of our own making. Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection revealed to us the true God, wiping away any preconceived notions of Him. The fact that Jesus is fully God and fully human defies human understanding, yet it is a foundational tenet of the Christian faith. Jesus’s atoning sacrifice required both the death of a mortal man in our likeness and the moral perfection of the immortal God united in the one God-man—Jesus Christ.

**How would you answer the disciples’ question about Jesus: “Who then is this?”**



**HEART:** Our world is filled with real threats and trials, just as in the disciples’ day. We face health concerns, job stresses, relationship struggles, grief, natural disasters, and even poverty. We need to connect our faith in the sovereign, all-powerful God to our day-to-day concerns. To trust Christ more completely, we need to examine our hearts to discover what we fear more than God.

**How would you answer Jesus's question to the disciples: "Why are you afraid?" What threatens your faith today?**



**HANDS:** Jesus demonstrated a life lived with the peace that surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:7). Jesus understood that He was destined for the cross, so a storm was not a threat. We don't know what the future holds for us, but we know who holds our future. Many people need that kind of reassurance and hope.

**What are some ways you can provide comfort and support for those who are fearful of or suffering under the effects of this fallen world?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Spend some time in prayer and ask God to allow you to see your struggles through the perspective of Jesus.
- Consider memorizing Mark 4:39-41 this week. Contemplate the place of fear and faith in your life and what you believe about Jesus.
- Encourage someone this week with the truth that Jesus is God and He is sovereign even over the wind and the waves.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 39 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES:

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 44:23-26 with your group. Thank God that He is always worthy of our faith and praise, even when we doubt and question Him.

#### References

1. David E. Garland, Mark, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 191.
2. Ephrem the Syrian quoted in Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, eds., Mark (Revised), Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 61.

