

#37

BUILDING THE  
**FAITH  
MUSCLE**

MINI BOOK

MIKE MAZZALONGO

**bibleTalk**.TV

Copyright © 2024 by Mike Mazzalongo

ISBN: 9781945778223

**BibleTalk.tv**

14998 E. Reno

Choctaw, Oklahoma 73020

Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation Used by permission.  
([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org))

Most people don't like to exercise – it's boring, it's inconvenient, it's painful. But they love what exercise does – it prevents weight gain, provides good health, and gives an emotional boost. This is why we exercise despite the howls of protest from our bodies. Now, I mention this aversion to physical exercise because in many ways it is similar to the distaste we sometimes have for spiritual exercise.

You see, just as we need to exercise our physical muscles to remain strong and healthy, we also need to exercise the spiritual muscle of faith in order to remain spiritually healthy. Having a strong "faith" muscle is important because it is what you count on during times of stress, trouble, and loss. Having a weak and flabby faith muscle in times of distress can lead to panic, depression, cynicism, and worst of all – loss of trust in God.

In this mini book, therefore, I'd like to describe to you how Jesus developed the faith muscle in His Apostles. This faith building program has been used ever since to help Christians build up their faith muscle and protect them from poor spiritual health.

## **JESUS' FAITH BUILDING PROGRAM**

In chapter 4:34 of his gospel, Mark summarizes the spiritual exercise approach used by Jesus. By this time in His ministry Jesus had spent a considerable amount of effort at teaching His disciples about faith, how it worked, and what it produced. Once He had given them this theoretical part, He was ready to have them experience the practical portion of His faith building program. Mark describes the scene as Jesus and the twelve enter a boat in order to cross over the Sea of Galilee. There, in the boat, we will see the four steps Jesus uses to build the faith muscle in His Apostles.

On that day, when evening came,  
He said to them, "Let us go over to  
the other side." Leaving the crowd,  
they took Him along with them in

the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

- Mark 4:35-41

Were you able to spot the four steps? Here they are:

## **Step #1**

### **He Brings You into the Storm**

For the Apostles it was an actual storm at sea. Normally they would have felt quite assured on the water - many were experienced fishermen used to such things. But what was happening was beyond their strength, their expertise, and their courage - they were in real danger!

That is what a trial or test is - something that takes you into deep water where what you have and what you control is not enough for what you are facing. This may be different for each person because what frightens one person is different for another. For some it is the threat of serious illness, for others it may be family trauma,

and many people feel that financial problems are the crisis they fear most.

Whatever the storm is, it is a threat, an enemy, and a challenge that is bigger and stronger than you are. This is usually the first step that the Lord permits you to experience in the exercising of your faith muscle.

## **Step #2**

### **He Allows the Storm to Actually Test Your Faith**

We all go through various trials and tribulations in life that test our love, our strength, our goodness, and our patience, but in the Lord's faith building program He allows something to come into your life that will bully it's way through all of these things and strike at the very core of your spiritual being, which is your faith. The

point of the test is not how kind or patient you are but if you believe in God – for real! Faith in God is the ultimate test because the Bible says that:

- God is over creation – (Job 42:2)
- God is over the affairs of nations – (Job 12:23)
- God is over man's birth and lot in life – (Job 14:5)
- God is over success and failure in life – (Luke 1:52)
- God is over every single event, good or bad – (Matthew 10:30)

God's sovereignty over all areas of life in this way means that: Every storm is scheduled by Him, every storm is controlled by Him, and every storm finds

its ultimate meaning in Him. This storm tested the faith of the disciples in the boat, not their seamanship. The Lord's building program is designed to test your faith. You may become depressed, angry, discouraged, afraid, tired, dazed or confused, but in the end, despite everything you've felt and thought and experienced – the question will be: **do you still believe?**

This is step #2; the storm rocks the very foundation of your faith. The Lord has not brought you to step #2 until you have been to this point. Step #1 brings you into a storm then step #2 lets the storm test your faith.

## **Step #3**

### **He Leaves You in the Storm**

The Apostles sensed the danger and tried everything they knew before finally coming to wake Jesus up. At any time He could have stopped the wind and waves, but the Lord allowed His disciples to remain in trouble until the last minute. People caught in the storms of life usually cry out – "why me, why this, why now?" or "how long, how much, how will I survive?"

They want to know about the condition of their bodies or the duration of the storm, when the real issue is the condition of their faith. They don't realize that in the end the only thing that matters, whether you live or die, is the strength of your faith.

And so, part of the conditioning program includes a period of time in the eye of the

storm because that's where weak faith is strengthened and true faith is revealed.

The disciples were no longer afraid after Jesus stopped the wind and the waves, but a sincere faith tested and tried in the many storms of life, becomes strong enough to give a person courage – even at the worst moment.

**STORMS, NOT SMOOTH SAILING,  
ARE WHAT BUILD FAITH.**

If your faith doesn't awaken or grow stronger in the storm, then whatever happened, happened for nothing. Jesus leaves you in the storm so your faith will build endurance, hope, and unshakable trust in Him.

## **Step #4**

### **He Leads You to Calm Waters**

The Apostles saw with their own eyes that the wind died down, the boat stopped sinking and the waves retreated. James describes the moment or status as one of spiritual maturity and completeness.

Consider it all joy, my brethren,  
when you encounter various trials,  
knowing that the testing of your  
faith produces endurance. And let  
endurance have its perfect result,  
so that you may be perfect and  
complete, lacking in nothing.

- James 1:2-4

Every storm eventually blows over and such is the case in the storms of life. But the ones we have come through with stronger faith change us for the better.

Our bodies or bank accounts may be in tatters as a result of the storms we experience but our inner selves, the place where the spirit dwells, remains peaceful and assured. That's because the Lord is creating within us a faith that cannot be moved, changed, or denied - a spiritual muscle that is strong and able to meet any challenge. And when we reach that place of calm water with Him, we can also sleep peacefully in the boat called life, even though the storms are raging around us.

Full maturity (or calm water) is knowing that we need God and that He will be there for us at every moment, good or bad.

## SUMMARY

I believe every person needs Jesus Christ in some way:

- Some need Him to clean their guilty consciences of sin and shame. He will do this for you if you believe that He is the Son of God, repent of your sins, and allow Him to wash you clean in the waters of baptism (Acts 2:36-38).
- Some need to renew their commitments to being good and faithful servants. He will take you back and put you to work again if you repent of your unfaithfulness and receive His forgiveness through prayer (I John 1:6-9).

- Some need a stronger faith because the storms they face are making them afraid and discouraged. He will strengthen you if you let Him lead you through the storm to the calm water of a mature faith (James 1:2-6).





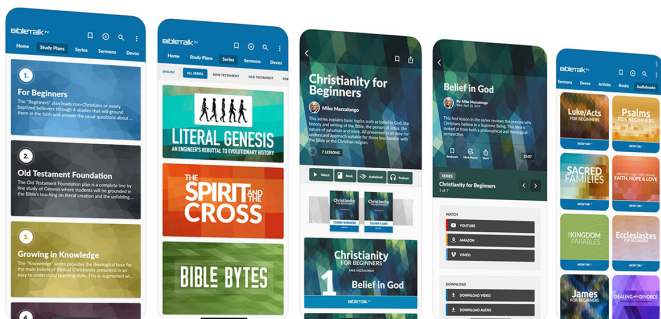
**READ IT,  
LEARN IT,  
PASS IT ON...**

---





## DOWNLOAD OUR APP





# TAKE QUIZZES COMPLETE STUDY PLANS RECEIVE CERTIFICATES

33%



[BibleTalk.tv/plans](https://BibleTalk.tv/plans)

## **BibleTalk.tv is an Internet Mission Work.**

We provide video and textual Bible teaching material on our website and mobile apps for free. We enable churches and individuals all over the world to have access to high quality Bible materials for personal growth, group study or for teaching in their classes.

The goal of this mission work is to spread the gospel to the greatest number of people using the latest technology available. For the first time in history, it is becoming possible to preach the gospel to the entire world at once. BibleTalk.tv is an effort to preach the gospel to all nations every day until Jesus returns.

The Choctaw Church of Christ in Oklahoma City is the sponsoring congregation for this work and provides the recording facilities and oversight.

**[bibletalk.tv/support](http://bibletalk.tv/support)**