



## Part 7: A Walk to remember | Pastor Joe Witter | July 25, 2010

### A. Fellowship Time (10-15 minutes)

1. Chitchat. Perhaps offer coffee, tea, or a cold drink with some snacks.
2. Pray (or invite someone to pray) to open the discussion.

### B. Review Time (Read the summary below to the group: 5-10 minutes)

**Introduction:** This summer, we're working our way through the gospel of Mark. We're calling it "Follow the Leader" because we want to learn more about Jesus so we can follow Him better. Last week, we read the story of the feeding of the 5000. Here's what happened next. [Read **Mark 6:45–56** together now.] After Jesus miraculously fed the crowd, John tells us that the crowd wanted to forcibly make Jesus king. The miraculous feeding didn't result in repentance and a desire to do Jesus' will. Instead, it had the crowd wanting to force Jesus to do their will. Jesus didn't want His followers infected with this misguided messianic fever, so He made them get into the boat and sent them off across the lake. Then, after Jesus dismissed the crowd, He went up on the mountainside and spent most of the night talking with His Father. Meanwhile, the disciples were in the middle of the lake, rowing hard and going nowhere because of a strong wind. Sometime in the wee hours of the morning, Jesus walked across the lake to help his beleaguered disciples. They were exhausted, frustrated, and stuck. Then Jesus showed up, and they were terrified! They thought He was a ghost. Jesus assured them that it was Him, and when He climbed into the boat with them, the wind died down and it was calm. They were amazed and astonished. Mark says that they had not understood about the loaves. Their hearts were hardened. In fact, all the significant events had escaped them: Jesus' calming the storm, freeing the demonized man, raising Jairus' daughter from the dead, multiplying food, and walking on the water. These were things only God could do. We have grown up with the idea that God has a Son and that God's Son, Jesus, is God too. But the disciples were strict monotheists and it never occurred to them that God would come to them as a man. Mark doesn't want us to make the same mistake, so he piles up the evidence, story after story, of Jesus doing what only God can do. Jesus must be God in the flesh. And if that is true, Jesus deserves our allegiance, obedience, devotion and love. We want to follow the Leader. Here are some things to note.

**1. Our Leader got alone to pray.** After sending off the disciples and dismissing the crowd, Jesus went up on the mountainside to pray for a long time. Mark shows us Jesus praying three times. First, **Mark 1:35** says, "*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*" The second time is in today's story. And the third is at the end of his gospel, in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus regularly got alone and prayed. And in each of Mark's three instances of prayer, Jesus was facing difficulties and making decisions related to His mission. Jesus met them on His knees, talking with His Father. He got away from all the noise, the busyness, and all the other voices, so He could hear His Father's voice. Our lives are so full of noise and activity that we struggle to hear the still small voice of God, the gentle whisper of the Spirit. When we force ourselves to wait on God, to focus on Him, and to listen for His voice, it's always good. We come away freshly connected to our Father. We don't need to stop shooting up arrow prayers, or praying while we're doing other things, but we want to follow the Leader and get better at getting alone with God and giving Him our undivided attention.

**2. Our Leader sent them into trouble...and left them.** The trip across the lake should have taken little more than an hour, but hours later, the disciples were stuck in the middle of the lake, rowing against a strong wind, and going nowhere. Jesus had sent them straight into trouble and left them there for hours. He came to their rescue, but only after they had been rowing all night! Many people think that God's will for us is comfort, ease, or safety. We pray, "Lord, keep us

safe.” And “Lord, bless us.” But what if God’s will is not to keep us safe, but to make us dangerous? What if God’s will is not to bless us and make us happy and comfortable, but to send us off rowing upstream, against the current and the wind? There’s nothing wrong with praying those kinds of prayers provided they are not our highest priority. God’s glory is God’s highest priority, and it ought to be ours too. It won’t always be easy, comfortable, or safe. Jesus said in **Matthew 7:13–14** *“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”* When we walk the hard way that leads to life, we bring glory to God and we find life. **Matthew 16:25** promises, *“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.”*

**3. Our Leader terrified and amazed them.** When Jesus came walking on the water, the disciples were terrified and amazed! Does that describe our experience with Jesus? Or have we reduced Him from the Lion of Judah to a tame little pussy cat? Have we reduced Him from the consuming fire of **Hebrews 12:29** to a campfire for roasting marshmallows? Acts 5 tells the story of a married couple in the Jerusalem church who were more concerned about their own reputation than they were about God’s glory. They sold some property to give the money to the poor. They said they were giving it all, when really they were keeping part of it for themselves. The problem wasn’t that they kept some for themselves, but that they lied to make themselves look better than they really were. They lied to Peter, to the church, and to God and the Holy Spirit. And God struck them dead! Is that the God we know? Or would “our god” never do something like that? We must follow the real Jesus, the Jesus that sometimes left people terrified and amazed. We must beware of our modern idolatry of making Jesus a manageable god who does what we want and is here to meet our needs and make us happy. The real Jesus, our Leader, made people terrified and amazed. And here’s the other side of the coin:

**4. Our Leader calmed their fears with His presence.** When Jesus saw that the disciples were terrified, He reassured them by saying, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” And when He got in the boat, the winds calmed, and so did the rattled disciples. He calmed their fears with His presence. The words “It is I” are literally, “I AM,” the divine name that God revealed to Moses. Jesus refers to Himself by the same name. He is saying: “Don’t be afraid! I AM is here.” Over and over in the Bible, God says, “Don’t be afraid.” And most often He adds this reason: “For I am with you.” We have a Father who loves us, and when we cry out in fear, God says, “I’m right here.” I AM is here.

**C. Life Group Questions** (Select, revise, and add as desired: 20-40 minutes.)

1. Do you regularly get alone to pray? How do you respond to life’s big moments, by getting alone to pray or something else? When was the last time you got alone to pray – not do anything else, but just to pray and seek God and listen for His leading?
2. It seems natural to pray for one’s own safety. What’s the difference of praying for our safety or for God’s glory in our life? What do you think Jesus meant by “the way is hard that leads to life” in **Matthew 7:13-14**?
3. Have you been terrified by Jesus before? Explain. Do you view Jesus more as the Lion of Judah, or domestic kitty? Do you find yourself more worried about your reputation or about bringing God glory? What would change in people’s lives if they truly viewed Jesus as the lion of Judah?
4. What do you fear the most? How does fear of things in your life get cast out by fear of God? Share an example from your life when the fear of God was more powerful than fear of anything else.

**D. Personal Application** (1-3 minutes)

At least once this week, make time to follow the Leader and get alone with God and pray.

**E. Prayer Time** (As a whole group or subgroups of 3-4; 10-15 minutes.)

- Ask God to help you pursue Him and to show His glory in your life.
- Thank God that we do not have to live in fear because He is with us.
- Pray about any other issues that came up during the discussion.