

# WHY? A Resource Kit for Talking to Teens about Disaster, Relief, & Restoration

## Facing the Deep Waters with a Deeper Faith

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### OBJECTIVES

- To talk through circumstances and assumptions that cause doubt.
- To draw lessons about living in faith from Christ's supremacy.

### OVERVIEW

Anyone can say they feel confident in the Lord during good times. Most believers would even say that they trust Him when life gets a little rough. But when all-out hurricanes strike, many people discover that it seems faith is gone with the wind.

You know the storms I'm talking about: The parent who promised to never leave walks out on the family. The school you had your heart set on sends you its final rejection letter. The grandparent you thought would always be there suddenly passes away. The seemingly perfect date decides you're less than perfect—good-bye, love life.

It's in moments like these, and countless others, that we may be prone to groan.

"Where have you gone, God?"

"Don't you care?"

"Maybe you're not even there!"

Have you gone through such a storm of doubting?

I remember when my ministry meant moving my family from a place we had grown to love. I had always paid lip service to the idea of doing whatever God called me to do. I'd do what He wanted, anytime, anywhere. But when the Call actually came, my family and I railed against God. I never knew how dependent I had grown on our city, friends, and our safe routine. To have God Call us to move away seemed impossible; He had to be kidding! But in reality, the only joke was the gap between my words and my actual commitment: Hey, God I'll do whatever you want, anytime, anywhere...as long as it's here.

One of the greatest lessons the believer comes to know is that God allows storms. He recognizes that faith grows in these kinds of conditions. Withholding such experiences would doom us to perpetual immaturity in our faith. Yes, it's true. God allows storms, but He is not the author of sin. Maturing in the faith means discerning between blaming God for the sin that causes storms, and recognizing His almighty Hand in seeing us through the storms that come as part of a fallen world.

Despite our pains and doubts, we have a deep assurance that God's purposes will prevail. He doesn't test us to harm us. He tests us to strengthen us, and even as He allows the test, He also provides the solutions. Anyone who has come through a period of difficulty and seen the growth that results knows that perseverance is worth the effort.

## **FACING THE DEEP WATERS WITH A DEEPER FAITH LEADER'S STUDY**

Luke 8:22-25 (and Mark 4:35-41) record an important nature miracle. This story has important theological overtones because of where it occurs, in "deep waters." Throughout Scripture the sea — or "the deep" — is an important theological symbol, serving as a metaphor for the world we live in now, or the world to which unbelievers are headed. In other words, the sea or the deep is a symbol of destruction.

We see this symbol in the flood of Genesis 6. Noah builds an ark to save his family from the destructive waters of judgment. We see it in Jonah, where the sea rages as discipline against Jonah's disobedience. And we see it in many Psalms, where the writer cries out to God to not let him go down to destruction.

So against this backdrop, we recognize that Jesus is demonstrating His power over the forces of the deep, His supremacy over the doom we all dread. And in this sense this miracle is a parable of grace; all who place their faith in Jesus are saved from destruction. Thus the key question, "Where is your faith?" (Luke 8:25). God has merciful purposes for us, despite the destructive forces around us.

### **What Faith Refuses to Believe**

#### **1. Difficulties are never allowed by a loving God.**

Many people are tempted to think that the devil or evil people or karma is getting the best of them when life goes south. But that is never the case with God's children. Everything is "father-filtered" in the life of a believer. So even though God is not the creator of our problems (that source is firmly found in our fallen nature), He still allows them for our long-term benefit. Don't buy the lie that difficulties don't come from His hand.

#### **2. Difficulties show that God doesn't love us.**

This is the classic fallacy concerning problems, the classic objection to the reality of evil: How could a good God allow this? Even the disciples fell into this one. When the waves beat against their boat, they cried out "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" (Mark 4:38). Of course He cares. There is no inconsistency between the presence of problems and the love of God.

#### **3. Difficulties will wreck our lives.**

Luke records the disciples' cry this way, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" That's all too typical. We think difficulty will result in utter destruction. "My life is over," we cry. But this is rarely God's plan. How often have your problems killed you?

#### **4. Difficulties require desperate measures.**

The disciples ran around in a fit of panic. Jesus slept. That's the perfect example for us to follow. As prone to action as we are, we need to remember that usually God simply wants us to rest in Him, be still and know that He is God, and trust in His deliverance.

#### **5. Difficulties can thwart God's plan.**

Not true. Look at the beginning and ending of the story, especially the way Mark puts it. The beginning: "Jesus said, 'Let's go over to the other side'" (Mark 4:35). The ending: "And they came to the

other side" (Mark 5:1). Sure there was a giant storm in the middle, but know this, if Jesus intends to take you to the other side, he will get you there!

## **FACING THE DEEP WATERS WITH A DEEPER FAITH DISCUSSION GUIDE**

### **ACTIVITY OPTION: WORST-CASE SCENARIO**

Check out the Worst Case Scenarios board game or book, and pull questions regarding disaster situations. Have four volunteers come to the front of the group and ask each a question. If she gets it wrong (which she will because the questions are ridiculous), she must perform a physical, mental, or culture challenge. She gets to choose which kind of challenge she wants to do. Examples of physical challenges are shooting a spit wad through a straw using only one nostril, eating a hot pepper, or doing 15 push-ups. Mental challenges are things like reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, reciting the multiplication table for the number eight, or naming the capitals of certain states. Culture challenges are things like naming three of Shakespeare's plays, doing an interpretive dance to the Barney theme song, or improvising a made-up love poem to the guy sitting in the front row. As long as a contestant either answers a Worst Case Scenario question right or completes a challenge, he stays in the game. If he misses a question or a challenge, he is out. It makes it more interesting if each student contestant is the representative for her grade and the whole grade gets a prize if its rep wins.

SAY- Sometimes when we go through storms in our lives we believe that they are a worst case scenario. We may even find ourselves asking God "Where have you gone?" ... "Don't you care?" ... "Maybe you're not even there!"

### **Opening Discovery**

1. Share a time when you felt "mad" at God.
2. What are the greatest doubts you have in times like these?
3. What does our anger or doubt in difficult times reflect about our understanding of God? What is it we believe about life or about God that makes us respond this way?

### **Bible Discovery**

Talk about the symbolic meaning of deep waters in Scripture. Almost every time we come across this image, it not only describes a physical condition, but a spiritual reality.

Read and discuss Luke 8:22-25 and Mark 4:35-41

1. What is the source of the disciples' fear in this story?
2. The disciples jump to the conclusion that they are going to drown. How is this a reasonable conclusion in one sense, but irrational in another?
3. What does the fact that Jesus was sleeping teach us about him? Why is this a significant detail to our understanding of the story?
4. What lessons about faith can be seen in this story?

## Reflection

1. What is one big storm or difficulty you are facing right now?
2. Jesus asks His disciples, "Where is your faith?" As you weather storms in your life, where have you been placing your faith?
3. What kind of a faith response does this story call you to make?
4. How does a story like this change your perspective on facing the storms of life?
5. How can the faith lessons of this story connect to our experience serving this week? As we travel home?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Jesus, thank You for being our wonderful suffering Servant, giving of Yourself even to the point of death for our forgiveness and salvation. During the storms in our lives help us to find strength in You. Strengthen us now for the storms ahead. Help us to remember that you are true to your promise that your purpose will prevail. Change us to be more like You in what we do and say, as we serve in Your name. Amen.

## OTHER FACING THE DEEP WATERS WITH A DEEPER FAITH ACTIVITY OPTION

### BUCKET BRIGADE

Supplies: Cups, wading pools, 5-gallon bucket

Preparation: Set the wading pools around the perimeter of the playing area. Set the buckets a few feet away from each other in the center of the playing area.

Form equal sized teams. Give each participant a cup, and instruct each team to line up single file behind a bucket. Each team's line should stretch in the general direction of one of the wading pools.

Explain that long ago, before cities had functioning fire hydrants and fancy fire engines, people used to fight fires by working together in bucket brigades. They would form a line near a lake or a stream and would pass bucketfuls of water from person to person all the way down the line until the water reached the burning building.

Tell teenagers that their job is to work together in their crew to move water from one of the wading pools into their bucket, using only their cups.

They must do this bucket-brigade style, with the person at the end of the line filling his or her cup in the next person's cup, and so on. The last person in line should dump his or her cupful into the team's bucket in an effort to fill it to the top.

Once a team's bucket is full, it's time to put the bucket to use. However, instead of throwing water on a fire, they get to dump the water on one of the other fire fighting teams. The bucket carrier can get within two feet of another team and let the water loose.

Once a bucket is empty the team should begin working right away to fill it up again.

Rules:

1. Only the end people in each bucket-brigade line can move around, either running back and forth to a wading pool or running to the bucket.
2. The rest of the team must pick a spot and stay there. This means that players getting doused by another team cannot run away; they can duck or lean to the side to avoid being soaked.
3. Players are not allowed to sabotage the other teams' efforts to fill their buckets.