

Connect360: The Perfect Storm

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• *Lesson 4 in the BaptistWay Press Connect360 unit "Miracles: The Transforming Power of Jesus" focuses on Matthew 8:23-27*

On most any airplane trip, it's easy to tell the seasoned travelers from the rookies. Those who fly often appear relaxed and unconcerned, settling into their seats with earbuds, books or electronic devices. Some sleep through much of the flight, not bothering to rouse themselves even if the plane hits heavy turbulence. Inexperienced fliers, on the other hand, often seem nervous. They gasp, grip their armrests, and glance around uneasily at every bump or unfamiliar sound. The difference between the two groups is a sense of perceived danger. Experience has taught frequent travelers to trust the aircraft and its crew. Those without such background tend to focus on potential hazards instead of present comfort.

For Jesus and his disciples, boats offered an accessible alternative to walking between cities. It seems to have been a restful mode of transportation for Jesus, away from the pressing crowds, for the Bible tells us that Jesus slept in the boat (Matthew 8:24, Mark 4:38). In much the same way that today's airline passengers relax during their flights, Jesus laid down to rest with no thoughts of a potential threat from the waters.

When a squall hit, the disciples panicked. The experienced fishermen among them knew what could happen if a boat capsized far from land. They had no recourse but to turn to Jesus for help.

Faith ... but only a little

There is a clear divide in the disciples' faith at this point. They had seen Jesus override natural law by healing incurable diseases. Though still infants in their spiritual understanding, they accepted his claim to divine connection. For that reason, his followers turned to Jesus for salvation at the point of peril.

At the same time, the disciples were uncertain how far they could trust Christ's power. Had their faith been strong, the disciples would have stopped with "Save us!" Instead, they demonstrated their uncertainty by adding a conviction of imminent death. They had some faith, but only a little. Their belief in Jesus's ability to act was tempered by what they perceived as the reality of their situation—they were all about to die.

Although the circumstances have changed, people today still struggle with storms in their lives. Sometimes our storms can be literal hurricanes or tornadoes. But more often, contemporary believers deal with problems and tragedies that challenge their faith and beliefs. The nature of crises may change, but Christ's ability to bring comfort and hope is the same in every situation. Although we cannot physically see him, Jesus is just as present in life struggles now as he was to the disciples on that boat in the Sea of Galilee. He stands ready to heal, sustain, encourage and infuse our hearts with hope. His presence still brings peace to the most violent storms of life if we turn to him.

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