

Session 2

# Act Boldly in Crisis

by Sue Ann and Ron Glusenkamp



## A day at the beach

Read aloud Mark 4:35–41.

It had been a day at the beach. A large crowd had gathered and so Jesus got into a boat to preach to the people on shore. And what did those assembled people hear? Jesus told them about:

- The parable of the sower (Mark 4:1–9)
- The purpose of parables (Mark 4:10–20)
- A lamp under a bushel (Mark 4:21–25)
- The parable of the growing seed (Mark 4:26–29)
- The parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30–32)

Mark tells us, “With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.”

Then it was evening and so it was time for a little boat ride to the other side. “A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped” (Mark 4:37).

The frightened disciples are being tossed around in their little boat. Perhaps they had thought that after they left fishing behind as their vocation, they had signed up for a pleasure cruise—something on the Love Boat or maybe even the Good Ship Lollipop. But instead it was beginning to resemble something like the Poseidon Adventure or maybe even the Ship of Fools. This wasn’t what they had imagined. Where was the leader, their captain?

- “Let us go across to the other side.” Where might be the other side for you?
- What great windstorms are arising in your life?
- Can you describe the latest weather report for your life? The 24-hour forecast? 10-day forecast? Stormy? Mild? Foggy? Dry?

“But [ Jesus] was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’” (4:38)

In what might be a tinge of humor on Mark’s part, Jesus is in the stern, asleep on the cushion. Jesus is asleep and he is using the equivalent of our boaters’ life vests for his pillow! The verb used for sleep is *katheudo* (kath-YOO-do). It is also used in 13:35–37 when Jesus says, “Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.” It is also used to describe the condition in which Jesus finds Peter, James, and John in the garden (see 14:37–42).

The disciples ask the sleeping Jesus a question, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” The word used for *care* is the same word Martha used when she asks Jesus in Luke 10:40, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself?”

- Have you ever been in a crisis and felt that Jesus was in the boat with you?
- Have you ever been in a crisis and felt Jesus was sleeping?
- Look up the painting by Eugene Delacroix, "Christ Asleep during the Tempest" ([www.metmuseum.org/Works\\_of\\_Art/viewOne.asp?dep=11&viewmode=1&item=29.100.131](http://www.metmuseum.org/Works_of_Art/viewOne.asp?dep=11&viewmode=1&item=29.100.131)). Can you imagine how you would feel in that boat?
- How do we know when it is time to sleep and time to be awake?

### A kind of hush

Jesus acts boldly in this crisis. He doesn't get defensive about sleeping. He doesn't get into a theological discussion or a scientific argument about the cause of the great windstorm, but rather, he "woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!'"

The word for *rebuke* is interesting. Jesus rebukes evil spirits in Mark 1:25, 3:12, and 9:25. In 8:31–33, Peter rebukes Jesus and Jesus in turn rebukes Peter. The disciples rebuke those who brought little children to Jesus (10:13) and the crowd rebukes the blind man in 10:48. But in this passage, Jesus rebukes the wind and speaks to the sea.

We've all heard the command, "Don't just stand there, do something!" Could it be that to act boldly for health—in crisis—might entail a reversal of that imperative? Maybe it should be: "Don't just do something, stand there!"

Jesus said, "Peace! Be still!" The first word is in the imperative voice. It is a command and often it is used to mean something like "be quiet" or "stop talking." So Jesus is telling the storm to "shut up!" The second word, also an imperative, also means

"be silent" or "refrain from talking." The words of Jesus are a holy "Hush!" Twice. Hush to the second power. Hush squared.

### Personal windstorms

I have seen many great windstorms over the years in my nursing practice, Sue Ann writes. During stormy weather I have witnessed the waves of life "beating into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped" by loss from illness or injury.

About a year ago, at 11 o'clock at night, Ron and I were returning from a lovely evening out together. The weather that night was gorgeous, but a windstorm quickly arose when the phone rang.

My mother had fallen and broken her arm. She was in an emergency room in St. Louis, waiting. At that point I could only imagine the pain she was suffering. Physical pain, to be sure, but also the pain of a broken heart. She had worked so hard to recover from her stroke and was back living in her apartment with some supportive services. I knew this would be a major setback in her rehabilitation, a big disappointment, and an end to independence. The waves were beating into her boat and she was feeling swamped.

Wounds, injury, pain, loss, suffering, disappointment, and broken hearts. I am sure that if you took the time right now to ask members of your group to share, each one of you could tell of an experience of stormy weather—a crisis—of illness, injury, pain, suffering, disappointment, or a time when your boat was swamped from a loss you endured. Jesus "rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' Then the wind ceased and there was a dead calm" (Mark 4:39).

Well, I flew to St. Louis the next morning and went directly to St. Luke's Hospital, a place I had visited many times over the years. My mother,

Doris, looked so fragile and frail, so drawn and defeated. As I sat by her side and listened to her story, my heart was also breaking for the hurt she had suffered and the pain she was enduring. Fear was in her eyes as she winced. Her boat had been severely challenged by the storm.

Do you know the greatest fear of senior citizens? Falling! Well, that fear was confirmed by what had happened to my mom. This big fear had become a reality. She was in darkness.

I believe that telling one's story is an important part of healing. So I listened and I shared in her lament and her anxiety: "Why did this happen? If only I hadn't tried to reach that plug! Is God punishing me? What am I going to do? What will happen to me now?"

"Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38) Have you ever asked those questions? Have you ever cried out to God, "Why?"

Thank goodness our God is big enough and strong enough and faithful enough to hear our laments and cries of despair. In fact, every parent wants to hold and comfort their suffering child.

Only after my mother shared her story and we agreed this was a rotten deal, unfair and unfortunate, did I read her a passage from Psalm 147: "He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds."

As I read God's word to my mother, I saw the grimace on her face ease and the tension written across her forehead fade. Holding her hand, I could feel her tension easing. She seemed to be relaxing into God's unfailing love. "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased and there was a dead calm."

What a gift we can celebrate. What a promise we can cling to. What a delight we can share, knowing that Jesus does care, that he is in the boat with us, and even "the wind and sea obey him."

## Learning to be still

One could hear the chariots' wheels and the pounding hooves of the horses. Clouds of dust were filling the air. The enemy was catching up. The children of Israel were in a crisis: in front of them was the sea, behind them was the Egyptian army.

Ask someone to read Exodus 14:10-14 aloud. This passage in Exodus ends with "keep still." Earlier we read that Jesus commanded the windstorm with "Peace! Be still!" Let's take a few minutes to reflect on what it means to be still. Ask someone to read Psalm 46:10-11:

"Be still, and know that I am God!

I am exalted among the nations,

I am exalted in the earth."

The LORD of hosts is with us;

the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Take a minute or two to sit together in silence and feel yourself be still. Just concentrate on feeling your breath go in and out, relaxing all your muscles.

Jesus is relaxing when the storm brews up. One of the issues we'd like to address is lack of sleep. The Wellness Council of America states that the five smartest things one can do for one's well-being are:

1. Assess your health
2. Decrease caloric intake
3. Increase physical activity
4. Quit smoking
5. Get enough sleep

Let's think about the last one—sleep. Sue Ann says that many times in her work at the hospital, she sees family members sleep-deprived from standing vigil with their ill loved one. However, in times of crisis we need more sleep in order to enhance our coping mechanisms, to be really present with someone in need.

Jesus was sleeping and at the same time he was alert and ready to respond. He could discern the right time to react. Jesus was rested, and we can learn so much from that. He was teaching us to rest during the storms of life, confident in God's promise to be present.

Perhaps tonight before you go to bed, you can read this verse: "I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O LORD, make me lie down in safety" (Psalm 4:8).

---

Sue Ann Glusenkamp is a nurse and Ron is pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Cherry Hills Village, Colo. He formerly served as vice president church/sponsor relations for the ELCA Board of Pensions where he was involved with their special programming on health and wellness.

- What helps you be still?
- Can you give examples of times when you felt overwhelmed or in a crisis but were able to quiet yourself? How did you do that? Prayer? Walking outdoors? Listening to a favorite hymn?
- Have you ever been the bearer of those words, "Peace! Be still" in the lives of people who are close to you? Can you share what happened?

Session 2: Act Boldly for Health

# Act Boldly in Crisis

by Sue Ann and Ron Glusenkamp



## Opening

Greet the women as they arrive, and when it's time, gather the group in prayer. You may pray in these words or your own:

O God, you who calmed the chaos and  
quieted the storm,  
as we look for health in times of crisis,  
we look to you and your Word.  
Help us ever trust in Jesus  
and follow his example.  
Guide us as we strive to glorify you  
with our bodies, minds, and spirits.  
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

There are many ways to look at the idea of Jesus calming the storm at sea, and one way is to examine some of our beloved hymns.

As a mother stills her child,  
Thou canst hush the ocean wild;  
Boist'rous waves obey thy will  
When thou say'st to them "Be still."  
Wondrous sov'reign of the sea,  
Jesus, Savior, pilot me.

"Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me" (*Lutheran Book of Worship* 334, verse 2)

What a great image: "as a mother stills her child,/ Thou canst hush the ocean wild." Jesus is Lord of all,

even the wind and the waves. Like a mother, Jesus puts his finger to his lips and speaks a holy "hush."

There might be a storm brewing in your life or the lives of the Bible study participants at this time. As the storm unfolds, Jesus says to the storm, "Peace. Be still."

Lead participants in talking through these questions:

- How does this holy "hush" of Jesus feel to you? Perhaps the "boist'rous waves" are representative of the internal struggle going on in your head, your heart, or in a relationship with a loved one.
- What helps you "be still"? Jesus speaks those words to the wind and waves, but they are a helpful reminder for us as we experience storms in life. Much of what we have written pertains to being troubled by the stormy weather. But because we know Jesus is in the boat with us, we can also see ourselves as the bearer of those words, "Peace! Be still."
- Is there a way for us to act boldly in crisis and speak a holy "hush" to someone who feels that their boat is being tossed about?

Encourage participants to commit to taking a few minutes every day to experience stillness, to sit quietly, and lift up their hearts to God in prayer. When they return for the next session, ask what that experience was like for them.

## Inmost calm

There is a wonderful expression, confession, and profession of faith in the refrain of the hymn, “My Life Flows On in Endless Song” (*With One Voice* 781):

No storm can shake my inmost calm while  
to that Rock I’m clinging,  
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth,  
how can I keep from singing?

I like it when a song ends with a question. It reminds me of the game show “Jeopardy.” So the response, the refrain that any one of us can sing, or the corporate response when two or three are gathered in Jesus’ name is, “Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?”

Given that creedal statement of Christ’s reign, what else is there to do but sing a song? Maybe that’s what it’s all about: “Don’t just stand there, sing something!” And the song we sing, whether it is a lullaby or a hymn of praise, might help another passenger in the storm-tossed boat experience some peace, some stillness in their heart and soul.

## Closing

One way to close this session might be to pray especially for those whose lives have been disrupted or devastated by storms and floods, such as the people who are recovering from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. There are resources such as prayers and litanies on the ELCA’s Disaster Response Web site at [www.elca.org/disaster/resources/05-09-01-katrinaprayer.asp](http://www.elca.org/disaster/resources/05-09-01-katrinaprayer.asp).

In closing, we know that in our world, there are storms. And yet, we are called to act boldly for health in crisis. We can do so because the Holy Spirit brings closure to the storms and unfolds peace for all.

## SOME THINGS THAT ARE USEFUL FOR ANY BIBLE STUDY SESSION:

1. **A well-lit, well-ventilated room** with enough space, chairs, and room at the table for everyone who wants to join in. If possible, arrange the room so that participants can see one another.
2. **Bibles for everyone.** We use the NRSV most often, but it’s helpful to have different translations at hand. Some other useful modern translations are the New International Version (NIV) and the Contemporary English Version (CEV).
3. **Writing materials for everyone.**
4. **Writing materials for you, the leader:** a chalkboard with chalk, whiteboard with markers, easel with easel pad and markers, or the like, so that you can post things for the group to consider.
5. **Name tags for everyone** make it clear that new people are welcome to join the group.
6. **Hymnals for everyone**, if possible. *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *With One Voice* are the ones we use.

## SOMETHING USEFUL FOR THIS SESSION:

There is a painting of Christ in the boat during the storm mentioned in the participants’ section. Your public library may have a copy of it that you could borrow. The artist is Eugene Delacroix, a French painter of the 19th century, and the name of the painting is “Christ Asleep during the Tempest.” It hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and can be seen on the museum’s Web site at [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org).