



APPENDIX 1

Sample Study of Mark 4:35-41

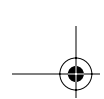
The first step is to enter the passage and observe it. Notice the details: *who*: Jesus “just as he was,” the disciples, the crowd and the people in the “other boats”; *when*: evening of “that day”; *where*: going from one side of the lake to the other; *what* and *how*: a great storm, Jesus asleep in the stern of the boat, they call him “Teacher” and so on.

You might choose to relive the story as one of the disciples. First you would be terrified at the storm, then perhaps somewhat miffed that Jesus is asleep on a cushion while the boat is being swamped. You would hope Jesus would get up and help. But when he does get up, he doesn’t just help—he calms the storm! You would be happy, of course, that you are saved, but in awe, wondering who your teacher really is. Is he more than just a teacher?

Next, generate some questions. Following are some you might ask.

1. What day does “on that day” refer to?
2. What lake were they near? Where is the “other side”? Where is the stern of a boat? What do we know about storms on the lake?
3. What does “just as he was” mean? Why would Jesus sleep during a storm?
4. What does “other boats were with him” mean?
5. What are the disciples’ motives in waking Jesus up? How do they perceive Jesus at that point in the story?
6. What is Jesus’ attitude toward the disciples when he wakes up?
7. After he calms the storm, why would Jesus ask them, “Why are you afraid?” Why would they still be afraid *after* he calms the storm?
8. What is “faith” for them at that point?





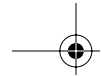
TRANSFORMING BIBLE STUDY

9. Why do they ask, “Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” What might that question reveal about their attitude?

Here are some possible answers to the questions, either from the text itself, the context, a Bible dictionary or map, or the Old Testament.

1. The context tells us that it was a long day of teaching for Jesus. He had told his most important parable, the parable of the soils; talked to his disciples about the secret of the kingdom; and told many more parables. So he would be tired.
2. These factual questions can be answered from the context, a Bible dictionary, an English dictionary and a map. The last place-name mentioned by Mark is Capernaum (2:1), which is on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee. The story after this shows that they are going to the land of the Gerasenes, across the lake to the east. A dictionary tells us that the stern is the back of the boat. A Bible dictionary indicates that storms came up frequently on the Sea of Galilee, usually at night, often quickly and unexpectedly.
3. The context and the text itself clarify that “just as he was” means Jesus went into the boat after a whole day of teaching, so he would be tired. Mark is showing Jesus as a human being, just like us, who could be tired and sleep soundly even in a storm after a long day of giving himself to people.
4. The text shows that Mark might have included this detail to show that others were affected by this storm also and witnessed it, lending credence to his account. In witnessing the storm and then the calm, they too benefited from Jesus’ power.
5. The text indicates that the disciples were desperate. They thought they were going to die. They needed everyone to help with bailing. And they expressed some annoyance at Jesus for not getting up earlier and helping. They call him “Teacher” because that was what he did all that day (we know that from the context). It seems that this was their perception, at that point, of who he was.
6. According to the Gospel of Mark up to this point, Jesus’ goal was to train his disciples as fishers of people, makers of disciples and citizens of his kingdom. Their response to the crisis of the storm revealed their misunderstanding of who he was and their lack of trust in him. His attitude toward them and questions about their faith reflect his interest in probing where they were in their understanding of him.





Appendix 1

7. According to a parallel passage in the Old Testament in Psalm 107:23-32, God raised up a fierce storm, the sailors were afraid, then God calmed the storm and they praised him. The fishermen on the boat with Jesus were Jewish men who knew the Old Testament, especially Psalms about sailors. Even if they didn't know this passage, they knew that only God can control the weather. Only God can calm storms.

They woke Jesus up expecting him to help them. Instead of grabbing a bucket, he spoke to the wind and sea and calmed the storm! Putting all this together, they may have begun to realize that this person with them in the boat was more than a teacher. Could he be God, the God of the Old Testament? That thought would certainly cause shock, fear and questioning in their hearts.

8. Up to this point in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus had been teaching about faith—that it meant actively trusting him and following him, seeking him, believing that he was more than just a teacher. Thus, in the context of this story, faith is being in awe of Jesus; realizing that he is more than a teacher, that he is God; and actively trusting him to help them.

9. From the text itself, the context, and the Old Testament parallel, their question might be phrased as, "Who *is* this, that even the wind and sea obey him? Could this man, our teacher, asleep in our boat, really be God, the God of the Old Testament? Only God can calm storms, and he just calmed a powerful storm. Could it really be . . . ?"

Lindsay Olesberg summarizes Mark 4:35-41 as follows:

After a full day of teaching, Jesus asks the disciples to row across the lake. A huge storm hits and the disciples are sent into the first crisis of the passage: "Are we gonna die?!" To make matters worse, Jesus sleeps through the emergency. After they wake him, he commands the wind and the sea to be still, and they obey him! Jesus' handling of the situation sends them into the second crisis of the passage: "So, who is this?!" Jesus is more than they expected. He isn't just a teacher; he is the creator of the whole universe. As the disciples discovered, following Jesus will lead people into situations that reveal the true state of their understanding of him. Jesus is using the storm in the disciples' lives to reveal their understanding of him and drive them to a deeper faith.

