



## Whose Battle is This

2021 Year End Message

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## God's Purpose for Every Person

- God creates every person to represent him in interactions with others
- Be for others what God would be for them if he lived with us in human form
- He provides resources for people to perform the responsibilities and blesses those that do
- If your motivation is to perform the responsibilities in *Living in the Image of God*, then every battle you face is his battle and he will guide you to victory

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## What We Will Learn

- Committed to representing God in human interactions
- In humility, motivated by his tasks and his goals
- Every battle you face belongs to God
- Focus on your human effort
- He will intervene when and how he chooses
- And will guide you to victory in every battle
- Christ interactions with disciples in two storms
- Mark 4:35–41 and 6:45–51

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## Basis for Faith

- Seek to fulfill God's purpose always
- To represent him among others
  - Channel for his human interactions
  - Conveyor of his image
- Every task and every battle belongs to him
- He will lead you to complete his tasks
- And accomplish his goals

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## Faith As Driver for Human Effort

- Motivation consistent with God's purpose
- Methods and approach consistent with *Living in the Image of God*
- God sees your human effort
- And wants you to succeed
- Your battle is his battle
- He will determine if a miracle is needed
- And what, when, and how

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## Encounter with Storm #1

- In the evening, Jesus asked disciples to sail across the lake to the other side
- He was in the boat with them, but asleep
- Severe storm, boat was filling with water
- Desperate and afraid, they awakened Jesus
- He rebuked the storm and it stopped
- He scolded disciples for lack of faith
- They showed lack of faith by shifting focus away from their human effort
- Mark 4:35–40

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### Mark 4 (NIV)

35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."

36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.

- They were working to accomplish a goal that Jesus established to them
- They and the other boats

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### Mark 4 (NIV)

37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.

38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

- They encountered difficulties and threat of failure as they worked on the task
- They shifted focus away from human effort as they sought to awaken Jesus

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### Mark 4 (NIV)

39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

- He released a miracle to clear their way
- He scolded them for lack of faith, which they showed by shifting focus away from human work

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### Faith and Human Effort Based on Storm #1

- Jesus scolded the disciples for lack of faith
- Instead of working to save the boat
- They shifted focus to seeking to awaken God to their human understanding
- Recognize the battle belongs to God
- And he will guide you to victory
- Focus on doing what you can humanly do
- God will intervene when and how he chooses

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### Encounter with Storm #2

- Occurred on Sea of Galilee in the night
- Jesus had sent disciples to sail to Bethsaida while he went up on a mountainside to pray
- Disciples encountered severe storm
- Worked feverishly to keep boat advancing
- Understanding human relationship with God
- Regarding faith, human work, and miracle
- Mark 6:45-51

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### Mark 6 (NIV)

45 Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.

46 After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

- They were working on God's task: heading to Bethsaida because Jesus sent them
- He was not with them physically

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### Mark 6 (NIV)

47 Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land.

48 He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them...

- He was on land, they were far on the lake, and it was in the night
- He could not see them physically
- But he saw them straining against the wind

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### Mark 6 (NIV)

48 ...Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them,

49 but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out,

- He saw their effort will get them to the destination and wanted to go on ahead
- But his manner of presence distracted them

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### Mark 6 (NIV)

50 because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

51 Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down...

- He encouraged them to continue
- Seeing they were distracted, he released a miracle to clear their way

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### What We Learned

- God will guide you to victory in his battle
- Motivation consistent with God's purpose
- Methods and approach consistent with *Living in the Image of God*
- Focus on human effort driven by faith
- God sees your struggles and difficulties
- And will intervene with a miracle
- When and how he chooses

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# Whose Battle is This

## Faith, Human Work, and Miracles

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Christ delivered the message of faith, human work, and miracles through his disciples on two occasions. You are committed to God's purpose and motivated to complete his tasks and accomplish his goals; in humility through compassion, peace, and righteousness. Therefore, every battle you face belongs to God. Focus on your human work. He knows your difficulties, sees and encourages your effort, and will intervene to guide you to victory when and how he chooses.

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God creates every person to represent him in interactions with others: to be for others what he would be for them if he lived with us in human form. He provides resources to empower every person to perform the responsibilities and blesses those that do. If your motivation is to perform the responsibilities and to follow methods and procedures consistent with *Living in the Image of God*, then every battle you face is his battle and he will guide you to victory.

Therefore, we can state the basis for our faith as follows. Seek to fulfill God's purpose always. In humility, to be his representative among people that he places in your network: to be a channel for his presence among them and his human interactions with them; and a conveyor of his image and impact among them. Then every task and every battle belong to him. He will lead you to complete his tasks and accomplish his goals, when and how he chooses.

Thus, faith drives human effort. Your motivation is to perform your individual responsibilities toward fulfilling God's purpose. In humility toward God and toward other people, you are committed to compassion, peace, and righteousness; and you focus on doing what you can humanly do. God sees your effort and wants you to succeed. Your battle is his battle and he will lead you to victory. He will determine if a miracle is needed and intervene when and how he chooses.

Jesus delivered this message—the message of faith, human work, and miracles—through his disciples on two occasions, in interactions with them during two storms on the Sea of Galilee. We discuss the interactions to understand our faith as the driver for our human effort.

## Encounter with Storm #1

On the day before the first storm, Jesus was teaching a large crowd during the day in Capernaum near the north shore of the lake. The crowd stayed on shore while Jesus was on the lake on a boat that he used as a platform. In the evening, he told his disciples to sail south across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes: "Let us go over to the other side" [Mark 4:35]. The disciples obeyed and set sail. Jesus was in the boat with them, but was asleep. Also, there were other boats with them.

They encountered a severe storm, and the boat was filling with water. Desperate and afraid, the disciples awakened Jesus [Mark 4:38]: "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" Jesus rebuked the storm and it stopped. However, he scolded the disciples for lack of faith [Mark 4:40]: "He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?'"

Jesus scolded the disciples for lack of faith: because they shifted focus away from their human effort. Instead of working diligently through their mission, they shifted their focus to seeking to

awaken God to their human understanding of the difficulties they faced. They were on the lake because Jesus asked them to sail to the other side. Because they were working to accomplish a goal he established for them, any battle they faced (e.g., against the storm) was his battle. Therefore, they were supposed to focus on doing what they could humanly do. Instead, they sought to awaken God to the difficulties they perceived, thus shifting focus away from faith-driven human work.

If you are seeking to fulfill God's purpose, then recognize that your battles belong to God and he will guide you to victory. Therefore, focus on doing what you can humanly do and God will intervene when and how he chooses. For example, Jesus intervened with a miracle: he calmed the storm to clear the way for the disciples to proceed through their mission.

Work diligently through your mission. Pray continually as you work diligently. But do not shift your focus away from your human effort. For example, in David's encounter with Goliath, he focused on preparing for the battle and prayed as he prepared. His prayer also served as a sermon and his sermon as a battle cry.

## **Encounter with Storm #2**

The second storm encounter also occurred in the night on the Sea of Galilee following a day that Jesus and the disciples interacted with a large crowd by the shore. The interactions included feeding a crowd of five thousand men plus others and ended late in the day. Thereafter, Jesus asked the disciples to go ahead of him to Bethsaida on the north-east side of the lake and the disciples left in a boat.

Jesus dismissed the crowd and went up on a mountainside to pray. The disciples encountered a severe storm on their way and worked feverishly to keep the boat advancing toward their destination. We discuss the events to understand human relationship with God regarding faith, work, and miracle.

**RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD** The disciples' relationship with God while on this task is similar to usual human relationship with God in at least two ways. First, the disciples were working on a task that God established for them, because it was Jesus that sent them to sail to Bethsaida: "Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd" [Mark 6:45]. Second, God was not with them in human form, because Jesus was on a mountainside praying: "After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray" [Mark 6:46].

**GOD SEES YOUR EFFORT** Jesus could not see the disciples physically, because he was on land, they were far on the lake, and it was night: "Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land" [Mark 6:47]. But he saw them straining against the wind: "He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them" [Mark 6:48]. Therefore, the phrase "he saw the disciples" means God saw them in his way (not the human way) and was aware of their human effort against the storm.

**NECESSARY AND SUFFICIENT** God may determine that your human effort will be necessary and sufficient to accomplish goals he has established for you. In the example of this storm, Jesus saw the disciples' effort will get them to the destination and wanted to go on ahead of them: "Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them..." [Mark 6:48]. However, the human manifestation of his presence distracted them from

work. He went into the boat and the storm stopped: “Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down” [Mark 6:51].

**GOD ENCOURAGES HUMAN WORK** When he saw they were distracted, before he climbed into the boat, Jesus encouraged the disciples to return to focusing on their human effort [Mark 6:49–50]: “but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, ‘Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.’” They were distracted by his manner of presence. But he encouraged them to continue with their effort. Further, we can learn from this encounter that certain manifestations of God’s presence that you may desire could distract you from human effort that God encourages of you.

**GOD’S INTERVENTION** God will intervene with a miracle if he determines a miracle is necessary. Jesus encouraged the disciples to continue with their effort. However, seeing they were distracted, he climbed into the boat and released a miracle to clear their way “Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down” [Mark 6:51].

## **Summary of What We Learned**

If you are committed to God’s purpose and motivated to complete his tasks and accomplish his goals; in humility through compassion, peace, and righteousness; then your battles belong to God. Focus on your effort. He will guide you to victory.

God sees your work and difficulties and could consider them necessary and sufficient to accomplish goals he establishes for you. He encourages human work, and will intervene to guide you to victory when and how he chooses.