



+ **YOU**

Sermon Series: How to Avoid Life's Pitfalls
To be used with: The Pitfall of Hard Times
Sermon Title Possibilities: A Long & Sleepless Night
Scripture: Mark 6:45-52

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study “*The Pitfall of Hard Times*,” this sermon will explore a unique encounter and exchange between Jesus and his disciples. They disciples were experiencing a hard time and Jesus came to them during their trial.

Introduction : Sleepless nights are no fun. We toss and turn all night long. This sleeplessness can be a direct result of a trial we are experiencing. This trial could be pending doctor’s report, a broken relationship, more bills than money, or a host of other things. Today’s sermon is looking at a sleepless night that the disciples experienced and how Jesus responded to their despair. We can be encouraged from this in knowing that we are not the only ones experiencing hard times and Jesus is more than aware of what we are going through as well.

1. The disciples long night

a. Experience was not helping them (v. 47-48)

A quick study of the gospels would reveal that many of the disciples were fishermen. We know that Peter and his brother Andrew, along with the brothers James and John were all fishermen by trade. Therefore, operating a boat, no matter the circumstances, would not be something new for them.

This particular night, though, was not good. The Bible says that they were in the middle of the sea and they were straining at the oars. When a storm arrives, the last place you want to be is in the middle of the sea because you experience the greatest impact. The word strain shows them working with all their might and yet unable to make any progress whatsoever.

Have you ever experienced anything like this? You start into something thinking that it will be no big deal because you have done this a thousand times before. Then, not long into the experience, what you thought was normal is anything but normal. If you have experienced a sleepless night because of this, then you are in good company. The disciples experienced the same thing.

b. The wind was against them (v. 48)

We learned in the previous point that the disciples were straining at the oars. The reason they were straining was because the wind was against them. A quick study of the original language does not show a gentle night breeze. Instead, we find gale-force winds that came upon them. The result was a great deal of effort with little to no results.

Haven’t we all experienced this before? We are putting in the long hours at work, school or sports and yet we are not making matters any better. The boss is still on

us, the grades have not come up and we are still sitting on the bench. It has been said that doing the same thing over and over while expecting different results is the definition of insanity. Might the time be fast approaching in which we begin to recalibrate our actions because we are seeing little to no results?

c. They were scared (v. 50)

To handle this point with biblical accuracy, it is important to acknowledge that Jesus is now on scene. He had gone for a late-night walk on the lake. How did the disciples respond? The Bible says that they were terrified. This was not a sense of apprehension. It was a feeling of absolute fear. They were fighting the winds, straining at the oars and now someone has walked out on the lake to them. They were ready to call it a night.

Here's the transition point. The hard time was upon them, and Jesus came walking out to them. All too often we feel like Jesus has left us during the struggle. Reality is that He has not left us but has drawn in close to us. If we would simply look up, we might see Him standing right there.

2. Jesus' response to the sleepless night

a. He was watching (v. 48)

Where exactly was Jesus when the disciples were struggling so much? Verse 46 indicates that He had gone up the mountain to pray. Verse 48 says that He saw the disciples straining at the oars and fighting the wind. He was fully aware of what was taking place and waiting for the right time to show Himself.

Jesus, however, was not satisfied with simply watching the events unfold. The Bible says that He went towards them. His actions show personal initiative. The text does not show the disciples asking Jesus to come to them. He took the initiative Himself.

When we are experiencing the sleepless night, we too can wonder where Jesus is. We can feel like our prayers are hitting the ceiling and bouncing right back. Can we learn from the disciples experience? He might be right there next to us. The key, however, can be to stop fighting the wind and straining at the oars. We need to set the things down that we expect to deliver us and look for Him.

b. He offered assurance (v. 50)

We learned a moment ago that the disciples experienced great fear. Jesus, being fully aware of this, offered them encouragement. An accurate way to interpret this phrase would be, "Stop being afraid". It is important to note that the Bible says that He spoke this to them immediately. He did not waste any time in offering assurance and comfort to the disciples.

The Bible is full of similar assurances for us today. Proverbs 3:6 says that God will make our path straight when we trust Him with all our hearts. James 1:5 says that He will give us wisdom when we ask Him for it. Philippians 4:6-7 tells us to

not worry, but rather trust in His peace that surpasses our understanding and guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Yes, we will have sleepless nights. But we are not alone in these nights. Jesus is aware, present, and offering us His words of assurance.

c. He got in the boat (v. 51)

The feeling of being alone is never fun. Isolation can be a form of punishment. Many a parent has sent a child to his room. The room is full of toys, but no one else is in there. The child can become upset because he knows he is alone and no one will be coming to his rescue for a while.

The disciples needed to be rescued. They thought they could handle it on their own, but the wind and waves were too much. Jesus, being aware of this, walked out to them and then proceeded to get in the boat. When this took place, the Bible says that the wind ceased. This reveals an immediate and complete stop of the wind.

Conclusion: What is keeping you up at night? Have you worked and worked only to find yourself straining at the oars and fighting the wind? Please know that Jesus stands at the ready to help you. He wants to get in the boat with you. If your struggle is something at home, work, or school, it is not too big for Jesus. If your struggle is a lack of assurance of your eternal home, please know that Jesus desires to forgive you of your sins and be your Savior. All you must do is call out to Him in faith and He will bestow His grace upon you.

Tod Tanner has degrees from Texas A&M University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has pastored churches in Texas and Tennessee. He and his family reside in Wartrace, TN and he is serving as the Vice President of the Tennessee Baptist Foundation.