**Live in Community**

Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**Navigate Hardship**

The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to the rescue each time. ([Psalm 34:19](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps34.19))

*Life is hard, even for believers. We all know it or discover it soon enough. Life tests our patience, our hope, and our sense of God’s presence. But we are not left hopeless in our challenges. God’s presence is more certain than even our hardships. Still, there are times in life we need to be reminded that He is present. It’s in hardships that we learn to recognize it. We also learn to depend on God, to wait, and to look forward to His rescue.*

**Session Overview**

**Know His Presence**

**Biblical Encounter:** The Disciples Cry Out to Jesus in a Storm ([Mark 4:35–41](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk4.35-41))

**Outcome:** Believe that God is always close, even during life’s hardships.

*In this session, we will explore what it looks like to trust God to be with us through every difficult season of life. A subtle shift in our culture seems to suggest that we should expect things to go well all the time. As believers, we somehow think that nothing bad should ever happen. So, when hard times come, we are often surprised, and may find our faith shaken. Just as the first disciples did, today’s Christ followers can learn to trust God even in the middle of life’s storms.*

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| First time leading *Live* for Adults? Check out the [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf). |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**If you had an opportunity to drive any car for a week, what kind of car would you choose? |

People have many different preferences about the car they’d like to drive. Some people prefer safety and comfort above all. Some would choose luxury. Others absolutely love the idea of a rush of adrenaline. They want a vehicle to be faster, louder, and more powerful than anything. Maybe they would even choose one that can climb rough terrain and roll over any obstacle.

But in life, almost no one loves having obstacles placed in front of them. Obstacles can make us feel confused and out of control. We might feel lost and alone. Hard things in life can even make us feel like God has forgotten us. In this session, we’ll look at what the disciples learned about trusting Jesus when they were in a great storm.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to this question: What keeps you from remembering God’s presence when you’re facing something difficult?



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**Consider What the Bible Says**

Many people have the mistaken idea that if a person becomes a Christian, nothing bad should ever happen to them again. Too many people who haven’t taken the time to learn what the Bible says. They think bad things are always a sign that God has turned away. But the Scripture passage we’ll look at today shows us something very different.

This portion of Scripture takes place early in Jesus’ ministry, after assembling His core group of disciples. His disciples had grown up in, or at least around, the Jewish faith. They knew about priests, sacrifices, and the Law. But now they were following Jesus, who did and said some things differently from what they’d heard or seen before. He performed so many amazing miracles, and His teaching was magnetic ([Matthew 7:28–29](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt7.28-29)). They had begun to realize that He was much more than they understood. He was making them think hard about everything they had thought they knew about their religion and about God.

**The Disciples Followed Jesus**

Read [Mark 4:35–37](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk4.35-37).

The disciples had been with Jesus all day as He taught a large crowd. He was preparing them to one day be able to make disciples, too. So, they were spending a lot of time with Jesus, getting to know Him and His ways.

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| **QUESTION**How do you think the disciples felt after such a good day of ministry with Jesus? |

On this particular long and good day, Jesus said He wanted to take a boat and go across the lake. Some of the disciples were fishermen who had spent a lot of time on the water. They probably didn’t have to think too hard or make a lot of preparation to start sailing. They did what Jesus asked and started out across the lake. But suddenly, without warning, a terrible storm came up. The storm was raging, and the waves were so high that the boat started filling with water.

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| **QUESTION**What thoughts and fears do you think came into the disciple’s minds as the storm came up? |

It’s important for us to realize that the disciples were doing exactly what Jesus had told them to do. But they still found themselves in the middle of a terrible storm.

**The Disciples Turned to Jesus**

Read [Mark 4:38–39](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk4.38-39).

Sometimes the difficult things we experience in life are our own fault. Our choices have consequences, good or bad. But some storms in life have nothing to do with our own actions. They just happen. The storm the disciples faced was enough to make even experienced fishermen afraid. And at some point, they realized that they needed Jesus. After all, this trip across the lake was His idea, so they hurried to wake Him.

The disciples knew that Jesus was physically there with them in the boat, but we can only wonder if they knew what a difference His presence could make in the storm.

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think the disciples asked Jesus the question that they did in verse [38](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk4.38)? |

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| **QUESTION**If you had been one of the disciples that day, how would you have reacted after seeing the storm obey Jesus? |

**The Disciples Worshipped Jesus**

Read [Mark 4:40–41](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk4.40-41).

Before this, they knew that something was special about Jesus. They left things behind to follow Him when He called ([Mark 1:16–18](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk1.16-18); [2:13–14](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk2.13-14)). But they still hadn’t quite understood exactly who He was. This event on the lake left them shaking and afraid.

If He could calm this storm with just one command, what couldn’t He do? After the storm, they understood that Jesus was much more than they had realized. Jesus was much more than only another teacher of religion.

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| **QUESTION**What shows us how the disciples were changed by this experience? |

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| **QUESTION**If you had been one of the disciples, what would you have done after that boat ride? |

**Did You Know?**

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| *The lake Jesus and His disciples were on, also known as the Sea of Galilee, was and is known for generating quick and violent storms. It’s shaped a little like an oval bowl that’s mostly surrounded by mountains. Those mountains are interrupted by a couple of valleys on the western side that allow concentrated wind to funnel into the area, causing storms with waves up to ten feet tall. Also, the lake’s elevation of almost seven hundred feet below sea level means that cooler air from the elevated areas around it can hit the warmer lake air and cause sudden storms.* |

**Reflect**

**Believe that God is always close, even during life’s hardships.**

No sin existed in God’s original creation. But humanity chose disobedience, and with that choice came the consequences we all must endure. In His kindness, God can use everything that happens in our life—even those consequences—so that those of us who love and serve Him can grow ([Romans 8:28](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro8.28)). Walking through difficulties with Him can help us know and trust Him better. It also equips us to help others when they face hard times.

God is challenging us to honor His presence in our life all the time. He wants us to learn to trust and depend on Him no matter what our circumstances are. We can always be sure that He is close, even during life’s hardships. But following Him means being in close relationship with the One even the winds and waves obey.

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

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| **QUESTION**What storm has Jesus calmed in your own life? How did you respond to Him? |

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| **QUESTION**How can we keep our eyes on Jesus when some problems seem impossible? |

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| **QUESTION**Who is the Holy Spirit prompting you to share with about how God helped you through a storm? |

**Activate**

God is always close, even during hard seasons of life. As we learn to trust Him, we can share His goodness with others, and encourage one other through hard times.

**Challenge**

This week, look for someone in your life to encourage and uplift. Think of a difficult season that God brought you through. Then watch for an opportunity to share His goodness to help someone in your family, at work, or in your Christian community. The Bible calls believers the body of Christ ([1 Corinthians 12:27](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Co12.27)). As we help and encourage others, we minister to them just as Jesus would if He were here in human form.

**Prayer Requests**

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| *Note any requests from the group and pray together. Also remember to pray for them during the week.* |

As we walk with Jesus, He helps us to change and grow. We learn to listen to His voice and trust that He is with us. We learn to see things as God sees them. The devotions for the rest of the week will look further into what the Bible says about knowing God’s presence and believing that He is close by, even in hard times.

**Live on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: The Disciples Cry Out to Jesus in a Storm**

Read [Mark 4:35–41](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk4.35-41).

Look back over Live in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

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| **QUESTION**What is God saying to you about believing He is close by, even during life’s hardships? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 2: He Is the God Who Sees**

Read [Genesis 16:1–16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ge16.1-16).

This story seems like it would make a great reality show. It’s hard for us to imagine how Abram and Sarai could have thought any of this was a good idea, but they did. And the consequences of these complicated relationships are still being felt today. Ishmael’s descendants today comprise the Arab nations, including the birthplace of Islam. Hagar was in a really hard place all the way around: She was a slave. She was given to the husband of her owner and promptly became pregnant. She had little control over her circumstances.

When we read this in our modern setting, most of us wouldn’t choose to relate to Hagar, but we should. She had to deal with the hard things that life brought her way. But in her time of great stress and trouble, God made His presence known to her. He comforted and encouraged her, giving her the strength to go on. As a result, she recognized Him for who He is: the God who sees us, no matter what.

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| **QUESTION**What do you think Hagar might have been thinking when she ran away? |

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| **QUESTION**How is your own faith impacted by hearing Hagar’s story? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 3: He Is the God Who Delivers**

Read [1 Samuel 17:1–16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Sa17.1-16), [26–37](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Sa17.26-37), [41–50](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Sa17.41-50).

David was the youngest son in his family, and his older brothers treated him that way. They didn’t see anything special in him at all. But in the time that David was out in the fields watching his father’s sheep, he learned a lot about God. He knew God was someone he could count on when things got really tough. When a lion or bear attacked, God helped him.

When the Philistine army was threatening and mocking Israel, David wasn’t afraid. After all, who was Goliath to stand up and disrespect God in that way? The young man who knew that God had delivered him from the bear and the lion trusted that God could also deliver him from a giant. In this storm of life, David trusted God to help and guide him. Because of David’s faith, God delivered all of Israel from the mocking enemy. What David learned about God through his early challenges carried him on to be the greatest king in Israel’s history. And hundreds of years later, the Messiah, the greatest Deliverer of all, came through David’s line.

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| **QUESTION**If you had been David, what would you have done when you heard Goliath’s taunts? |

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| **QUESTION**What do you think were the most important differences between David and his brothers? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 4: He Is the God Who Provides**

Read [2 Kings 7:1–16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Ki7.1-16).

The people of Samaria were being held captive in their own city by an enemy. Things were getting really desperate, and everyone was in danger of starving to death. During this time in Israel’s history, the king was not leading the people to seek God, so they were worshipping all kinds of things instead of the one true God.

At that time, Elisha was a prophet who believed God and listened to Him. He reminded the king and the people just how good and how big God is. When seemingly everyone else had given up, Elisha brought the word of the Lord in defiance of the enemy.

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| **QUESTION**If you had been there at the beginning of this passage, how would you have predicted this story would end? |

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| **QUESTION**How does this passage challenge you, living in our society today? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 5: He Is the God Who Saves**

Read [Jonah 3:1–10](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jon3.1-10).

Almost everyone has heard the story of Jonah in some form. Some people make fun of Christians for believing that a person was swallowed by a big fish and then lived to tell about it. While that’s a fascinating part of Jonah’s story, the bigger point is why he was at sea to begin with.

God specifically told Jonah to go and tell an entire nation that they were on the path to destruction. But Jonah had a different plan. He ran away from God rather than obey Him. In His kindness, God used a huge fish to give both Jonah and his enemies a second chance. This time, Jonah obeyed and delivered the message to Nineveh: God could not ignore their great sin.

The people of Nineveh listened to God’s message, and this wicked and violent society totally repented. All of them! We can learn so much through Jonah’s story. God uses us in spite of our many problems. God cares about people so much that He gives us all opportunity to change and grow closer to Him. Jonah’s God is the same God who “gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” ([John 3:16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn3.16)). He is the God who saves.

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| **QUESTION**What questions would you like to ask Jonah about his life and experiences? |

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| **QUESTION**What is God speaking to you about obeying His direction in your life? |