

Jesus Walks on Water

Matthew 14:22-33

BIBLE BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

Prayer and Compassion

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After hearing of the death of John the Baptist, Jesus sought solitude but was followed by throngs of people. He took pity on them, healing the sick and feeding the crowd. Evening was approaching when Jesus sent his disciples toward the other side of the Sea of Galilee by boat, dismissed the crowd, and finally retired, alone, to pray. He apparently spent many hours in prayer, because he didn't approach the disciples' boat until "the fourth watch" (Matthew 14:25), which would have been between 3:00 and 6:00 a.m.

The disciples' terror at seeing a figure walking on the water is certainly understandable. They knew no ordinary human could do such a thing, so they assumed the figure must be a ghost. Their cries of fear prompted Jesus' compassionate response, for he always responded compassionately to people in need.

Stepping Out

Hearing Jesus' voice, impetuous Peter had a crazy idea: What if Jesus would make it possible for him to walk on the water as Jesus was? So he voiced his suggestion to Jesus, and Jesus took him up on it. Peter's success and then his failure hinged on his focus. When he concentrated on Jesus, he walked on water. But when he focused on the wind and waves, he almost drowned.

After pulling Peter from the waves, Jesus said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). Some consider this a rebuke. However, it was more likely a gentle encouragement to Peter to have even more faith. After all, Peter was the only one of the disciples who had enough faith to step out on the water in the first place!

Jesus Shows His Power

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What happened next stunned everyone but Jesus. The wind that had been hindering the disciples all night suddenly stopped. Jesus was capable not only of walking on water but also of calming the wind and the waves! John's Gospel states that the disciples immediately reached their destination (John 6:21). Jesus could also control time and space! The disciples' response was only logical: They bowed in worship before this one who truly was the Son of God. Before this event, they had thought perhaps they knew who Jesus really was, but now they were certain. In this miracle, Jesus rescued Peter when he doubted and then eliminated all the doubts of the others.

The Jesus Connection

When you trust in Jesus, you can "walk on water." Jesus gives you the ability to accomplish impossible things, which gives him the attention he deserves.

What overwhelming situations do you tend to look at fearfully? How can trusting Jesus cause you to "walk" over that storm in your life? Jesus will respond to you with the same love and support he gave Peter. Bring him your fears and storms in prayer right now. You can write your prayer here.



Adult

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DIGGING

Matthew 14:22-33 ► Bible Point—Jesus helps us believe. Key Verse—"If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

Daily Challenges

Choose one or more of these activities to do this week.

- Talk to several Christian people you know about times they had doubts about God. You might talk with a relative, your pastor, or a friend.
- Find other examples in the Bible of people trusting God. Pray that God will teach you the same lessons those people learned.
- Look for opportunities to help someone who doubts God. Share your faith history with him or her and how God has helped you increase your faith.

Through the Week

Use the following passages to explore additional biblical perspectives on faith and doubt.

Monday–Matthew 17:20

Why is faith so powerful? How can faith help us when we doubt?

Tuesday—Romans 10:17

How do we get faith?

Wednesday—Hebrews 11:1

In your life, do you find it's really possible to be sure of what you don't see? Is a person who doubts lacking in faith? Explain.

Thursday–John 5:24

Why is faith so important?

Friday–Jude 22

Why is it important to be merciful to those who doubt?

Saturday—1 Timothy 4:12

How can your faith be an example to others?

Talk Topics

DEEPER

- Talk about how doubt affects your relationship with God.
- Talk about why two people—only one of whom is a Christian—might totally disagree about how trustworthy God is.
- Share about a time you doubted God and his ability to keep a promise made in the Bible.
- Talk about an area where you're struggling to have faith right now. Ask someone to pray for you.



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