

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1 Can you recall a specific moment when you felt challenged to step out of your comfort zone and risk something for your faith in Christ? What were the circumstances, and what was the outcome?
- 2 Reflect on the role of fear and doubt in your faith journey. How do these emotions affect your ability to take risks for Christ, and how have you managed or overcome them in the past?
- 2 How does trust in Christ factor into your willingness to take risks? How do you cultivate and strengthen that trust in your life?

WE DO LIFE TOGETHER!

If you haven't been involved in a LIFE Group yet, send us a message us thru Fb, and we will get you connected to a small group.



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SUNDAY WORD

10 • 29 • 2023

DARE TO WALK ON THE WATER

MATTHEW 14:22-33

When you read the Bible, you often see that men and women who accomplished great things for God weren't content to accept the status quo. They didn't just go along with things as they were. They believed that more could be done if only someone would lead the way. And when no one else stepped up, they themselves volunteered.

This is the right thing to do because having faith means taking risks. If you're not willing to take a chance because you're afraid to take a step, unless you're sure things will turn out well, then faith will always be a mystery to you.

Among all the stories in the New Testament that tell us about taking the risk of faith, none is more special than the one where Peter walks on water in Matthew 14:22-33. Everything was going well at first, but then a huge storm came up while the disciples were sailing across the lake. The storm started around 8:00 P.M. and lasted all night, which was unusual because storms usually don't last that long. The disciples were in the boat, struggling against the wind and rain, and the hours passed by without the storm stopping. After eight or nine hours, they were stuck in the middle of the lake, dirty, wet, cold, and very tired, wondering if they would ever reach the shore safely.

THE DISCIPLES TERRIFIED

We pick up Matthew's story in verse 25: Matthew 14:25-26 - "25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. 'It's a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear." (NIV)

It was during that time that Jesus started walking on the water. When the disciples saw Him walking on the water, they were terrified. Someone cried out, "It's a ghost." Why were they so scared? They've been rowing for a long time and can't reach the shore. It's very early in the morning, around 4:00 or 4:30. They're extremely tired, and every part of their bodies hurts. The wind is loud, rain is hitting them, and they're cold, wet, and exhausted. On top of all that, they're feeling grouchy, hungry, and frustrated. All of a sudden, someone sees a person walking on the water.

Matthew 14:27-29 - "27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." 28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." 29 "Come," he said (NIV)." At this point, Peter is not being impulsive. He didn't just leap out of the boat and start walking. Peter asked for permission first. If Jesus had said no, Peter would have stayed in the boat. But Jesus didn't say no; He said, "Come." So Peter went.

FAITH = CONCENTRATION IN JESUS

We must not miss the force of Jesus' words when He said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid". He used an expression the disciples would immediately understand. The phrase "It is I" is the Greek version of God saying in Exodus 3:14 that His name is "I AM." Jesus links Himself with the God who in the Old Testament miraculously delivered His people again and again. It's not just that Jesus is saying, "Don't worry. It's me. I'm not a ghost." It's His way of saying, "I am the Lord God of the universe. I created the wind and the waves and I sent the storm." And it is the Lord Himself who tells Peter to come to Him on the water.

When Jesus tells you to come, you should listen and come. When He says to walk, you should walk. For Peter, it was safer to be on the water than in the boat at that moment. The wisest choice for Peter was to leave the boat. Having the Lord with you in a storm is better than being without God in what seems like a peaceful place. Once Peter was fully on the water, he turned to walk toward Jesus. As he walks toward Jesus, his Master walks toward him. Everything goes fine until Peter again notices the storm all around him.

Matthew 14:30-33 - "30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" 32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God (NIV)." While all this was happening, heavy rain poured down. The wind had been there all along. The storm had been going on for hours. It didn't calm down when Jesus started walking on the water. Jesus came to them in the middle of the storm.

Here's something important to realize: God is always there for us when we need Him. He is with us during both good and tough times. So, when you feel like God has abandoned you during life's difficulties, don't believe the lies the devil tells you. We need to focus on Jesus. It's easy to get distracted, especially when the storms of life rage around us. It's hard to stay focused on Jesus during the dark, stormy times when fear tries to take over. This passage reminds us that Christ not only controls and sends the storms, but He also shows Himself to us in the midst of storms. Often, we see Jesus most clearly when life's storms challenge our faith. What should we do in those moments? Pray for strong faith and concentrate on Jesus. Fix your eyes on the Son of God.

The wind always blows, and storms eventually come. We can't choose or control when they happen. Today might be sunny, but tomorrow we could be facing rain and strong winds, struggling through tough times. That's something we all know. What happened to Peter could happen to any of us. For a moment, he forgets about Jesus and remembers who he is and where he should be - Peter, a fisherman from Galilee, who belongs in the boat. At that moment, he looks down at his feet, sees water beneath him, and thinks, "I'm not supposed to walk on water; this is impossible." Here's a valuable life lesson: When we lose our focus on Jesus, we begin to sink in life.

PETER PRAYED

As Peter goes down into the water, he prays one of the shortest prayers in the Bible: Matthew 14:30 "Lord, save me!" Have you ever prayed this kind of prayer? When you're sinking, you can't pray a long prayer. You have to be quick, or you might drown before getting to the point. The Bible says that immediately Jesus reached out and caught him. His words to Peter are very important: Matthew 14:31 - "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" In English, "You of little faith" is four words, but in Greek, Jesus used just one word: "Little-faith." It's like a nickname. Jesus called Peter "Little-Faith." "Little-faith, why did you doubt?"

LITTLE FAITH VS NO FAITH

Peter deserves credit because he was ready to do something no one else was willing to do. Before we judge Peter too harshly for briefly losing sight of Jesus, remember that there were 11 other guys in the boat watching the whole thing. To start walking on water, you first have to step out onto the water. If you stay in the boat, you won't sink, but you also won't experience walking on water.

This isn't a story about Bartholomew walking on water because Bartholomew stayed in the boat. It's not about Matthew walking on water because Matthew stayed in the boat. It's not about James walking on water because James stayed in the boat. It's about Peter walking on water because he had the courage to step out of the boat. Maybe some of the others wanted to do it, and maybe they would have if Peter had stayed out there longer. But let's give credit to Peter - he did it, while they didn't. That's why this story is about him, and the other 11 aren't even mentioned. Before you say Peter had "little faith," keep in mind that "little faith is better than no faith" which is what the other guys in the boat had.

When Jesus called Peter "Little-Faith," he wasn't rebuking Peter for trying too much, but for not trusting enough. Do you see the difference? Jesus isn't saying, "Peter, you should have stayed in the boat." Jesus is not saying, "Peter, you should have stayed in the boat." Jesus did not rebuke Peter for getting out of the boat. On the contrary, Jesus is really saying, "Peter, if you had just kept your eyes on me, you could have walked even across the Pacific Ocean."

Staying in the boat may be comfortable and safe, but that's not what the life of faith is all about. Christ calls us to find out what He is doing in the world, and wholeheartedly devote ourselves to His cause.

Who comes out looking better in the end? Peter, who tried and sank, or the other 11 who didn't even try? There's a good reason why we don't hear much about the other 11. They chose the safe path. Only Peter took the chance, and that's why we still remember him after 2,000 years. Walking on water is risky, and you might sink. But you'll never find out unless you get out of the boat. What happened to Peter can happen to any of us. You can survive any storm if you keep your eyes on Jesus.