

PREPARATION

Spend the week studying John 6:16-21. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

DETERMINE | which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group.

PRAY | for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members and their openness to God's Word.

LANDING POINT | The supernatural life is not always the easy life, but it allows us to see God's power, protection and provision in life's storms.

◦ Remember the 4 Rules for Small Group Discussion

- 1. Confidentiality.** What's said in the group stays in the group.
- 2. No cross-talk.** Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.
- 3. No fixing.** We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.
- 4. Sharing.** Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Like the sign of feeding the 5,000, this week's sign reveals Jesus as our Provider. Not only does Jesus provide for you, but He is also with you through life's storms. The winds and waves of adversity that cause doubt, stress and hardship are under Jesus' control. The supernatural life is not always the easy life, but it allows us to see God's power, protection and provision in life's storms.

What does it mean to you that Jesus is your Provider? Where do you see that in your life?

How do you typically react when a storm hits in your life?

LEARN

Select 2-3 questions to discuss as a group.

◦ Caught in a storm

This story takes place on the same day Jesus miraculously fed 5,000 people. It was evening and Jesus wasn't around. So the disciples got in a boat and made their way towards Capernaum, which is on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Suddenly, strong winds began blowing, causing a violent storm. The boat tossed back and forth on water. The situation got so bad that the disciples (many of whom were seasoned fishermen) feared for their lives.

Read John 6:16-21. What stands out to you in the story? Why?

Split the group into pairs. Practice telling the story in your own words.

◦ A miracle on the water

The disciples were in a panic. They rowed the boat for three or four miles until they saw something in the distance. They couldn't make out what it was at first. It looked like a person, but this person was walking on the water! They thought, "That's impossible." As this person drew closer to the boat, they recognized him. It was Jesus. Instead of being overjoyed, they were frightened. "What kind of man can walk on water?" Jesus calmed them and said, "It is I; don't be afraid." The disciples took Him into the boat, the storm ceased and they reached the shore, safe and sound.

Imagine seeing Jesus walk on water. Does the disciples' reaction [fear] seem reasonable? Why or why not?

How can Jesus be calm in the midst of this violent storm? Consider that, in another story, He was asleep in the hull of a boat during a storm [see Matt. 8:23-27].

LIVE

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

What does this sign reveal about Jesus? First, it reveals that Jesus has power over the natural world and events. Second, it reveals how Jesus protects and provides for us in the midst of life's storms.

◦ Power

Jesus is God, which means He has power over the universe He created. When He told the waves to be calm, they obeyed. Only God can intervene to alter the natural order of the universe. In other words, if

 **LIVE** [CONT'D]

he made the Laws of Nature, He can break them, too. The God who made this world has the power to command it. That goes for whatever you're dealing with in your life. The same God that hung the stars in the sky can affect your life with His supernatural power. Do you believe He is capable and wants to do that for you?

Do you ever doubt God really has control over your life? What causes you to doubt?

How can the statement "the God who made this world has the power to command it" be an encouragement to you?

- **Protection and provision**

This sign also reveals how Jesus protected and provided for His disciples. He didn't necessarily take them out of the storm. He met them in it and made sure they arrived safely to shore. Life's storms teach us something about God. They teach us that He is trustworthy. Jesus shows us how God draws near to us when life's storms hit. What storm are you facing? Is your marriage on the rocks? Did the doctor's report make you afraid? Is life after college more turbulent and unpredictable than you expected? Jesus responds to your storms with these words: "Don't be afraid. I'm God. I can handle this. Trust me."

How would your faith be different if God never allowed storms in your life?

Consider a storm (or difficulty) you're facing right now. What would Jesus tell you in response to it? Say it aloud.

 **LEAD**

Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.

So what does this story teach us about living the supernatural life? It teaches us that there is no storm which God doesn't have control of. If you're facing a storm right now, follow these survival tips.

- **Surrender**

The disciples responded to the storm by trying to row away from it. In their own power, they were helpless. They feared for their lives because the storm was so great. We face our fears, on some level, everyday. However, fear is not always a bad thing. It's what you do with your fear that determines whether it's healthy or unhealthy. How you respond to fear is up to you. You can run from God or try and control the situation. Or you can surrender your fears to God and trust Him.

 LEAD [CONT'D]

What's one practical thing you can do to respond to your fears in a healthy way this week?

Look

Isn't it easy to get caught up in the storm and lose your perspective? How many times have you encountered a problem and fixated on it until that tiny molehill became Kilimanjaro? Sometimes we face storms because we were disobedient foolish or sinful. Sometimes we face storms, because we were obedient. Jesus never promised that following Him would mean all life's difficulties would disappear; actually, following Him sometimes puts us into the path of more storms. God sees storms as an opportunity to strengthen—not weaken—our faith in Him. Therefore, the next time you find yourself caught in a storm, fix your eyes on Jesus. He is with you in the storm and promises to be your power, protection and provision.

Which storms are you facing right now? How can you gain a right perspective and fix your eyes on Jesus in the midst of it?

 PRAY

Is it possible to thank God for life's storms? Consider what God has taught you about Himself and yourself through your storms. Thank Him that He was (and is) always near to you in the midst of them.

 FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read 2 Timothy 1:7 and reflect on what it means to receive the spirit of power, love and self-discipline instead of one of fear.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their life.

COMMENTARY

◦ Sea of Galilee

A freshwater lake located in the hills of northern Palestine. Its surface is almost 700 feet below that of the Mediterranean. To the east of the lake are the Gilead Mountains and to the west are the Lebanon Mountains. The lake is fed mostly by the Jordan River, which originates at the foothills of the Lebanon Mountains. Because of where it's located (nestled between mountain ranges) and its topography (its shaped like a giant bowl), the lake is subject to sudden and violent storms.¹

◦ "It is I."

It seems that, when Jesus approached the disciples' boat, He was simply telling them, "It's me." The original Greek of Jesus' words could be translated "I am," which might refer to God's self-identification as "I AM WHO I AM" to Moses in Exodus 3:14. There are seven "I am" statements in John's Gospel. Jesus calls Himself:

1. *The Bread of Life* [6:35, 48-51]
2. *The Light of the World* [8:12, 9:5]
3. *The Gate* [John 10:7,9]
4. *The Good Shepherd* [10:11,14]
5. *The Resurrection and the Life* [11:25]
6. *The Way, the Truth and the Life* [14:6]
7. *The True Vine* [15:1,5]

◦ God speaks to Job out of the storm.

The story of Job deals with the problem of how God can be just and sovereign and still allow suffering. For many, this problem has kept them from believing in God. The climax of the story is in chapters 38-41 when God confronts Job (ironically, He does this out of a "whirlwind," or storm). God reproves Job and demonstrates His power, love and care for creation with a series of rhetorical questions. What does God want Job (and us) to learn from his story? That God is good, just and trustworthy as Creator and Ruler of His universe.

1. Roger Crook, "Galilee, Sea Of," ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 617.