The calming of the storm

Sue Wallace

Editor's note: Bible meditation may be new to you, although it is far from new in the history of the Church. At its simplest it is a way of engaging with a section of Bible text in a way which stimulates the imagination and gives time for a kind of personal exploration through the senses. It also facilitates the opportunity for God to speak to us. It can be used in an individual’s prayer time, but it also provides for a very powerful group experience. Some in your group may find reading or discussion is not their preferred way of learning. Using an imaginative Bible meditation may well release them into a new way of understanding the text. If you are new to leading a group in this kind of activity, it's important to speak slowly and deliberately, and allow plenty of generous pauses for individuals to pursue their own thoughts – and to listen to what God might be saying to them. You may also find it helpful to play some gentle instrumental music in the background. Practice reading it over various pieces of music so that you appreciate the effect of different background sounds before settling on a choice.

So over to Sue to introduce The calming of the storm.

This is an imaginative Bible meditation based on the calming of the storm narrative in Mark 4. It aims to recreate the experience of one of the disciples travelling with Jesus, calling up the sounds, sights, smells and experiences he may have encountered as he went on that eventful journey.

Resources

You will need: no special resources apart from the script and a Bible.

Method

Begin by ensuring everyone is comfortable and relaxed and then read Mark 4:35-41 to set the scene for the storm script.

The storm script

Close your eyes, and begin to imagine yourself walking along the sea shore in Galilee. It is evening. You can hear the waves lapping along the shore. You can feel the gentle sea breeze, making your hair ruffle around your face. Ahead of you, you can see Jesus. He is walking along the shore, too.

Look at Jesus. Look at his body posture. His walking style. It seems to be laboured, as if he is very tired. Now, he climbs into a boat, and you follow him. You sit down on a rolled-up fishing net. The air is warm and humid. You can smell the salt, the seaweed, the lingering smells of fish. You look around. The other disciples are all tired too, but Jesus is especially tired. It has been a long day of preaching and healing. Some of the disciples nod off, and so does Jesus, lulled by the gentle swaying of the boat in the waves. You can hear the lapping of the water, the flapping of the sails; you can see flickering lights pinpointing the villages by the lake...

Suddenly, a cold blast of air hits you. You realise the waves are beginning to rise. Thick grey clouds are massing overhead and the air tingles. The boat begins to roll... and suddenly an enormous crash of thunder wakes most of the sleeping men. The boat lurches; the waves get higher; spray begins to splash your face... but Jesus sleeps on.

Soon it is as if the sky is throwing everything it can at you. Sheets of rain are pounding the deck, and the boat is leaping wildly from side to side. It is threatening to capsize. The disciples are shouting at each other, and to Andrew at the back of the boat, desperately trying to keep it on course. Everyone is beginning to panic and their voices sound strangled and strained. The rudder slips in Andrew's hands and the boat spins around and around. You are feeling exhausted, sick and dizzy.
At last one of the men shakes the still-sleeping Jesus. ‘Master, MASTER! Save us... we’re going to drown!’

Jesus sits up, the rain running down his cheeks and beard. He shouts to be heard above the wind. ‘You’ve not got much faith, have you! Why are you afraid?’

You shiver from the cold and the embarrassment of the rebuke. You draw your sodden clothes tighter around you. You wait, curious... for you sense something is about to happen...

Jesus stands up. Though the boat is lurching and spinning wildly, the wind is wailing, the rain is coming down in torrents, the deck is awash and the timbers of the mast are creaking loudly... he stands up and shouts:

‘Wind! WIND! BE QUIET!’

And... the wind stops. The boat gives another sudden lurch as it is sent tipping down the crest of another wave.

‘ WAVES! BE CALM!’

And the sea... becomes like glass. All is silent. All is calm. The only sounds that can be heard are the distant echoes of puzzled voices floating across the water from a few houses on the shore and the sharp intakes of breath of the men in the boat.

Then, ever so slowly, the wind begins to blow once more... but this time it is a gentle breeze softly caressing the boat towards the shore.

You feel stunned. Disorientated. Then you hear one dazed man say to another, as Jesus curls up to sleep once more, ‘Who is he? What sort of person can he be... if even the wind and the waves do as he says?’

After a pause, encourage the group to share any new insights they experienced.

This meditation is one of 50 activities designed to help you be more creative around the Bible in small group and church settings to be found in Multi-Sensory Scripture by Sue Wallace, published in August 2005. For more details from our online shop click here.

Feel free!

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