

LESSON 4

June 27, 2021

Unit I. Jesus Teaches about Faith An Amazing Feat

DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 38:16-20

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Matthew 14:22-33

PRINT PASSAGE: Matthew 14:22-33

KEY VERSE

Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? (Matthew 14:31, KJV)

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Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14:31, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Recall the amazing story of the storm at sea followed by Jesus’ appearance walking on the water.
- Repent of your failure to trust in God when caught up in a crisis.
- Develop habits of trust that enable you to overcome your doubt about God’s care.

KEY TERMS

Constrained (verse 22)—Greek: *anagkazó* (an-ang-kad’-zo): necessitated; compelled; forced; urged; “made” (NIV).

Fourth watch of the night (verse 25)—Greek: *phulaké* (foo-lak-ay’): a watching, keeping guard; of the time (of night) during which guard was kept; “shortly before dawn” (NIV).

Pray (verse 23)—Greek: *proseuchomai* (pros-yoo’-khom-ahee): to pray to, pray for, offer prayer; to petition.

Take courage (verse 27)—Greek: *tharseó* (thar-seh’-o): to be of good courage; “be of good cheer” (KJV).

Walking (verse 26)—Greek: *peripateó* (per-ee-pat-eh’-o): to walk, tread; movement.

Waves (verse 24)—Greek: *kuma* (koo’-mah): surges; billows.

PREPARING THE LESSON

- Refer to the *Townsend Press SS Commentary Teacher’s Edition* for an additional lesson plan—with word studies, insights on teaching adults, learner matrices, etc.
- Review last week’s student assignments (“Your Life” and Your World!”).
- Thoroughly review your student book for your adult or young adult class.

- Please note that you have the option of using your subscription bundle supplements, i.e., Lesson Scenario, Student Activity Sheet, SSL-AAG.

WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS

In the depths of crises, people are often caught between trust and doubt. How can believers be confident that help will come when they need it most? Jesus, by walking on water to save His disciples, demonstrated His divine authority as the Savior of all.

THE LESSON IN FOCUS

The call to a life of adventure has echoed in the spirit of many throughout the ages. From the crawling infant's curiosity about navigating the stairs alone, to a grown man's compelling need to test the speed of a new sports car, many have taken unwarranted risks in the daring quest for adventure. Some would say that the bigger the risk, the greater the reward. However, along life's way, we have learned the hard way that not all adventures are equally rewarding. We may start off with zeal on a risky but worthy venture, only to lose heart later as the difficulty of the task begins permeating our reality. No one expects that their adventure will end as a rescue mission in which they are the ones who need saving. Sometimes, we invite hardship and misfortune by making bad decisions. At other times, we fall victim to people who are strangers, or those who claim to love us but do us harm. Some troubles, like flash floods, show up unexpectedly to do us harm. Most of us, with honest reflection, have at some point needed someone to save us from a bad situation. Desperate people are not often choosy, but they usually hope that the one who comes to save them will be qualified to do the job.

THE LESSON IN CONTEXT

The storm rescue in Matthew 14 is the second recorded occasion of Jesus' rescuing His disciples from a potential boating disaster on the Sea of Galilee. The first rescue was during a violent storm that threatened to sink the boat (see Matthew 8:23-27 and lesson 2 in this unit). Mark's account (see Mark 6:45-53) of the second rescue is more focused on the disciples' lack of understanding than Peter's lack of faith. Mark's gospel confirmed the body of water as the Sea of Galilee, located north of Jerusalem. Matthew's version of the story notes the disciples' utter amazement concerning what manner of man Jesus was (see Matthew 8). In Matthew 14, it is only when Peter is restored to the other disciples on the boat that the wind and water became calm and all of them together worshipped Jesus and declared Him to be the Son of God (verse 32). What might this detail reveal about the nature, faith, and witness of the church? By walking on water, Jesus transcended the laws of gravity. By faith and his own request of Jesus, Peter was able to step out of the boat and defy the laws of gravity. Jesus chided Peter for a lack of faith, but it did not prevent Him from giving Peter immediate assistance when he cried out for help. Peter and his brother, Andrew, were the first disciples called by Jesus (see Mark 1:16-17). Peter is known for his impulsive, headstrong, and somewhat forceful personality. Jesus had great confidence in Peter and chose him as a part of His own inner circle. Whether they realized it or not, the episodes at sea allowed the trio to have more intimate exposure to Jesus' spiritual work (see Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 5:35-43; 14:33-42).

OPENING INQUIRY

(Choose from the questions below.)

1. Share a time when you doubted God's willingness to deliver you.
2. What were the circumstances surrounding your doubt?

3. Did you overcome the doubt and fear? If so how? If not, why, and what did you learn in either case?

INSIGHTS

Believers may often feel alone during times of struggle. In spite of the struggle, however, true believers know that the Lord is never far away when we call Him. Knowing this does not immediately (nor always) cast the fear out of our lives. Sometimes, God allows fearful times and opportunities to help us grow in faith in Jesus. As Christians, we desire to participate in adventures of faith, trusting that God will be with us even when our faith falters. In challenging situations, the assurance of the Lord's constant presence with us can build our faith and encourage our hearts (see Matthew 28:20).

EXPLORATION

Through every storm we face, we must trust in God. No matter how strong the storm, God is stronger. By faith, we know that God sees our circumstances and hears our cries (see Psalm 34:15). Therefore, we trust Him completely, even when divine intervention is not immediate.

ADDITIONAL EXPOSITORY INSIGHTS FOR THE TEACHER

Commentary on Matthew 14:22-24

KJV

22 And straightway Jesus *constrained* his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to *pray*: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with *waves*: for the wind was contrary.

NIV

22 Immediately Jesus *made* the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to *pray*. Later that night, he was there alone,

24 and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the *waves* because the wind was against it.
the wind was against it.

Jesus sent the disciples on the way and returned to dismiss the crowd before spending time in prayer. The mountain area where Jesus retreated for prayer was a secluded place, apart from the distractions of the clamoring crowd and His own disciples. For Jesus, prayer was a habit and a priority. The Gospels record that He spent much time in prayer, seeking the Father for direction and strength for His ministry. From this mountain Jesus could observe the disciples in their boat (see Mark 6:48). Knowing all things, Jesus knew that the disciples were struggling desperately against the wind to navigate back to the other side of the lake. After they had struggled for hours, Jesus came toward the disciples, very late at night, walking on the water. Matthew 14:24

indicates that the boat was a considerable distance from the shore, estimated by John 6:19 to be nearly halfway across the width of the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is a freshwater lake that is about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide (see Luke 5:1). Much of Jesus' ministry occurred in this area. A typical boat for the time would have been about 27 feet long and 7.5 feet wide at the widest point. It would have been just about right for twelve men and could be propelled across the water by oars, a sail, or both. While the disciples had faith and trust in Jesus, the reality is that they were overwhelmed by the necessity and challenge of trying to navigate their boat when the wind was against them.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:** Have you ever had a “storm” to appear in your life just after having a miraculous experience with Jesus? Share.
- **Young Adult Question:** We cannot afford to wait until we find a free moment—we must give God priority by intentionally making time for spiritual solitude. How important is it for Christians to spend time with God?

Commentary on Matthew 14:25-30

KJV

25 And in the *fourth watch* of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, *Be of good cheer*; it is I; be not afraid.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

NIV

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.

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. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

The fourth watch of the night is the time from three to six in the morning, just before the break of day. The men had been rowing since sometime that late afternoon, approaching the evening, and were nearing exhaustion. Rough seas and head winds prevented their progress of advancing to their goal of reaching the other side. Although the disciples had already witnessed Jesus' power over a storm (see Matthew 8:23-27), this time He was not in the boat. The lesson for them (and us) is that God's power is able to sustain His children in every appointed task, whether He is visibly

present or not. In walking on the water, Jesus revealed that He is not only the Master of the wind and the waves, but also Master of natural laws—specifically, gravity. Although Sir Isaac Newton had not discovered and named the concept we know as gravity, its force was still in full effect. The frantic disciples yielded to fear and superstition, believing Jesus to be a specter or ghost. Perhaps they thought it might be a warning of death for them. On this dark and stormy night, the sound of a familiar voice brought comfort when sight alone had failed. The account of Peter’s walking on water is only recorded in Matthew. True to his impulsive nature, Peter asked Jesus to allow him to walk on the water and join Him. This request shows Peter’s bold, willing spirit as well as the limitations of his faith.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:** Sometimes, we do not recognize the Lord when He shows up to bless us. Share a time when you initially questioned or rejected what turned out to be a blessing in disguise.
- **Young Adult Question:** Think about a time when you felt unusually frightened but later discovered there was no reason to fear. Explain.

Commentary on Matthew 14:31-33

KJV

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

NIV

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.”

Jesus displayed another dimension of His supernatural power as He stretched out His hand to rescue the sinking Peter. In allowing Peter to walk, Jesus had illustrated the power of placing complete faith in Him. Those who place their complete trust in Jesus find that faith is enough to enable every appointed task of God. Jesus and Peter walked back to the ship amid the storm. The winds ceased when they got into the boat. At that moment, the other disciples came to Jesus and worshipped Him. The phrase “Thou art the Son of God” is equivalent to the Divine Deliverer, the Messiah, or the Christ. Although such an identification had been made earlier by the disciples (see John 1:41, 49), there was an ever-increasing realization by the Twelve of what this phrase meant. Notice that Jesus did not calm the storm to rescue Peter. Instead, He saved Peter in the midst of the storm. The storm continues as Peter walks on water to Jesus. It is the storm that distracts Peter. With Jesus’ help, Peter regains his footing and is able to walk back to the boat with Jesus, through the storm. Jesus does not always rescue us from the storm, but by faith He can keep us through the storm.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:** When doubt hits (and it does and will), what do/ will you do?
- **Young Adult Questions:** When you step outside your comfort zone, are you more likely to trust God or yourself? Peter stepped out of the boat. Share a time when you have trusted God and stepped out into the unfamiliar.

LIFE APPLICATION

Refer to Adult Book (See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

—This week, reflect on those things God has called you to do. Identify your greatest fears and present them to God. Develop a plan to stay focused on God's plan for your life. This may include consistent Bible readings, prayer time, and sharing with others.

(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)

—This week, identify someone who could use a word of encouragement or pat on the back. Sometimes, people are hesitant to share their struggles. Without pushing or probing, reach out to strengthen someone with a gesture of kindness or an uplifting word. Instead of being preoccupied with your own needs and problems, step outside the box to encourage someone else.

Refer to Young Adult Book (See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

—Jesus spent time alone in solitude with God, and so should you. Often, the pressures of life and the demands of work, church, and community service, as well as ministering to family and friends, can be draining. Sooner or later, those who keep pouring out without being replenished will experience burnout. You need time alone with God; make it a priority.

(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)

—The storm is coming. One way to prepare for life's inevitable troubles is to begin building a stronger relationship with God so that, when the storm comes, you will not doubt the strength of His hand to save you. Share this message with others.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

The lesson topic for Sunday, July 4, 2021, is "Expressing Thanks." The Devotional Reading is Isaiah 56:1-8, the Background Scriptures are Leviticus 13-14; Luke 5:12-16; 17:11-19, and the Printed Text is Leviticus 13:45-46; Luke 17:11-19.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, help our unbelief. While we proclaim boldness in our confidence in You, we acknowledge that there are moments when we lose our focus. Help us to remain focused on You, for You are our never-failing help. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

An Attitude of Gratitude (June 28–July 4, 2021)

MONDAY, June 28	“God Welcomes Foreigners”	(Isaiah 56:1-8)
TUESDAY, June 29	“Naomi’s Sorrow Turns to Joy”	(Ruth 4:3-6,13-15)
WEDNESDAY, June 30	“Symptoms and Treatment of Leprosy”	(Leviticus 13:1-8)
THURSDAY, July 1	“Lepers Share Their Good News”	(2 Kings 7:3-11)
FRIDAY, July 2	“Many Samaritans Believe in the Savior”	(John 4:39-42)
SATURDAY, July 3	“Doing What Needs to Be Done”	(Luke 17:1-10)
SUNDAY, July 4	“Cultivate Gratefulness for Acts of Healing”	(Leviticus 13:45-56; Luke 17:11-19)