Take Courage! It Is I

MARK 6:45-52 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

No fear, because he is with me: “It is I.”

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage (day 6): Psalm 23:4, Through the Valley. Its big idea: In the darkest valley, the Shepherd is with me.
- After this passage (day 8): Mark 8:27-31, Who Do You Say I Am?. Its big idea: The Shepherd walked through the valley of death first, and rose.

Open

Recall last time (Psalm 23:4): in the darkest valley, the Shepherd is with me. Today we take one phrase of that verse onto the water: “I will fear no evil, for You are with me.” Ask: What helps you most when you are frightened? Read Mark 6:50: “Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.” Big idea: No fear, because he is with me: “It is I.” Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. For You Are with Me (Psalm 23:4, about 8 min)

The one thing: In Psalm 23:4 fear is answered by presence: “You are with me.”

Ask: Why do you think Psalm 23:4 gives a person, not a plan, as the reason not to fear?

2. Against the Wind (Mark 6:45-48, about 10 min)

The one thing: The disciples had the dark and the danger, and Jesus saw them straining.

Ask: The disciples were in the wind because they obeyed Jesus. What does that say about hard times in the life of someone who follows him?

3. It Is I (Mark 6:49-52, about 12 min)

The one thing: Jesus answers terror with presence: “It is I,” the “You” of Psalm 23:4 in person.

Ask: Why does Mark end with the disciples’ hard hearts instead of the calm water?

Close (never cut it)

Read Mark 6:50, then Psalm 23:4. Jesus said “Do not be afraid” because “It is I.” Say the line together: “I will fear no evil, for You are with me.”

PROTECT THE ENDING

If the last section starts late, read v50-52 and go to the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 3, 2, 1, 4, 5 (top to bottom) · Feelings: The disciples rowing against the wind worried, The disciples seeing a figure on the water worried, The disciples hearing Jesus say “It is I” happy, The disciples when the wind died down happy · Code: YOU ARE WITH ME

Act it out: Some children sit in a row of chairs as the boat and row hard while others blow as the wind. One child is Jesus, who watches from a “mountain,” then walks over, says, “Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid,” and sits in the boat. The wind-blowers stop.

1. For You Are with Me

PSALM 23:4 · ABOUT 8 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The psalm gives a reason not to fear: a presence.
- Isaiah heard God promise, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you” (Isaiah 43:2).
- The psalms admit fear: “When I am afraid, I put my trust in You” (Psalm 56:3).

“I will fear no evil, for You are with me.” (Psalm 23:4) The reason is who is WITH me.

“Take courage! It is I. Do not be AFRAID.” (Mark 6:50)

Discuss: Why do you think Psalm 23:4 gives a person, not a plan, as the reason not to fear?

In Psalm 23:4 fear is answered by presence: “You are with me.”

MUST COVER

- Psalm 23:4: “I will fear no evil, for You are with me.”
- Isaiah 43:2, 5: “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you”; “Do not be afraid, for I am with you.”

IF THERE'S TIME

- Psalm 56:3: David admits fear and answers it with trust.

Illustration idea: A child in a thunderstorm who stops crying when a parent sits on the bed, though the storm goes on.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Knowing someone is there.
- Listen for: The storm doesn't stop, but you're not alone.

If it drifts: If the talk becomes tips for managing anxiety, bring it back to the reason the psalm gives: You are with me.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

No fear, because he is with me.

Short on time? Drop Psalm 56:3. Keep Psalm 23:4 and Isaiah 43:2.

Bridge → Mark shows the disciples with the fear and, for most of the night, without the presence.

2. Against the Wind

MARK 6:45-48 · ABOUT 10 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Jesus sends the disciples across the lake and goes up the mountain to pray.
- They row most of the night against the wind.
- Jesus sees them straining and comes to them on the sea.

“He could see that the disciples were STRAINING to row.”

“About the fourth WATCH of the night, Jesus went out to them.”

Discuss: The disciples were in the wind because they obeyed Jesus. What does that say about hard times in the life of someone who follows him?

The disciples had the dark and the danger, and Jesus saw them straining.

MUST COVER

- v45-46: Jesus “made” them go (a strong word: compelled) and went up to pray.
- v48: he saw them straining; the fourth watch was about 3 to 6 a.m., so they had rowed most of the night.

IF THERE'S TIME

- “Treads on the waves of the sea” is something only God does (Job 9:8).
- “He intended to pass by them” uses the verb the Greek Old Testament uses for God’s glory passing by Moses (Exodus 33:22).

Illustration idea: Rowing a boat or paddling a canoe straight into the wind and watching the shore stay where it is.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Hard times do not mean we took a wrong turn.
- Listen for: He prayed, and he saw them.

If it drifts: If it becomes a debate about how anyone could walk on water, come back to who Mark says Jesus is: the one who treads on the sea.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

He saw them straining before they saw him.

Short on time? Drop the Exodus note. Keep v48.

Bridge → Then the disciples see a figure on the water.

3. It Is I

MARK 6:49-52 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The disciples think Jesus is a ghost and are terrified.
- Jesus says, “Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.”
- He climbs into the boat and the wind dies down, but their hearts are hard.

“Take courage! It is I. Do not be AFRAID.”

“Their hearts had been HARDENED.”

Discuss: Why does Mark end with the disciples’ hard hearts instead of the calm water?

Jesus answers terror with presence: “It is I,” the “You” of Psalm 23:4 in person.

MUST COVER

- v50: “It is I” is literally “I am” in Greek, the words God uses of himself (Isaiah 43:10).
- v52: the passage ends in hard hearts; they had not understood about the loaves.

IF THERE'S TIME

- God promised, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you” (Isaiah 43:2).
- Mark used the same word for hardness of heart about the Pharisees (Mark 3:5).

Illustration idea: A child woken by a noise in the dark who calms at once when a parent says, “It’s me.”

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Being close to Jesus does not mean we understand him.
- Listen for: He came to them anyway.

If it drifts: If people start judging the disciples, ask where they see the same slowness in themselves, and return to v51: he climbed into the boat.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

“Do not be afraid” because “It is I.”

Short on time? Drop the Mark 3:5 note. Keep v50 and v52.

Bridge → So hear the psalm line again next to v50.

With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Start with the wind. Ask: When have you been working hard and getting nowhere?
2. Read it. Read Mark 6:45-52 together.
3. The long night. Jesus sent them out, prayed on the mountain, and saw them straining at the oars.
4. The words. “Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.” In Greek, “It is I” is “I am.”
5. Leave the question. Ask: Who walks on the sea and calls himself “I am”? Leave it with them.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

“Why did he mean to pass by them?”

The same verb is used when God’s glory passed by Moses (Exodus 33:22). Many read it as Jesus showing them who he is.

“Was it a storm?”

Mark only says the wind was against them and they were straining to row. The storm Jesus calmed is an earlier crossing (Mark 4).

“Why were their hearts hard?”

Mark ties it to the loaves: they had seen him feed thousands and still had not understood who he was.

“What does this mean for me?”

He sees his people when they struggle, and his word to them is still “It is I. Do not be afraid.”

Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

EVERY LESSON

1. Pray before you prepare

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).
If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.
If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

2. Study the text first

Understand the passage yourself before any help.
If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.
If you've taught for years: Don’t lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

3. Teach one big idea

People remember one sentence, not four points.
If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.
If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn’t serve it, cut it.

4. Point to Christ

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).
If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?
If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

FOR THIS LESSON

1. Make it concrete

Mark keeps time: evening, the middle of the sea, the fourth watch.
If you're new: Draw a clock and shade in the hours they rowed.
If you've taught for years: Use Mark 13:35 for the four watches.

2. Let the Bible do the talking

The Old Testament explains the strange details.
If you're new: Read Job 9:8 and Exodus 33:22 aloud before v48.
If you've taught for years: Let the class connect them.

3. Let the passage land the way it lands

It ends in hard hearts, not a happy ending.
If you're new: Do not tidy up v52.
If you've taught for years: Stay with v51-52 and the fact that he came anyway.

BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you’ll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

OPENINGS

- ask a real-life question: When have you worked as hard as you could and felt you were getting

nowhere?

- use an object: Hold up an oar or a paddle and ask how long someone could row into the wind.
- raise a problem: You obeyed Jesus and ended up rowing against the wind all night. What would you think?

CLOSINGS

- restate the big idea: No fear, because he is with me: “It is I.”
- call back to the opening: Return to the “getting nowhere” stories and read v50 over them.
- pray the text: Pray Psalm 23:4 together, then thank Jesus that he climbs into the boat.

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone has been rowing against the wind for years and Jesus has not stilled it.: Do not promise a quick calm. The passage promises that he sees and comes; leave room for the long night.
- Someone feels their heart is hard and fears they are not a real believer.: Point out that Mark says this of the Twelve, and Jesus climbed into their boat anyway.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: “Thanks. Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t spoken yet.” Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can’t answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: “Great question. Let’s catch it after class so we can finish the passage.”

READ THIS WEEK

- Isaiah 43:1-5
- Psalm 107:23-31
- Matthew 14:22-33

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/mark/6-45-52/lesson

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Key verse: “I will fear no evil, for You are with me” Psalm 23:4

THE BIG IDEA

No fear, because he is with me: “It is I.”

1. FOR YOU ARE WITH ME · PSALM 23:4

- The psalm gives a reason not to fear: a presence.
- Isaiah heard God promise, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you” (Isaiah 43:2).
- The psalms admit fear: “When I am afraid, I put my trust in You” (Psalm 56:3).

“I will fear no evil, for You are with me.” (Psalm 23:4) The reason is who is _____ me.

“Take courage! It is I. Do not be _____.” (Mark 6:50)

Discuss: Why do you think Psalm 23:4 gives a person, not a plan, as the reason not to fear?

2. AGAINST THE WIND · MARK 6:45-48

- Jesus sends the disciples across the lake and goes up the mountain to pray.
- They row most of the night against the wind.
- Jesus sees them straining and comes to them on the sea.

“He could see that the disciples were _____ to row.”

“About the fourth _____ of the night, Jesus went out to them.”

Discuss: The disciples were in the wind because they obeyed Jesus. What does that say about hard times in the life of someone who follows him?

3. IT IS I · MARK 6:49-52

- The disciples think Jesus is a ghost and are terrified.
- Jesus says, “Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.”
- He climbs into the boat and the wind dies down, but their hearts are hard.

“Take courage! It is I. Do not be _____.”

“Their hearts had been _____.”

Discuss: Why does Mark end with the disciples’ hard hearts instead of the calm water?

Read this week: Isaiah 43:1-5 · Psalm 107:23-31 · Matthew 14:22-33

For Kids: Take Courage! It Is I

MARK 6:45-52 · NAME: _____

Big idea: I don't have to be afraid, because Jesus is with me.

1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

☐ Jesus walks to them on the water.

☐ The wind blows against their boat.

☐ Jesus sends his friends across the lake.

☐ Jesus says, “It is I.”

☐ He gets in; the wind dies down.

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

The disciples rowing against the wind: happy · sad · worried

The disciples seeing a figure on the water: happy · sad · worried

The disciples hearing Jesus say “It is I”: happy · sad · worried

The disciples when the wind died down: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

O G J B R C K D W
N F E P O O P K A
I K S D W U O U T
G G U U S R P P E
H C S H C A W R R
T B S C H G I A B
R O Y D F E N Y B
N A H U U D D P K
R T H D F G H C U

JESUS · BOAT · WIND · ROW · WATER · NIGHT · PRAY · COURAGE

4. SECRET CODE

1=A 2=E 3=H 4=I 5=M 6=O 7=R 8=T 9=U 10=W 11=Y

___	___	___		___	___	___		___	___	___	___		___	___
11	**6**	**9**		**1**	**7**	**2**		**10**	**4**	**8**	**3**		**5**	**2**

5. DRAW IT!

Draw the boat on the lake at night, with Jesus walking toward it on the water.

6. MEMORY VERSE

“I will fear no evil, for You are with me” Psalm 23:4 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

When I am scared, Jesus says _____. _____