

5. That's Not What I Meant!

Introduction

What would you think if you wrote a “*Dear John letter*” to make it clear to an admirer that you are *not* interested in a serious relationship, only to have that person misinterpret your letter to mean the complete opposite? *It would be exasperating!* Maybe you’ve already experienced something like this? Well, just as your letter would carry a *single message*, so the Scriptures have only one interpretation. Remember the principle: “*There is only One Interpretation but Many Applications!*”

Continuing our illustration of the Crime Investigator, the crime scene has been mapped and photographed, and the pieces of evidence identified. Now to solve the crime! *The Investigator’s most important tool is his mind and his ability to find meaning and significance in the things he observes!* That is what sets a Lt. Columbo apart from the rest! But how does he find meaning and significance in the evidence? *By asking critical questions!*

The Quest for Meaning

The search for meaning involves asking *the right questions*. The questions below are designed to help us discover the meaning and significance of Scripture.

Determine Their **Meaning**:

What does this word mean?

What does this phrase mean?

Is this word or phrase to be interpreted literally or spiritually?

Determine Their **Significance**:

What is significant about this word or phrase?

What is significant about this verb tense or this connective?

Why did the author use this word? Why did he say it this way?

Determine Any **Implications**:

What is implied by the use of this word or phrase?

Determine the **Key Words, Verses or Ideas**.

Which words, verses or ideas express the purpose of the author?

Why do they?

Use your *Observations* and *Reference Materials* to answer your questions. Don’t feel you have to answer every question. It is better to have *no* answer than to have the *wrong* answer!

Interpretations Questions for Mark 4:35-41

Mark 4:35-41

- 35 **That day**
when evening came,
he said to his disciples,
"Let us go over to the other side."
- 36 **Leaving the crowd behind,**
they took him along,
just as he was,
in the boat.
There were also other boats with him.
- 37 **A furious squall came up, and**
the waves broke over the boat,
so that it was nearly swamped.
- 38 **Jesus was in the stern,**
sleeping on a cushion.
The disciples woke him and said to him,
"Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"
- 39 **He got up,**
rebuked the wind and
said to the waves,
"Quiet! Be still!"
Then the wind died down and
it was completely calm.
- 40 **He said to his disciples,**
"Why are you so afraid?
Do you still have no faith?"
- 41 **They were terrified and asked each other,**
"Who is this?
Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Questions:

- ▶ What is significant about it being "evening"?
- ▶ What is the significant about Jesus' instruction?
- ▶ **Key Statement:** Jesus' will expressed.
- ▶ How far is the "other side"?
- ▶ Why does Mark say the disciples "took (Jesus) along" with them in the boat?
- ▶ What kind of boat was it?
- ▶ What is the significant about "other boats" being with them?
- ▶ What is a "furious squall"?
- ▶ Are these storms common?
- ▶ What is significant about the situation?
- ▶ What is significant about how Jesus is described?
- ▶ What does the disciples' question imply?
- ▶ What is significant about Jesus' actions?
- ▶ What is significant about what resulted?

In the search for a passage's meaning, there is no end to the questions that can be raised. In fact, ***the more questions asked, the more information gained, and the better your interpretation will be.*** Don't hesitate to ask about anything and everything your Observation has uncovered. But ***don't be distracted from your primary goal, and that is to discover what the author meant by what he wrote.*** Every question you raise must bring you closer to that goal!

My Interpretation of Mark 4:35-41

The purpose of Mark 4:35-41 is to reveal Jesus' primary goal in His discipleship ministry: *the development of faith in His disciples' lives (Key verse: Mark 4:40)*. The trip across the Sea of Galilee (*Mark 2:1; 4:1 and Atlas*), a trip of 8-15 miles, was Jesus' classroom where He is about to give a lesson on *Faith*. The lesson begins with Jesus' instruction for them to *"go over to the other side"* of the lake, a significant statement.

The text says that the disciples *"took Him along, just as He was, in the boat."* Normally it is Jesus taking His disciples along, but here, *the disciples are taking the lead*. There is an air of *confidence* among the disciples, four of whom were professional fishermen on this very Lake (*Mark 1:16-20*). They were in their element, familiar with their surroundings ... been there, done that. But then the unexpected happens. A *"furious squall"*, not an uncommon natural phenomenon where strong winds sweep across the eastern wilderness and down the cliffs, striking the surface of the lake and creating a sudden turbulence (*Bible Encyclopedia*), came up and strikes the boats with such fury that the boats are in danger of sinking.

To make matters worse, it is *evening (4:35)* adding to the danger the disciples feel they are in. Interestingly, and almost unbelievably, Jesus is asleep on a cushion in the stern. He is not anxious nor bothered by the storm swirling around Him. The disciples, however, have had enough and wake Jesus with the accusation *"don't you care if we drown?"*. *Dr. Howard Hendricks* suggests that the implication is *"at least you can help us bail out!"*. Their urgent plea only accentuates the seemingly dangerous situation of the moment, especially in light of the fact that, as noted, four of the disciples were professional fishermen!

Jesus awakens and with nary an effort simply *commands* the wind and the waves to cease and desist, which they immediately do! But what bothers Jesus far more than a "furious squall" at night in the middle of the lake is His disciples' lack of Faith! He scolds them with the questions, *"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"* The implication is that by then, they should have had Faith! Why? Because they were eyewitnesses of Jesus' miracles (*Mark chapters 1 & 2*) in which he demonstrated His power and authority over the physical and spiritual forces time and again. A study of Jesus' healings reveals that by the authority of His spoken Word, demons and sickness cease (Mark 1:24-27; 41-42). Therefore, when Jesus speaks and says that they are going *"to the other side"*, *they are going to the other side!* The object of our Faith is *Christ*, with all *His Authority and Integrity!* No matter what may come up, Christ's Words will prevail!

The disciples, unfortunately, may be in the boat, but they have missed the boat, as they query one another *"Who is this? Even the winds and the waves obey Him?"* Commanding demons is one thing, but nature? No way! That seems to be their sentiment as they perhaps shrink away with fear from the Lord, and maybe spend the rest of the trip huddled on one side of the now calm boat while Jesus returns to sleep on the other (*my imagination*).

Return to your Structural Diagram of Mark 8:22-30 and create Interpretation questions. Jot these down on your work sheet. Then write out your interpretation of that passage and what you believe the author (Mark) intended it to mean on the back of the sheet.