

GAME CHANGER
Weekly Devotional
A ministry of Chapel Hill
chapelhillpc.org

WEEK 3

This guide and devotional pairs with Mark 6:45-52 and the sermon preached on June 8 and 9.



Written by Anita Baldwin

Anita is a long-time member of Chapel Hill. Craig, Anita and their four sons started attending Chapel Hill and became members in 1989. Over the years, she has served in many areas of the church. She loves her family (which has grown from six to 17) and loves being a grandma. She also loves to sew, garden, read, plink on the piano and harp, and all kinds of handwork. Anita is found on a daily basis at her husband's engineering firm working as the office manager. She especially loves the Word and knows from experience, that the Holy Spirit uses it to comfort, encourage, and transform us. She has served in many areas of the Chapel Hill and recently returned from a medical outreach mission trip with the Cambodia Go Team. She has experience firsthand the importance of THIS community of believers who minister to each other in time of need. She is so grateful for life and all the friends and family here at Chapel Hill; her motto is "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".

LifeGroup Guide

Head

What is special about Jesus' words "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid"? Look up these words in the original Greek and discuss what this short phrase says about who Jesus is. Why would this have been astounding to the disciples and to the original readers of Mark's gospel?

Note Mark's repetition of the word "immediately" in this passage. How does this word give us a picture of the context of this story, and the pace of events in this story? Consider how the placement of this passage after the account of the loaves and fishes helps build a clearer picture of Jesus' power and identity.

Heart

These fishermen are used to storms, and yet they are struggling in this story. They are making headway "painfully", the wind is "against them", they are afraid of what they think is a ghost. When have you struggled with something you were always confident at before? How was this an opportunity for Christ to reveal his presence, his comfort, his assurance?

Jesus' presence brings peace to the storm and to the hearts of the disciples. He calms their fears and changes the atmosphere. Where do you need to experience Jesus' peace right now?

This account ends with the phrase "They did not understand about the loaves, for their hearts were hardened". Consider how the disciples experienced firsthand the power and authority of Christ and yet didn't yet understand the fullness of who he truly was. They are even "terrified" when they see him and mistake him for a ghost! How can you relate to this gradual process of learning who Jesus is?

Hands

Jesus' practice after a busy day of ministry was to go up on the mountain alone to pray. What is your practice when things have been really hectic and other people's needs have been overwhelming? How can you practice prayer as a response this week?

Bring to Jesus the areas you feel afraid, or need to experience his peace. Thank him for his presence and ask for him to speak his words of comfort to you personally.

Fighting Fear
Monday

Read

Mark 6: 45-52

Dig Deeper: Job 9:8, 11 Eph. 6:10-18, Ps. 23:4, Ps. 27:1, Matt. 6:25, Matt 10:31, Matt. 14:26, Luke 1:50

Ask

Take a moment for self reflection:

- Do you consider yourself a fearful person?
- What fears are you wrestling with now, in the past, or thinking and worrying about for the future?
- What scripture do you go to in order to help you overcome your fears?
- Have you memorized this scripture?

Reflect

On the start of our week's reflections, let us take our first day to think about fear. I know that is not a fun thing to think about, but our week's title is "Fighting Fear". If you haven't already, you will experience fear at some point in your life. We can't compare our fears with each other, it can take us by surprise and we can feed it! *Or* we can recognize it when it manifests itself and deal with it. Fear is fear, and there is biblical, Christ centered hope in dealing with it. There is victory in Jesus!

The word "fear" occurs 400 times in 385 verses in the KJV translation of the Bible.¹ As often as fear is mentioned in the Word, the Lord must have known we all would have a difficult time dealing with it. Our study is an "offensive move" study. Recognizing fear and taking offensive action towards those fears; not letting fear be the aggressor and take hold of us. It is well to remember the adage "to be forewarned is to be forearmed". As we see what fear is and how we can stand against it, the schemes of the devil will have less effect or affect in our lives, and we will be forewarned and forearmed and able deal with it. We will have tools to strengthen us in life's journey.

Fear has been something I have had to deal with in my life. Possible breast cancer at 21 (it wasn't), a sick son with encephalitis and then the seizures resulting from that illness, moving to the "big city" not knowing anyone, homeschooling—then putting our children into the public school system, multiple illnesses, breast cancer, an Ileostomy, a partial knee replacement, broken bones, consequences of the recession on our business, raising four sons and then releasing those four sons to college and adulthood—I didn't use to think of myself as a fearful person, but I have been; I have had to deal with my fears and learn some tactics in my fight.

This week's segment of scripture confronts us with the topic of fear; it also gives us some ways of fighting the battle. The scriptures listed above set the stage for our week. Read and reflect on them and journal some of the fears you need to bring and lay at Jesus' feet.

¹ The difference between the words that exist in a language is a term called "lexicon". The words used by an individual person some linguists describe as "vocabulary". And there are 35 Bible Lexicon* entries that match the word fear; 25 in the Hebrew (Old Testament) and 10 in the Greek New Testament.

Note Mark's repetition of the word "immediately" in this passage. How does this word give us a picture of the context of this story, and the pace of events in this story? Consider how the placement of this passage after the account of the loaves and fishes helps build a clearer picture of Jesus' power and identity.

Fighting Fear
Tuesday

Read

Mark 6:45

Dig Deeper: Mark 6:45-52, Matt 14:22-32, John 6:15-21, 2 Tim 1:7, Ps 27:1-2 Heb. 5:8-9

Ask

- What boat has Jesus made you get into and go before him to the other side?
- Were you obedient?
- How does obedience help fight fear?

Reflect

Today, reflect about what the disciples have just gone through in their lives and how this relates to “fighting fear”. It is recorded in previous verses that Jesus sent them out two by two to teach, to take authority over unclean spirits and heal the sick. (Mark 6: 7-13). While these incredible things were taking place, the death of John the Baptist occurs with all the grisly details. Upon returning to Jesus, the disciples tell him all they had done and taught. Jesus takes them to a desolate place to rest. This desolate place was in the hill county north of Capernaum and west of Bethsaida; a five-to-six-mile row across the Sea of Galilee. It usually would take only a couple of hours of rowing at this location. The crowds find them. 5,000 people are fed with five loaves and two fish! There were 12 baskets left over! After all these events, our verses for the week start:

*“Immediately he (Jesus) **made** the disciples get into the boat and go (back) before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.”*

Why did Jesus make them get into the boat? In his commentary on Mark, Jim Edwards writes: “An unusual number of signs thus suggest the wilderness commotion was aflame with messianic fervor, and that the crowd hoped to sweep Jesus up as a guerrilla leader.” Jesus **immediately**—compelled posthaste—the disciples to leave. Jesus needed to dismiss the crowds. He didn’t need the disciples getting involved with this fervor. He knew the disciples were tired and fearful, exhausted from rowing earlier in the day, exhausted from the earlier days of ministry when they went out two by two. He knew the fearful reflections of John the Baptist’s death, and fear of more terror reigning down on them from Herod, and he knew their amazement and astonishment regarding the feeding of **all those people!** Jesus knew his disciples and he was protecting his own. He made them leave for their own benefit. They responded to his immediacy. They were obedient.

Have you been exhausted and fearful over life situations and yet compelled posthaste by Jesus to get into a boat? To go before him, knowing that you immediately needed to obey? It is hard to believe those times are for our benefit. Fear tends to sneak up on us in life’s stresses and we let our emotions paralyze and rule us. “You can’t mean that you want me to go before you, Jesus? You are supposed to be my forward guard and my rear guard! And you always go before me!”

And yet, there it is, the boat before you and you are compelled to get in. Think about your obedience and your boat today.

Fighting Fear
Wednesday

Read

Mark 6:46-48

Dig deeper: Mark 6:45-52, Eph. 6: 14-15, Isaiah 53:12, Romans 8:26, Romans 8: 34, Hebrews 7:25, 10:7

Ask

Today, reflect and journal on God's faithfulness to you and his remembrances of you. Journal a verse or a word that reminds you of God's faithfulness in each of those fearful times in your life.

Reflect

Mark makes a point to let his readers know that Jesus and his disciples were in two different places. They were not together. The disciples were having a very difficult time. Jesus could see them and knew their situation was against them. But he was remembering them.

"And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray..." Jesus was praying; worshiping, communing with the Father; and just like us, our prayers and worship lead us to intercede for those we love. He was probably remembering the situations and experiences they had shared with him (Jesus) upon their return; when he had sent them out two by two. He was probably remembering the afternoon's feeding of the 5,000. The awe and unbelief of his disciples. He probably was remembering how tired the disciples were and the reason they had all gotten in the boat to go to a quiet place in the first place. Jesus was remembering them!

Remembering. It can be a curse sometimes, but also a sweet gift from the Lord and one of the tools in our arsenal to fight fear. Getting into our boats and going to the other side, wherever that may be, can be so difficult for us. Our obedience to the Lord is a sweet offering to him and to us. As a result of that obedience we have the ability to **remember** the faithfulness of our sweet Savior. The Scriptures we memorize and remember during difficult boat launches stay with us a lifetime. The Scriptures go deep within our soul and remind us of his word to us. They bring encouragement and are the instrument of transformation in our lives. Remembering his word is not just a gift to us but a tool we can use to encourage ourselves and others over and over again.

Remembering God's faithfulness is a strong tool to fight fear.

The most precious thing is that God remembers us!" Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." (Heb. 8: 34)

Thank him and praise him for these memories.

Fighting Fear
Thursday

Read

Mark 6:48

Dig Deeper: Mark 6:45-52, 2 Tim. 1:17, Isaiah 41:10, Psalm 19:9

Ask

- When have you struggled with something you were always confident at before? How was this an opportunity for Christ to reveal his presence, his comfort, his assurance?
- Where in your life are you making headway painfully?
- What headwind is against you at the moment?
- Is this headwind causing fear and causing fear to take a foothold in your life?

Reflect

Making headway painfully! The nearest I have been to the disciples experience is canoeing with my husband Craig, on Park Lake and Soap Lake, part of the Sun Lakes, just north of Ephrata, Washington. An afternoon wind comes up on those lakes almost every afternoon in the summer and paddling back to shore takes real effort. It is scary; as my mom would tell Craig, "Now you two be careful, Anita is not a very strong swimmer"! We had a couple of hard paddlings to get back to shore!

What a description of the reality of the disciple's predicament. The Sea of Galilee could normally be crossed in Biblical times, in six-to-eight hours. But in the evening, there is a wind that can arise that is known in Arabic as "Sharkia", or shark. It caused fear and distress among Galilean fishermen. These men spent hours on the water; they knew how to maneuver and deal with boating emergencies. The sea was their work place. Fear didn't grip them easily. But this verse says "they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them." They were straining at the oars! The Greek word for "straining" is *basanizein*. It means "to torment". Going out on the Sea in the evening, knowing that this wind could come up and "torment" them must have been frightening. They wouldn't have gone out on the water, except that Jesus **made them get into the boat, and go before him to the other side!**

Maybe you are a fisherman in Gig Harbor and you know exactly what these verses are talking about. The rest of us make headway painfully in the ordinary places of life. Jobs, school, raising children, volunteering, bad habits, medical problems, relationships—these are our places of torment. It seems like there is a headwind against us and we are fearful.

It has been debated whether Jesus really walked on the water. The preposition "on" means "on", "upon" or "on top of". It means what it means. Jesus **was walking on** the water! He went to the disciples and he goes to me in my distress. His compassion was toward his disciples and his compassion is toward me where I am "making headway painfully". Jesus was trying to give an "in-your-face" visual reminder of what God did for his children in the Old Testament. The disciples knew these Torah stories and scriptures. He was attempting to get the disciples to recognize who he was. The "I AM" of the Old Testament who has compassion for each of us. Only God can walk on water. (Job 9:8, 38:16, Ps 77:19, and Isa 43:16) Jesus was identifying unmistakably with God. He was trying to communicate that he was walking where only God can walk, that he is in charge over nature, that He was walking in God's stead and was taking God's name, the great "I AM"!

Fighting fear means recognizing Jesus for who he is. The Great I AM who has compassion towards me.
And comes to me walking on the water.

Fighting Fear
Friday

Read

Mark 6: 49

Dig Deeper: Mark 6:45-52, 1 Kings 19:11, Exodus 33:17-22, 33:19, and 34:6, Job 9:8, 11

Ask

- What is special about Jesus' word, "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid? Look up these words in the original Greek and discuss what this short phrase says about who Jesus is. Why would this have been astounding to the disciples and to the original readers of Mark's gospel?
- How have you seen Jesus "passing by"?
- Jesus' presence brings peace to the storm and to the hearts of the disciples, He calms their fears and changes the atmosphere. Where do you need to experience Jesus' peace right now?

Reflect

What precious verses these are! During my study I have been truly moved by what they mean. When I first started studying this passage, the picture they painted on the surface seemed rather flippant; uncaring on Jesus' part and to be honest, it troubled me greatly. Why did it say, "He (Jesus) meant to pass them by"? Did he not care that they were making headway painfully? Was he just trying to get ahead of them and be first to the other side? What's up with this, Jesus? It baffled me. Jesus saw them from the shore while he was up on the mountain praying. And then the verses state that **as he was walking on the water, all of the disciples saw him and were terrified!** Terror upon terror; the terror of the sea conditions and now the terror of seeing Jesus walking on the water!

Wow, Jesus, what is going on?

Throughout the gospels people and unclean spirits shouted out who Jesus was; "You are the Son of God". Jesus always commands them to be quiet. His time to be revealed had not yet arrived. Jesus' reveal was to come through Jesus himself not people or unclean spirits.

Jim Edwards says, "In the Old Testament...this nondescript phrase is charged with special force, signaling a rare self-revelation of God. At Mt. Sinai the transcendent Lord passed by Moses (Exodus 33:22, 33:19 and 34:6) in order to reveal his name and compassion. Again, at Mt. Horeb, the Lord revealed his presence to Elijah in passing by (1 Kings 19:11). The most important antecedent of the idea, however comes in Job 9:8, 11."

The same words thematically and linguistically are used in the OT verses as in Mark 6:49! Edwards goes on to say, that when Jesus "passes by" the disciples on the Sea of Galilee, his revelation is different than that of the Old Testament. Instead of people having to hide in the cleft of a rock, or being covered by God's hand, or the Lord descending in a cloud; Jesus reveals himself face to face. What a wonderful act of compassion! The God of Israel, majestic, awesome but unknowable face to face God, is revealing himself to his disciples—to us—face to face—walking on the water "passing by"!

The disciples were in distress and Jesus was revealing himself to them, yet they didn't recognize the picture. They didn't see what he was doing. Instead they were terrified and thought he was a ghost. Jesus was passing right in front of them—**face to face**. Jesus was revealing the glory he shares with the Father and the compassion that he has for his followers.

This has struck me deeply! The years of fearful health conditions, bad accidents, struggles with children, hard times for our business—the times of turbulent seas were the times Jesus walked on the water revealing himself to me. The word and the body of Christ here at Chapel Hill were Jesus’s face-to-face compassions showing me who Jesus is. The times I thought Jesus was “passing me **by**”, were times that he was really “passing **by** me. How about you? Is Jesus passing by you?

Fighting Fear
Saturday

Read

Mark 6: 50

Dig Deeper: Mark 6:45-52, Exodus 3:14, 6:6, Isaiah 41:4, 43:10-11, 48:12, John 17, John 14:20, 26, 15:4

Ask

- Are you afraid right now?
- Presently, do you hear Jesus saying to you from the word, “Do not be afraid”? Explain. Do you have a verse to hold on to during this time?
- How are you responding to his admonition?
- Is compassion part of your life?
- How can you end this week with an act of compassion? Maybe someone’s only connection to Jesus is through you!

This account ends with the phrase “they did not understand about the loaves, for their hearts were hardened”. Consider how the disciples experienced first hand the power and authority of Christ and yet didn’t yet understand the fulness of how he truly was. They are even “terrified” when they see him and mistake him for a ghost! How can you relate to this gradual process of learning who Jesus is?

Reflect

What a compassionate Lord we serve. Here Jesus was just “passing by” trying to reveal himself to his disciples, who didn’t understand. But instead of scolding them and humiliating them in their lack of recognition, Jesus again, **immediately** speaks to them. “Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid “. Jesus’ command is something like this “Have courage, it is I, have courage! Can you hear the compassion in his voice? Compassion for these big, fearful, terrified fishermen!

The phrase “Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid”, is a faith building, compassionate command. Even in this command Jesus is revealing himself. “It is I” I am not a ghost or apparition. The phrase, “It is I”, is again a reference to the self-disclosure God made to Moses in Exodus 3:14, 6:6, Isaiah 41:4, 43:10-11, 48:12. In the book of Mark, Jesus **shows** us that he is the Son of God through his compassion to his disciples.

It is really me! And isn’t that what we all need when we are facing fear? We need Jesus to reveal himself to us! He didn’t wait around to see how they were responding to his,” passing by”. He said “it is I”! When we are fearful we need both physical acts of compassion, and verbal acts of compassion. Words of encouragement—and kindness shown!—“Jesus sees you and it is going to be all right.” A hug, a meal, someone to clean your toilets!

We need to remember that Jesus ministers to people’s needs through his disciples. We help each other fight fear. That’s you, that’s me! A simple smile, a hug, a meal, a ride to an appointment, a birthday party! Everyday kindnesses. Words of encouragement from the Word. Spoken words of encouragement from one person to another. Fear is slain when we as his disciples pour out his love through us. Fight fear for yourself and for someone else today!

Fighting Fear
Sunday

Read

Mark 6: 51-52

Dig Deeper: Mark 6:45-52 Romans 1:17, Romans 3:22-30, Hebrews 6: 11-12, Hebrews 11

Ask

- What didn't the disciples understand about the loaves?
- Have you allowed your heart to harden after or during difficult times?
- Are there loaves (God's provisions) in your life that you didn't understand, so consequently you hardened your heart.
- Do you need to seek repentance regarding a hard heart?

Reflect

Jesus got into the boat and the wind ceased! He has the power over nature! HE has the power over the storm within us from the outward waves around and outside of us. Being with Jesus calms the storms. Sometimes we still have to navigate through deep waters, but Jesus will calm yours and my fears (storms). One of the consequences of *being with Jesus* is safety and peace. Jesus helps overcome the storms of my life and of yours.

During my year and a half of treatment for breast cancer in 2002-2003, fear seemed to raise its ugly head often. There were times when I said over and over again, "I choose to follow you, Lord Jesus. I choose to follow you!" I didn't know what else to do. I had to run to the lover of my soul and be with him! During struggles and trepidations, faith is a decision. It is a choice. It is not something that happens automatically or evolves. We choose faith. Jesus is already calling to us. Declaring himself to us as the "I AM". Quoting Edwards again: "Discipleship is more endangered by lack of faith and hardness of heart than by external dangers. (Mark 3:5, 4:41, 5:17)

And here we are with the last sentence of our passage. "And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened".

The loaves should have reminded these Jewish fishermen, tax collector, and zealot of the mana in the wilderness. That God miraculously provided food for his children and Jesus was doing the same for them. There were 12 baskets left over! One for each of them. It is recorded that "all ate and were satisfied". But they didn't understand. Do you and I?

Fear can be conquered because Jesus has done it for us. He died on the cross and conquered death. We have been forewarned this week regarding fear. We know that we will have to get into some boats that we really don't want to get into. We need to remember God's faithfulness and who Jesus is. He is the "I AM". We need to show compassion just as Jesus was and is, and we need to choose Faith.

Jesus sees you, and longs for you to see him face to face.

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba Father!" (Romans 8:15)