

CLOSE THE DISTANCE

CIRCLE UP | JOHN REILLY

KEY POINTS

- Jesus intentionally chose to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, a region that was racially, culturally, politically, and religiously foreign to His Jewish disciples, demonstrating that where He went was as much a part of His message as what He said.
- Fear is the dominant force that creates distance between people, and it manifests not only as dramatic terror but as subtle hesitations such as not wanting to seem awkward, worrying about being rejected, or assuming someone is too busy.
- While fear creates distance, Jesus consistently closes it, and He calls His followers to do the same by moving toward others rather than away from them.
- Moving toward others applies both to those who do not yet know Jesus and to fellow believers who need their faith strengthened, reflecting Paul's language in Romans 1 about being mutually encouraged by one another's faith.
- The transformed man of the Decapolis is a model for every believer: he had no theological training, only a personal encounter with Jesus, and his willingness to share that story resulted in thousands coming to faith across the region.
- Practical movements toward others include curiosity through asking genuine questions and listening well, courage to cross whatever distance exists, extending invitations, practicing hospitality by making real space in one's life, approaching others with humility rather than as a hero, and sharing one's personal story of what Jesus has done.
- The responsibility of changing or saving another person belongs to God alone; the believer's responsibility is simply to make the move and trust God with the outcome.
- One person making one move can produce results far beyond what they could anticipate or measure.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Mark 4:35 - Mark 5:20

Romans 1:11-12

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jesus intentionally chose to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, a place that was racially, culturally, politically, and religiously different from what his disciples knew. Who represents 'the other side' in your own life, and what fears have kept you from moving toward that person?
2. The townspeople begged Jesus to leave after witnessing a miraculous healing because they were afraid of what they did not understand. Have you ever responded to something God was doing with fear rather than faith, and what did that reveal about your trust in him?
3. Paul writes in Romans 1 that he longed to see the Roman believers so that they could mutually encourage one another in faith. How does the idea of mutual encouragement challenge the way you typically think about your role in relationships with other believers?
4. The man freed from demons was told by Jesus to go home and share what the Lord had done for him, and his simple testimony eventually drew thousands to Jesus. How might you be underestimating the potential impact of simply sharing your own story with the people around you?
5. Jesus crossed the sea to reach one man, and that one man's testimony eventually moved thousands. How does this challenge the way you evaluate whether a single conversation, invitation, or act of kindness is worth your time and effort?



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