

Small Group Resource Week of January 19th

"In the Face of Darkness...THIS IS the Messiah!"

Leader's Note: Encourage vulnerability and openness but also remind the group of the hope and victory we have in Jesus as the Messiah. Reinforce that spiritual battles are not fought alone; we stand together as the Church under his authority.

Opening Prayer: Invite someone to open the group in prayer, asking God to reveal his truth and presence during the discussion.

Ice-Breaker: Begin with some group sharing:

- Have you ever had a "mountaintop" experience in your faith followed by a season of difficulty or struggle? How did it impact your trust in Jesus?
 - Share an example of a time when you felt like you were in a spiritual battle or faced overwhelming circumstances. How did you respond?
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Scripture Reading: Read Matthew 14:22-32 and Matthew 16:13-19 aloud. Assign different group members to read each passage.

Discussion Questions:

1. The Storm and the Messiah's Power

- What stands out to you about the disciples' response during the storm in Matthew 14:22-32? How can you relate to their fear and doubt?
- Jesus invites Peter to step out of the boat and walk on water. What does this teach us about faith and focusing on Jesus in the middle of challenges?
- What storms in your life are you facing right now where you feel called to trust in Jesus' authority? How can the group support you in this?

2. Peter's Confession at Caesarea Philippi

- Why do you think Jesus chose Caesarea Philippi, a place of spiritual darkness, to ask the question, "Who do you say that I am?"
- Peter boldly declares Jesus as the Messiah. How does this declaration contrast with the idolatry and brokenness around them?

- Jesus says, “On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” What does this mean for us as his Church today? How are we called to confront darkness in our world?

3. The Transfiguration: Seeing Jesus’ Glory

- Read Matthew 17:1-9 (optional). Why do you think Jesus gave Peter, James, and John this glimpse of his glory?
 - How does the Transfiguration encourage us to trust in Jesus’ divine authority when we’re in the “valleys” of life?
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Reflection Activity: Distribute paper and pens to the group. Ask each person to write down:

1. A “storm” or area of spiritual battle they’re facing right now.
2. A “gateway of darkness” they feel called to bring light to—whether it’s in their personal life, community, or the world.

After a few minutes, invite people to share (if comfortable) and pray for one another.

Application:

- **Personal:** What’s one practical step you can take this week to keep your eyes on Jesus in the middle of life’s storms?
 - **Community:** As a group, discuss how you can “storm the gates” together. Is there a specific need or area of darkness in your community you feel called to address?
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Closing Prayer: Spend time praying as a group. Focus on:

- Asking for courage to trust in Jesus’ authority during life’s storms.
 - Boldness to step into the mission of bringing light into darkness.
 - Discernment and empowerment for how your group can reflect the Kingdom of Heaven.
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