

Students on Fire
Discipleship Weekend
March 11 & 12, 2011
“Where’s Your Faith?”

Late Night Devotion
Teaching Materials
Matthew 8:18-27

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Notes to the Leader:

This guide is meant to help you lead the youth through the late night Bible study which is intended to be held in the host homes after the big evening session. Some churches choose to go back to their home church and do this as a large group. Whatever works for you works. Feel free to use it as you see fit. Our hope is that your group will be able to connect what they hear at the big rally with this material which will be shared in a much smaller group. We want this to be an interactive time- just you and a bunch of kids talking about God.

I have included a suggested outline and some illustrations and activities. Use what works for you and throw out what doesn't. **We do ask that you try to cover the entire passage of Scripture.**

Helpful Hints:

- If you are one of our BCM students leading a group you don't know, take the time to tell them a little about yourself and find out a little about them.
- Make sure everyone knows each other before you start. It will help with the discussion. If your group is larger, personal introductions may not be necessary, but at least take a couple of minutes to encourage them to get to know the ones sitting near them.
- Don't start the lesson as soon as you get back to the house, but don't wait until midnight either. Give everyone time to get comfortable and hang out a little. You do want to set a time when they should be ready to sit down and do the study.
- Establish a few ground rules. For this time to be effective, you want as few interruptions as possible. Everyone should go to the restroom first and put their cell phones away. They can catch up their texting later after the Bible study.
- Be relaxed and give the students the freedom to ask questions and express their opinions, but always bring it back to the Word.
- Don't just read the material to the students. Much of what is written here is meant for your eyes only as background and suggestions. Incorporate what is written into your own teaching style. Feel free to look to outside sources for more information if you need it.
- Don't let it drag on. Keep the Bible study moving so that you aren't boring them to death. Each group is different, but 30-40 minutes is about as long as you can expect their attention to last, especially this late at night.
- Allow time between the Bible study and bed time for students that may want to talk more to come to you and talk. This could be the most productive time of the weekend. Keep the youth leaders from that church informed of any issues that are brought to your attention.
- Have Fun!

Outline

Introduction & Background Information

Activity

Read Scripture – Matthew 8:18-27

I can put my faith in Jesus because:

1. He is greater than my stuff. (8:18-20)
2. He is greater than my family. (8:21-22)
3. He is greater than everything. (8:23-27)

Conclusion

Introduction & Background Information

Those of us who have been in church for most of our lives think we have heard all the stories. We know about David & Goliath, the walls of Jericho, the trials of Paul, and the miracles of Jesus. Students often make the mistake of thinking there is nothing more to learn from a story they have already heard. The passage we are going to examine tonight is one that they have all heard. They all know that Jesus is going to calm the storm before He even climbs into the boat. Even the awesome nature of this event loses its significance when we don't put it in the correct context. Jesus is the master teacher. Everything He did on this earth was a teachable moment. As teachers, we must be willing to turn the familiar stories of the Bible on their heads, examine them from different angles and see what those who first experienced them saw. The truth of the event can hold up to our scrutiny. It is the Bible, after all.

The story of Jesus calming the sea is in all three synoptic Gospels (Matthew 8:18-27, Mark 4:35-41, and Luke 8:22-25). Take some time to compare these accounts. Read some of the surrounding text to see what happened before and after this event. Remember that not every event in Jesus' life was recorded. We find out from Matthew that this was fairly early in Jesus' ministry, before Matthew himself was even called to follow Jesus. But we also see that Jesus had already performed a significant amount of miracles. Those in the boat with Him would have witnessed demons being cast out, people being healed with a word or even just a touch, and leprosy being cured. They would have heard Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount and tell many parables. They would have also seen Jesus running into conflict with the Pharisees for healing a man on the Sabbath. Their experience with Jesus was not shallow, although it was fairly new to them. This truth becomes all the more important when Jesus asks them point blank, "Where is your faith?" (Luke 8:25).

In our western culture, we have gotten pretty comfortable. Most of the students you are teaching have no idea what it is like to not have enough food or to have to wear worn out clothing. They probably have a nice home and even their own room with a television, a computer, and plenty of closet space. If they don't have a cell phone then they are in the minority. As we look at Jesus' question about faith, we will be examining where we find our security. Do we find it in the things we have? Is it in our relationships with parents or friends? Is it enough to be secure only in our relationship with Jesus Christ?

Activity

You will need a blindfold of some sort to do this activity. A dark T-shirt will do. The object of this activity is to demonstrate that there is only one person we can really trust all the time. Here is how to play:

One volunteer will wear the blindfold and will start on one end of the room. At least two students will attempt to guide him or her to the other side of the room using only verbal instructions. They should be standing on the opposite side of the room from the blindfolded person. The trick is that one of them will be giving good instructions while the other(s) will be trying to trip up the blindfolded person or make him or her run into walls. If you have a large group, then several people can be calling out instructions and the blindfolded person will have to discern who is telling him or her the truth. Everyone who is not blindfolded or calling out instructions will act as barriers. Have some of them sit on the floor. Others should stand up. Some could even lie down on the floor. However, you may want the barriers to remain still once they get into position. With a small group, even the barriers could call out instructions.

Helpful tips:

- Blindfold the person first before picking who will give instructions.
- Even those giving bad instructions should give good instructions some of the time.
- Don't make the activity so difficult that it cannot be finished. It is more fun to do it several times with different people than to make it so hard no one can do it.

Of course, the point of this activity is to demonstrate that there may be a lot of voices out there that may seem trustworthy; however, there is only One you can count on all the time.

Read the Scripture – Matthew 8:18-27

I can put my faith in Jesus because:

1. He is greater than my stuff (8:18-20)

Ask the students “What is the one possession you don't think you could live without?” You will probably get responses ranging from “my cell phone” to “my toothbrush.” Many of them won't even consider answers like “my house” or “my bed”, because they just assume those things will always be there for them. They are secure in the fact that they will always have a roof over their heads and a place to sleep at night. Of course, it is not bad to have this security at all. It is when our security in those things competes with what Jesus is calling us to do that we run into problems.

Reread verses 18-20. The man who approaches Jesus here is a Scribe. Just like Nicodemus, he was not only curious about the claims of Jesus, but he went to check Him out himself. He was so impressed with what he saw that he made the bold proclamation that he would follow Jesus anywhere. Jesus, of course, knows the heart of a man. He was not rude or condescending to him. He simply told him that where He was going, there was no guarantee of shelter or warmth. Jesus knew that this man was wealthy and probably very successful. He was used to having the comforts of home. Jesus didn't turn him away, but he challenged him to count the cost of following Him. Perhaps Jesus knew that even though the man said he was willing to follow, perhaps he wasn't quite ready to give up his comforts. It is also possible that the man responded to Jesus' statement by

following Him anyway regardless of the cost. We are not told in Scripture what he did. We do know that Jesus' statement was meant to cause him to consider whether he was willing to give up the security of his stuff to follow Jesus.

Ask the students to think about that thing they told you they couldn't live without. What if Jesus said that in order to follow Him, they would need to give that one thing totally up? Challenge the students to think about the things in their life that they have been blessed with. Have them think for a minute about how Jesus has over and over again proved His ability to provide for them. Then ask them again if they would be willing to give it all up in order to follow Him.

I can put my faith in Jesus because...

2. He is greater than my family (8:21-22)

Family is one the greatest blessing God has given us, especially those of us who have Christian parents. By no means is this passage of Scripture implying that your family is worthless. On the contrary, the relationships you have in your family are some of the most important ones you will ever have. Most of us find a tremendous sense of security among our family, as we should. If something scares you, you should be comforted by your father or mother's embrace. When you have a huge decision to make, you should be secure enough in your relationship with your parents to confide in them and ask for help. God designed the family to be our primary support system.

All of that being true drives home the point Jesus was making even more. When another man approached Jesus, the man made a simple request. Reread 8:21-22. The man just wanted to take care of his family first and then he would be free to follow Jesus. That doesn't sound too bad does it? We need to understand the culture and what the man was actually asking Jesus.

The man was not telling Jesus that he was needed at the funeral right away. In fact, his father was probably still very much alive. What he was requesting was plenty of time to take care of some business related to his father including eventually burying him before surrendering to the call to follow Jesus. It would be essentially the same as one of your students saying, "Just let me graduate first and then I will follow Jesus." Or "Can I wait until I am older and married with kids before I get really serious about this God thing?" Perhaps this man was the eldest son and he wanted to make sure he got his share of the estate when his father passed away. Or maybe his father was ill and he wanted to spend what time he had left with him. Whatever the case, Jesus knew the real situation and His response to the man tells us a little about the man's motives. Jesus told him to let the dead bury the dead.

Wow! That seems a little harsh, Jesus. What Jesus was saying was that in order to follow Him, no relationship can get in the way. Jesus Himself must be more important than your parents, your friends, your boyfriend or girlfriend, even your future spouse. He was telling this man that although your relationship with your father is important, it is not more important than whether or not you follow me.

Foreign missionaries today give up a lot in order to go to other countries to share the Gospel, but there was a time when answering the call to missions meant saying goodbye to family and friends with the very real possibility that you would never see or hear from them again this side of heaven. Today, someone can get from one place on the globe to just about any other place in less than 24

hours. Missionaries can communicate with family back home through email, video conferencing, and telephone calls. Technology has removed barriers and excuses that used to exist, but there is still a desperate need for people to go yet few respond.

As secure as we are in our family relationships, there will always be times when those people who love us most let us down. Think back about our activity. There was only one person who never gave wrong instructions. The security you find in your home is great, but it is nothing compared to Jesus. He will never let you down or disappoint you. Parents and siblings are flawed people just like you. They may never mean to hurt you or let you down, but they will. Jesus is the only one we can fully put our trust in knowing that He will never fail us.

I can put my faith in Jesus because...

3. He is greater than everything (8:23-27)

Now we finally get to the heart of the story. Jesus has instructed His disciples to go to the other side of the lake. Keep in mind who these men are. Some of them are accomplished fishermen who knew this lake very well. They made their living out on those waters. They knew that on the Sea of Galilee there was always the possibility of a sudden, violent storm. No doubt some of them had faced them before and survived. These are not weak, inexperienced men who got scared when they heard thunder. Think “Deadliest Catch” kind of guys. That makes it all the more interesting that these same burly fishermen freaked out when the storm hit. That tells us that this was no ordinary storm. It was massive and fierce. They genuinely thought they were going to die. Reread 8:23-25.

Jesus, on the other hand, was sound asleep. He had been with the people all day and he was extremely tired. The wind and waves didn't bother Him one bit. They just rocked Him to sleep. Isn't it interesting to look at the way Jesus responded to the situation in light of the way the disciples were reacting? He was more concerned about their spiritual condition than He was about the storm. His words to them show that their actions were not in line with someone who claimed to have placed their faith in Him. The disciples had experienced great things with Jesus. They saw miracles performed, heard Him speak with great authority, watched as He cast out demons and stood by as He restored countless people to health. They had seen His power at work, but still they were afraid.

In Matthew, Jesus says that they have “little faith.” The church is full of Christians with little faith. We say that we believe God can do great things, but we do not act on that belief. We trust in our bank accounts and our relationships far more than we trust in the power of God. We are not willing to risk the security we find in those things for what Jesus “might” do in our lives. We are just like the disciples. We have seen God work through the ages, but we are unwilling to totally surrender to Him.

In Luke, the writer records Jesus as saying “Where's your faith?” I believe the question He was asking is, “In what have you placed your faith?” They were failing to see the big picture. Jesus was the one who told them to get into the boat at that time of day and go to the other side. He knew there was going to be a storm. Why in the world would he preach to all those people, heal all those sick, and get all these men to follow Him just so they could all die in a storm on the Sea of Galilee? It makes no sense and if the disciples had thought about it for one moment, they would have come to the same conclusion.

Often in our lives, there are tests and storms. God sends these in order to strengthen our faith. James wrote that we should consider it joy (BE HAPPY ABOUT IT!) when we face trials, because the end result is a greater, complete faith (James 1:2-4).

The last verse sums up where the disciples were at. They were amazed that the winds and waves had obeyed Jesus and it caused them to question who He was. This is one of the first glimpses they really get at Jesus' deity (the fact that He was God). The awesomeness of the storm had seemed overwhelming, but with just a word, Jesus removed the danger and set things right again. In exhaustion and relief, the disciples were hit with the reality that Jesus is greater than any force of nature. He is capable of anything they can imagine and He is worthy of their trust.

Conclusion

What storms has Jesus brought you through? How many times has He proved His power to you? Is there any reason why you would need to hold on to anything else besides Him?

If we take a moment to examine our own hearts before the Lord, we may find that we have been placing our faith in things that really aren't secure. As great as your family is, they could be taken away from you in a heartbeat. As nice as it is to have a home, one careless act could cause it to burn to the ground. Your BFF may say she will always be there, but her dad may get transferred and move the family to another state. Even the most secure things in your life are temporary. The one thing that is eternal is your relationship with the Lord. He will never ever leave you and He is big enough to take care of any problem that comes your way. If He calls you to a task, He is capable of equipping you to do that thing.

Leader, be sure to have a time of decision after the lesson is completed. You have given them a lot to think about and work through. It may take a while for them to process how this works out in their own life. On the other hand, some of them may see an immediate area where they need to surrender. Be sure to share enough of the gospel so that if you have any students who are not saved, they will have heard the good news. Make sure all the students know that you are available if they need to talk and that you want to know if there are any decisions made. Also challenge them to make those decisions public at both SOF and in their own church. Close in prayer.

Thank you for taking the time to disciple young people. Each year we have students saved at SOF and most of them happen in the homes. I will be praying that God blesses us with the opportunity to see young people saved once again and others challenged to live a life of greater faith for Him.