

Fields of Gold: Life Group Study 1

When our Fears Make God Seem Small

Intro



Our fears regarding the circumstances that surround us can be crippling at times. Anxiety and worry build until we are no longer capable of trust. Hasn't God promised to provide?

Like a child learning to ice skate, we tend to have a white-knuckled grip on the rail and refuse to let go. As children, we had to learn to conquer our fears one by one. Eventually, most of us let go of the rail and skated out into the center of the ice. When it comes to our faith – and the growth in maturity and obedience our Father wants us to experience – we need to let go of the handrails on which we've been leaning. We have to learn to put our fears in the proper perspective and into the proper hands. We need to learn to trust.

Discussion questions

- 1) What were your childhood fears (e.g. monsters under the bed, dark)?
- 2) Do you continue to have the same fears? Why or why not? Isn't it funny how time and experience prove most fears are irrational?
- 3) What are you afraid of now? How do your fears affect your relationship with others? How do they affect your relationship with God?

Bible study

If we're following Jesus, it's not going to be long before we find ourselves in situations in which our faith is stretched, where we feel vulnerable or where we feel afraid.

Mark 4 relates one such occasion in the experience of Jesus' disciples.

Several of them – Peter, Andrew, James and John most notably – were experienced fishermen. But, despite their years of experience on the Sea of Galilee, they found themselves in a storm that caused them to fear for their lives. Jesus used their experience on the choppy sea to teach them about faith and about the proper Object of their fear.

Read Mark 4:35-41

- 1) Who told the disciples to climb aboard the boat (v. 35)? Why is that significant?
- 2) What are the disciples initially afraid of? In what ways are they rational fears? In what ways are they irrational?
- 3) The disciples are terrified. Jesus is asleep. How was Jesus able to sleep in the middle of the storm?
- 4) At some point, the disciples turn to Jesus and their fears shift. What do their fears shift from? What do they switch to? Why are they so much more afraid of Jesus than the storm?
- 5) What's the lesson the disciples learned that night?
- 6) How do fear and faith go hand in hand?

Application

The story we've just read is about boats and storms, not about finances and generosity. "But this is a financial study," you might ask. "How does it tie in?" Well, when it comes to your finances, don't you tend to scan the horizon constantly looking for warning signs? Have you ever felt like you're being blown back and forth and that you can't stop taking on water? Have you ever wanted to make a spiritual investment but turned back after seeing the wind and waves? Have you ever wanted to shake Jesus awake and ask, "Don't you care that I'm drowning?"

Our faith (or lack thereof), our fears (no matter how big or small) and our finances (no matter how much or how little) go hand in hand. What we believe about Jesus and how that belief frames our fears can be clearly seen in the way we handle the resources we've been given. If we trust Jesus is in control, we don't have to worry about tomorrow's weather. If we have a proper fear of Jesus, circumstances are less threatening and we're more free to be generous.

- 1) If you could ask Jesus to say, "Peace, be still!" over any financial storm in your life (e.g., job security, home value, gas prices, investment accounts), what would it be?
- 2) How do your current fears about these situations tend to remove Jesus from his rightful place?
- 3) How does fear affect your giving?
- 4) If you removed the fears you experience and if you had unlimited resources with which to be generous, what big things would you attempt to do for God? Even with your current fears and limited resources, how could you begin to move toward your vision of generosity?
- 5) The disciples learned that they didn't need to fear the storm. They learned that Jesus was in control and their fears were put in the proper perspective. Knowing Jesus is in control of the storms in your life, what one or two things can you do, starting today, to live a more generous, faith-filled, fear-free life?