

Women's Bible Study:	Discipleship Ministries Folder 2021, #2
Subject:	Strength in Crisis, Continuity of Mission, Encouragement
Scripture References:	Matthew 14:22-33
Theme:	Navigate the Waves of Crisis with Christ
Objective:	That the sisters be strengthened in the midst of crisis by the presence of Jesus in their lives.

Introduction: One of the most difficult things we've faced during this time of pandemic has been what it means for us to be the Church. How will we cope after all this is over? What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus at this pivotal moment in history?

Sisters: Everything we are and do has to be Christ centered. Everything must point to Jesus' life, his death on the cross and his resurrection. The presence of Jesus in our lives continues to determine our identity. Today we will see how some of the disciples who had fears and frustrations, like ours, were transformed by the Master. We will see what Jesus did for them so that we can see that he can do it for us too.

- Have the ladies in your group give a summary of the Bible passage and discuss it together.

Proposition: In the wave of the crisis, you need the Christ of the wave, the one who is above all things.

What situations did the disciples go through that are similar to ours? Here are three situations:

I. TIMES OF FRUSTRATION: Matthew 14:22-25

Jesus was praying alone on the mountain when he saw the disciples in the distance, paddling with effort and very fatigued because the waves were battering the boat and the wind was blowing against them. The moment came when the boat was in a dangerous situation.

- The boat was battered by the waves. The boat was tormented, it was harassed, it was about to capsize.
- The disciples had exhausted their resources and strength by rowing.
- The rest of the trip was uncertain and frustrating for them.
- Jesus approached on the sea, walking on the water in the darkest hour.
- It was a real crisis.

APPLICATION

- Jesus is in control of the situation; He is above anything that can frustrate us.
- Jesus is enough. His grace goes ahead of us.
- Any difficult situation can be overcome with Christ.

II. TIMES OF FEAR: Matthew 14:26-27

- The disciples were physically exhausted from rowing against the wind and they hadn't made much progress. They were also emotionally fatigued.
- The disciples were afraid because the boat could capsize at any moment.
- The Prince of Peace walked towards the apostles, on the water, and immediately spoke to them: *"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."*
- Jesus is not afraid. He says: "It is I." He is God, he is the sovereign king of all the earth.

APPLICATION

- Perhaps you have been feeling frightened, overwhelmed or weighed down lately.
- At times when we least expect it, and when we experience the greatest fear, we need to remember that Jesus is near.

The apostle Paul wrote: *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 8: 35-39).

- The powerful presence of Jesus drives away fear.

III. TIMES OF WEAKNESS: Matthew 14:28-31

- This portion of the story is not told in the other gospels, and involves the Apostle Peter. Peter was one of the apostles who was closest to Jesus. He was part of Jesus' inner circle. Can you think of and share some intimate moments that Peter had with Jesus?
- Peter experiences a crisis of insecurity; he says to Jesus: *"Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water."*
- Walking on water is impossible for human beings.
- The winds were blowing against them.
- Christ says to Peter, in the midst of a storm, *"Come."*
- Jesus shared his nature with the disciples.
- Jesus shared his authority and Peter seized it at that moment. Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water to get to Jesus (he was daring, he took a risk of faith).
- Peter is the only person other than Jesus who has walked on water.
- For all his weaknesses, Peter had far more faith than any of the other disciples.
- What happened to Peter next? Weakness overcame him. He took his eyes off Jesus and began to focus on the crisis of the storm. He saw the strong wind blowing and watched the waves batter the boat. At that moment, he began to sink.
- In the middle of the storm, Peter had an opportunity. He prayed one of the most urgent and greatest prayers that exists, and one that we can pray in any situation, and it is: *"Lord, save me!"* Immediately, Jesus reached out his hand and caught Peter and then gently said: *"You of little faith, why did you doubt?"*
- Jesus kept walking (we assume), helping Peter out of the waves and back into the boat. As soon as they were both in the boat, the wind died down and the waves stopped.
- Scripture says that everyone in the boat worshiped Jesus and said: *"Truly you are the Son of God."*

APPLICATION

- Jesus gives us the same invitation that he gave to Peter: Come.
- Jesus came to save all humanity from sin and death and to allow us to have a part in his mission on this earth.
- Jesus makes us participants of his divinity and of all that is his.
- Example # 1: When there was a need, Jesus prayed for that need, and then Jesus himself supplied that need. In Matthew 9, he tells us about the need for workers for the harvest. Jesus told the disciples: *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few"* because he saw that the crowds were helpless and scattered like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus' solution to that dilemma was, *"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."* He taught them to pray for their needs, to pray in the midst of their crisis. Then Jesus called 12 men to become his disciples and he gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal the sick and people with all kinds of ailments.
- Jesus chose the disciples, gave them a mission, and sent them out, empowered to do the work with his authority.
- He made them participate in the healings by empowering them to go heal people themselves.
- Jesus didn't see the weaknesses of people; he saw the potential they could have when he is present in their lives.
- Example # 2: When Jesus saw the crowd was hungry, he told the disciples to feed them. He involved the disciples in feeding the 5,000 by telling them to go feed the people. When they couldn't because they only had five loaves and two fish, Jesus prayed, raised his eyes to heaven, blessed the bread, broke it, and told the disciples to distribute the food to the crowd. He included the disciples in the miracle. When all the people ate and were satisfied, the disciples gathered up what was left, and they had twelve baskets full.

CONCLUSION:

- We don't have to pretend that we are strong; Jesus Christ knows our weaknesses. Jesus is there to save us despite our inadequate faith, despite our fears, despite our frustrations, despite all our weaknesses.
- The crisis, not only of this pandemic, but also the crisis of sin, is more contagious than the coronavirus.
- Jesus is the Messiah who shares his divine power to create a new Kingdom that brings blessing, healing, and restoration to the world.
- Focus your life on Christ, a relationship with Him who enables you to walk on the water.
- I don't know how you have felt during this time, but I can imagine. Beloved sister, I invite you to listen to his voice today. The Lord Jesus Christ is telling you: *"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."* Jesus has a new life for you, full of his favor. He calls you to participate in his grace, his peace, his authority, his strength, his forgiveness, and his love.

REFLECTION:

- What have been your biggest fears or weaknesses, especially during this time of the Covid-19 pandemic?
- Can you name times when you have experienced the authority that Jesus gives you in a particular situation?
- Share with your sisters how they can continue to carry out the mission that Jesus has entrusted to them in the midst of this or any crisis?

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