

REFLECTION GUIDE

JOHN 6:14-21 | PRAYERFULNESS

KEY TERMS

King – Following the feeding of the 5,000, the crowd identifies Jesus as the “Prophet like Moses” from Deuteronomy 18:15. Jesus recognizes that part of this identification will mean an expectation that he serve as a political *king* over Israel—likely leading them in battle against Roman oppression (v. 15).

Withdrew – Because of his commitment to his Father’s will—which was not for Jesus to become an earthly political king—Jesus *withdrew* from the crowds (v. 15). Jesus had a regular rhythm of spending time in public and then privately withdrawing to spend time with his Father (see Mark 1:35 & Luke 6:12).

It is I - In Greek, Jesus’ words (*ego eimi*) can be translated as “I am.” This phrase echoes God’s self-identification in Exodus 3:14, where He tells Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” Jesus’ statement not only reassures the disciples but also hints at his divine identity.

SYNOPSIS

Following the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, Jesus perceives that the crowd intends to force him into kingship. Understanding that their desires are political rather than spiritual, he retreats alone to the mountain (v. 15). Meanwhile, the disciples set out across the Sea of Galilee, rowing against strong winds (vv. 16-18).

As they struggle, Jesus approaches them walking on the water (v. 19). Terrified, they do not immediately recognize him, but he reassures them with the words, “It is I; do not be afraid” (v. 20). This moment highlights both Jesus’ divine authority and his intimate care for his disciples. Once he enters the boat, the storm ceases, and they miraculously arrive at their destination (v. 21).

This passage reveals Jesus’ power over creation and his presence with his people in the midst of fear and struggle. It also challenges us to trust in his sovereignty rather than our own understanding, just as the disciples had to learn that Jesus’ kingship was not about earthly power but about divine rule over all things.

GOING DEEPER

Read Exodus 14:21-31 and Psalm 107:23-32. How does Jesus’ act of walking on water echo God’s past deliverance of His people? How do these passages deepen our understanding of Jesus’ identity and his power over nature?

DID YOU KNOW?

The Sea of Galilee is about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide, and its location—surrounded by hills—makes it prone to sudden, violent storms. The disciples were likely rowing against strong headwinds for several hours before Jesus appeared, based on the detail that they had *rowed about three or four miles* (v. 19).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read John 6:14-21. Make some observations. Who is present? What is the setting? What emotions are present on the part of different people?
2. In verses 14-15, what do you make of Jesus' response to the excitement of the people after his miracle? In Mark's account, what does he reveal about Jesus departure (Mark 6:36)?
3. When you consider all that had happened earlier that day with large crowds, the feeding of the 5000, the conditions on the sea, and the late night travel (Mark tells us it was the fourth watch of the night: between 3-6 AM), how do you think the disciples felt as they reached the halfway point rowing with another 3-4 miles to go? Is it surprising that Jesus allowed them to endure this on their own? Why or why not?
4. In verses 19-21, what are the disciples' responses to Jesus? What results after Jesus arrives (see also Mark 6:51-52)?

LIVING THE WORD

5. When we find it hard to pray, it is easy to blame our busyness or the pressures of life, but Mark 6:51-52 points to a different reason? Do you agree? Why or why not?
6. Jesus speaks a work of encouragement to the disciples, "It is I; do not be afraid." In a broad sense, Jesus' simple statement summarizes the gospel message very succinctly. How is this simple truth the foundation of a prayerful life? How should this motivate your prayerfulness?
7. In this episode, imagine if one of the disciples had stopped rowing and said, "Hey everybody, maybe we should stop and pray before moving on." What might that have changed? Why is it difficult to be the one who pulls away to pray?
8. As you reflect on this lesson, what are your learning about prayerfulness? This week, how will what you've learned shape you as a person?