Session 5: Mark 4:35–5:43

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Because Jesus is a compassionate, powerful God, we can and should come to him with our concerns and needs.

Head Change: To know with confidence that Jesus is present with us in every circumstance.

Heart Change: To feel gratitude for the transformation God has brought about in our lives.

Life Change: To face our fears with the faith that God is our refuge.

OPEN

Have you ever taken a risk on something? Perhaps you applied for a job or moved out on your own. Or you queried a publication to gauge interest in your writing. Or you put your name down to volunteer somewhere new. **What was it like to wait for the risk to pay off (or not)?**

In this passage we find several people risking everything when they connect with Jesus. They decide the potential negatives are worth the potential rewards of following him, approaching him, worshipping him.

READ

Read Mark 4:35–5:43.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Francis's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions:

What difference does Jesus's presence make in the lives of those who are undergoing challenges?

How do the different people he encounters through his miracles react to Jesus?

Show Session 5: Mark 4:35–5:43 (11 minutes)

DISCUSS

In the video session, Francis taught from a boat on the very sea described in the passage.

Put yourself in the shoes of the disciples. **What do you think it would have been like to experience the storm now that you've seen the sea itself?**

Though most of the disciples were seasoned fishermen, they were still afraid. They knew the power of storms on the Sea of Galilee—their fear wasn't based on a little choppy water. They recognized a powerful storm when they saw it. And—recognizing authority when they saw it—they turned to Jesus for help.

In the same way, we experience fear in the course of our everyday lives that's well-founded. As we walk the road of discipleship, we have to recognize that Jesus sees and acknowledges the reality of our fears.

Reflect back on a time in your life where a situation or set of circumstances left you feeling afraid. **In the midst of that fear, what did your perspective of God look like?**

The disciples had seen Jesus heal many people and cast out demons, but they weren't prepared for him to have authority over the weather. **What sort of ideas about Christ did you have when you were a new believer, which you later discovered were wrong? What have you learned about who Jesus is as you've followed him?**

Francis noted that as followers of Jesus we shouldn't be afraid of anything. Jesus expects the same faith from us that he did from the disciples.

Do you have trouble trusting him with specific fears? If so, which ones and why?

Read Mark 5:1–20. Look for parallels between the storm on the Sea of Galilee and the hoard of demons in the man from Gerasenes.

What did you notice was similar between the two vignettes? What was different?

Just as the storm, wind, and waves fell immediately silent at the voice of Jesus, so also here do the demons possessing the poor man recognize Jesus. In fact, the parallels go deep into the original language: Jesus "rebuked" (*epitemesen*) the wind and commanded the sea to "be still" (*pephimoso*). The exact same terms appear in Mark 1:25 when Jesus heals the man possessed by a demonic spirit.

[Note: For further study on epitemesen *and* pephimoso*, see Go Deeper section 1 at the end of the session.]*

Once the Gerasene man is free of the demons, he immediately wants to follow Jesus. He wants to be a disciple. But instead, Jesus sends him home—not because Jesus doesn't want the man with him, but so that he can be a missionary to his town.

When we see God's power on display in our lives, it can (and should) motivate us to tell others about the God we serve. He is with us. He works on our behalf. **Do you find it hard to talk about what Jesus has done for you with those around you? In your neighborhood, at work, at church? If so, why?**

[Note: For further study on the cultural significance of the herd of pigs, see Go Deeper section 2 at the end of this session.]

Read Mark 5:21–34.

Just as the disciples put it all on the line to chase after Jesus, so too will a hurting woman risk everything.

After healing the demon-possessed man, Jesus returns to the western side of the lake and is greeted by a large crowd. Among the throng was a synagogue ruler named Jairus, who approached Jesus and requested his healing touch on his dying daughter. On their way to Jairus's house, Jesus is approached by another sickly woman.

What did you notice about the woman's attitude toward Jesus? How would you compare her confidence in him to the way the disciples viewed Jesus on the sea?

The woman had already spent her life's savings on cures for her condition. She'd bet the farm on the doctors and they'd failed her. But she had heard about Jesus. Like the disciples, she knew what Jesus had done for others, and she hoped he'd be there for her too.

What happened to her when she touched Jesus's robe?

Look at verses 32–33. **How is the woman similar in her approach to Jesus to the disciples or the townspeople from across the sea?**

How does Jesus respond to her?

Maybe you're in a situation like that woman. Maybe even though you love and follow Jesus, life has been crushing you under its thumb. Maybe you feel like you've screwed up one too many times—that you don't deserve Jesus's attention or help. But the picture we get of Jesus in this passage is a compassionate, loving savior who's waiting to respond to even the slightest bit of faith.

Jesus *wants* to be with you. **How does that fact—that Jesus wants to be with you—impact your daily life? What can you do to remind yourself throughout the day of this truth—that a compassionate loving savior wants to be with you?**

Read Mark 5:35–43.

Here, Jesus resumes his mission of healing the synagogue ruler's daughter. But by the time he's finished speaking with the woman who'd touched him in faith, messengers have already arrived. The girl's dead, they say. Don't bother, Jesus.

When in your life have you been to a place where you, like the messengers, felt too far gone even for Jesus?

What words would you use to describe that time in your life? What did it look like?

Notice Jesus's words to the little girl's father in verse 36. This entire week, people have responded to their circumstances with fear, but Jesus faces it head on. With tender words of love, he calls the girl awake—out of death and into life.

In the face of fear, Jesus is enough. No one is too far gone for Jesus.

How can knowing this truth impact your thought life?

Your emotions?

Your actions?

In what ways can you regularly remind yourself that no one is beyond the healing love of Jesus? And how will that impact the way you treat those around you?

LAST WORD

This week we've talked a lot about fear, about trusting in the power Jesus offers us, and about confidence in his care for his followers. Looking back at the moments in your life you discussed earlier, remember this: Jesus was (and is) there with you.

Take a moment and reflect on the words of the old hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." Fear will come in hard times, yes. But alongside that fear stands the one who has the power to raise the dead. Cling to him today. Look to Jesus.

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting.

1. Peek at the Greek: epitemesen *and* pephimoso

The account of Jesus calming the storm is one of his most famous miracles in all of the gospels. However, some of the terminology Mark uses to describe the scene parallels a previous miracle. Mark 4:39 says that Jesus "rebuked" (*epitemesen*) the wind and commanded the sea to "be still" (*pephimoso*). The exact same terms appear back in Mark 1:25 when Jesus heals the man possessed by a demonic spirit, which may imply some sort of evil presence magnifying the terror of the storm described here.

Mark frames the calming of the storm like an exorcism. Jesus speaks to the elements and they listen. The term translated "be still" can also literally read, "be muzzled" (1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18), as though the weather were a disobedient animal forced to submit to the command of its owner.

Reflect on the authority that Jesus demonstrated by speaking these words to forces of nature and demons.

How does that level of power fit with the image you have of Jesus?

Does it change the way you think of him? How?

2. Background: Of pigs and demons

Mark 5:1–20 includes one of the more bizarre parts of the story. What's the deal with the pigs? Other than the pigs, Jesus destroys something with his power only one other time (Mark 11:12–14, 20–21). So, what do we make of it?

Due to ritual cleanness laws, Jews didn't raise pigs as livestock. But Gentiles did. Herds like the one in Mark 5:1–20 were a source of income. Jesus doesn't actually command the demons to inhabit or kill the pigs, but he does give them permission.

The dramatic end to the demons' power displays Jesus's ability to totally dominate demonic activity. Previously, the possessed man lived in a cemetery, broke every form of restraint placed on him, and walked around naked, cutting himself with stones and screaming at nearby residents. At the command of Jesus, all of that changed. The demons departed, and he sat down calmly before Jesus.

Yet how do the people from the city respond? "They began to beg Jesus to depart from the region" (5:17). Jesus had freed a man from a legion of demons. But the townsfolk cared only that the freedom had cost them their livestock. Rather than praise Jesus for what he had done, they were terrified by his power and cared more

for their pigs than they did for this man now free from demonic oppression.

Most of us aren't pig farmers. Following Jesus probably won't mean a complete collapse of our agricultural enterprise. But following Jesus does come with a cost. Sometimes the salvation he offers means depending wholly on him, instead of on what we've come to trust for safety—financial or otherwise.

What do you depend on to get you through your day—or through your life (a job, certain people, etc.)? Where does following Jesus rank compared to those things?

What would happen if they disappeared and all you had left was Jesus? Would you, like the townsfolk, turn on him? Or would you, like the demon-possessed man, turn *to* Jesus?