

STORY

Jesus Walks on the Sea - Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:15-21

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, our reason and our senses, the world and doubting friends, suggest many reasons to doubt Your Word and Promises. By Your Spirit, strengthen my faith and the faith of those whom I am about to teach about Your amazing power and will to help in time of need. Help us to walk confidently with faith in You over the troubled waters of life that we may come to You safely in the end. And if doubts threaten us, rescue us from them that we may firmly believe in Jesus our Savior who alone is able to deliver us from every evil of body and soul. In His name we pray, Amen.

VOCABULARY

Bethsaida - this town was on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee, a few miles north of Capernaum (see Rupprecht p. 194, 201).

Fourth watch of the night - using the Roman method of keeping time, this would be between three a.m. and six a.m.

Ghost - also in those times people were afraid of ghosts and spirits.

Boisterous - noisy and very turbulent or exuberant; of wind, flowing strongly and in various directions.

OUTER AIM

Jesus walked on water to help His disciples.

INNER AIM

Believe in Jesus without a doubt.

BACKGROUND

(Rupprecht Bible History References Vol.2, pp. 200-204)

This story follows immediately after Jesus fed the 5,000+ with 5 loaves and 2 fish. It reminds us that people, even with great proofs for their faith, might still doubt and need God to continue to strengthen their faith.

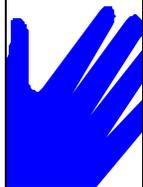
God wants us to believe in Him without doubting, for He alone can truly be trusted. Doubts are a sin against the 1st commandment because they reveal a lack of trust in God and instead, show trust in something else, whether it is our senses or someone other than God.

Matthew 14:22

- ▶ After Jesus had miraculously fed the thousands of people, they wanted to make Him their earthly king who would provide them with all their needs (John 6:15).
- ▶ To try to prevent that, Jesus sent everyone away.
- ▶ He sent the disciples by boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. In a boat, they wouldn't be coerced by the crowds who wanted to make Jesus a "Bread-King."
- ▶ Jesus sent the crowds away.
- ▶ A note on the destination: Mark 6:45 names their destination as Bethsaida while John 6:17 says they went toward Capernaum. The Bethsaida on the northwest side of the sea is a few miles north of Capernaum and the home of some of the disciples. The disciples could have been trying to visit their homes that night and then, the following day, plan to meet Jesus at Capernaum where He would be preaching next (John 6:24).

Matthew 14:23

- ▶ Jesus had much to pray about as He saw the people looking at Him, not as their Savior, but as their "bread king."



- ▶ He spent many hours alone in prayer on a mountain talking with His Father. He prayed into the evening, long after sunset.

v. 24

- ▶ The Sea of Galilee is about 40 miles across. On a good day, it wouldn't have taken the disciples a very long time to cross.
- ▶ A storm came up and the wind was against them. As their boat was tossed by the waves, they strained hard at the oars (Mark 6:48); in the hours of fighting the storm, they had gone only three to four miles (John 6:19).
- ▶ Jesus, on the land, saw the disciples caught in the storm. Jesus may or may not have needed to use His omniscience (all knowing ability) to see the disciples, depending on conditions which we don't know. We know only that He saw them. Mark 6:48.

v. 25

- ▶ Jesus waited until after three a.m. to come to His disciples. Then he did it in a miraculous way. He walked on the stormy water itself.
- ▶ As the Creator of all and divine Ruler over the laws of nature, He could command the water to support His human body.
- ▶ Mark tells us that He would have passed them by as a further test of their faith.

v. 26

- ▶ The disciples' reacted with fear and superstition. They thought that Jesus was a ghost and they cried out in fear as their reason grappled with what their senses told them.

v. 27

- ▶ Immediately Jesus speaks words of comfort, "Be of good cheer; it is I, do not be afraid." Literally: "Be courageous; I myself am, don't be afraid." The comforting voice of the Lord speaks through the storm to encourage them not to fear, for He is with them.

v. 28

- ▶ Peter responded with a bold request. "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to you upon the water." This might also be saying that Peter wouldn't believe unless He had proof. The others took Jesus at His Word.

v. 29

- ▶ Jesus' simple word of command calls Peter to trust Jesus to allow Him to walk safely across the violent sea.
- ▶ With a storm raging around him, Peter courageously stepped out of the boat and began to walk across the shifting sea toward Jesus.

v. 30

- ▶ Ah, but Peter took his eyes off the Lord and was overwhelmed by his reason and senses and questioned what his Lord had shown was possible.
- ▶ The strong wind blew making the waves rough. How could he, a mere human being, walk on water? In his fear and doubting, he began to sink as the grip of his faith relaxed its hold on the Lord's promise.
- ▶ Yet, he cried out to the Lord to save him as he began sinking.

v. 31

- ▶ Immediately, Jesus' hand caught Peter before he could drown.
- ▶ Jesus chided him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"
- ▶ Peter, bold at first, didn't remain strong in faith when put to the test. Peter's doubts had let him down, but the Lord would not have abandoned him if Peter had continued to trust in Jesus.

v. 32

- ▶ This was a night of miracles: not only did Jesus and Peter walk on stormy water, but as soon as Jesus and Peter entered the boat, the storm stilled and, as John says, immediately the boat reached the other shore.
- ▶ Not coincidence, but these miracles occurred as Jesus' continued to display His love and power to the disciples.

v. 33

- ▶ The disciples reacted with overwhelming amazement and wonder.
- ▶ As Mark says (6:52), their hearts had been hardened or dull, and they hadn't grasped the lesson from Jesus' feeding the thousands with the loaves. They didn't grasp that Jesus was God who could be trusted to take care of them. But these amazing miracles brought the message home to them (see Mark 8:17). Now, in faith, they welcomed and worshiped Jesus saying, "Truthfully, You are the Son of God."

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, Your Word calls us to believe in Your promises. Your Word gives us many examples of Your power to do the humanly impossible in order to help those who trust in You. Strengthen our faith in You and Your Son Jesus Christ our Savior, that we may firmly believe without doubting anything that You have told us and promised us. When we are afraid, remind us of Your protection; when You ask us to do difficult things, give us courage to step forward without doubts. And if doubts distract our faith, rescue us when we call for Your help. We pray with trust in You who spared not Your own Son but delivered Him up to be our Savior, knowing that You alone can be trusted in every need, Amen.

PRESENTATION

Briefly review the previous story as time allows. Make links to the new story when possible.

Tell the story: Teachers, be encouraged to tell the story in your own words while remaining faithful to the scriptural account. When scripture records the story in more than one place, you may want to harmonize the accounts (including extra details found in each account). Let the students know where they can find the additional details in the Bible.

Discuss the story: While reviewing the major events of the story, discuss the possible applications to the students' lives. Ask questions that make them think about the story and show that they understand the story.

For the activity, you will need to have supplies ready. See the student lesson for those materials.

APPLICATIONS

1. Jesus knew that the disciples' faith needed to be strengthened, for they did not see how much they could trust in Him to take care of them in times of trouble. He allowed them to experience the storm in order to show them that He was able to protect them. They learned that Jesus could do the humanly impossible to help them, such as walking on the stormy sea and stilling the sea at will. They also saw from Peter's example what happens when doubts overcome faith. Yet, they also saw that the Lord was quick to rescue Peter when he called for help as his doubts let him down. As their faith grasped these truths, they responded in worship of Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus wants us to have a strong, unwavering trust in Him as well. From this story and others and the promises of God's Word, we learn that we too can trust in

God confidently, despite the doubts that our senses, our reason, or other people will suggest against such faith. If we divert our eyes from God and His promises, we will sink. But if we start to sink, we know that Jesus' rescuing hand will bring us to safety. God is faithful to those who trust in Him.

2. Fear, worry, and doubt can replace faith. Faith is a firm trust and confidence in God and His Word. Why are fear, worry, and doubt sins against the first commandment? Why can't we always trust our senses, our reason, or sometimes, other people in matters of faith and life? (Sin prevents us from seeing how God can work in spite of how the situation may seem to us.) How do we know that we can trust in God even when our faith is being tested (Romans 8:31-39)? Discuss how Psalm 46 is an encouraging declaration of faith. See also James 1:6.
3. Jesus is able to protect His people from every danger. Consider examples from the Bible of how God protects His people from danger. Talk over with the children how God is able to take care of His dear children.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Psalms 50:15 - Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.

Middle any of the above and...

Psalm 46:1-3 - God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling.

Upper any of the above and...

Romans 8:31-32 - What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Romans 8:38-39 - For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

HYMN CHOICES

"Oh, For a Faith That Will Not Shrink" (TLH 396 1, 3, 6)

"If God Himself Be For Me" (TLH 528 1-3, choose more)

"Abide, O Dearest Jesus" (TLH 53)