Jesus Walks on Water



Scripture Reference: Matthew 14:22-33

Suggested Theme: Look to Jesus and have faith in him. He will help us in our lives.

Memory Verse: "'Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads. I will give you rest.'" Matthew 11:28 ICB

Story Overview:

Jesus wanted to spend some time alone in prayer, so He told His disciples to go ahead of Him and take the boat to the other side of the lake. The disciples were caught in a storm in the middle of the night. They looked over and saw Jesus walking towards them on the water! The disciples thought they were seeing a ghost. Jesus asked Peter to walk out to him, so Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water too. When Peter began looking at the waves instead of Jesus, he began to sink. Jesus saved him.

Background Study:

You can also read this story in Mark 6:45-51 and John 6:15-21. It is interesting and helpful to put all three accounts together. Matthew is the only one who records that Peter got out and walked to Jesus. Mark records that Jesus stood on the shore and could see the disciples straining at the oars even though they were 5 kilometres out and it was dark. He also mentions that Jesus was actually about to pass it by when the disciples saw him.

According to Roman calculation, the night's fourth, or last, watch (verse 25) would have been between 3-6 a.m. The disciples were out on the lake without Jesus because He had sent them ahead so He could go onto the mountainside to pray. He stood with the crowd of 5000 and watched the disciples row away before dismissing them and going to be alone. Perhaps Jesus wanted to pray about the loss of his cousin John who had just been beheaded (Mathew 14:1-13).

Mark 6:52 records that the disciples still did not understand what happened earlier when Jesus fed the 5000. Sometimes reality is harder to believe than fiction. When they saw Jesus walking on the water, they began thinking of the day's superstition. Many Jews at that time believed that the appearance of a spirit during the night brought disaster.

When they heard the voice of Jesus Peter called out for confirmation. He wanted to make sure it was Jesus, so he gave him a test. "If it's you, tell me to come to you." He must have been shocked when Jesus actually said, "Come."

Many writers have commented on Peter's walk on water. Some have talked about his lack of faith, which resulted in his beginning to sink. Others have mentioned how he took his eyes off Jesus. Whatever we have to say about Peter, remember that Peter was the only one who actually got out of the boat and stepped into

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the waves. Also, he knew the right person to call out to when he began to sink. He didn't ask the other disciples to throw him a line. He asked Jesus to save him. Jesus asked Peter why he doubted. But remember, Peter seemed to have more faith than anyone else on the boat that night.

Who do we put our faith in? Is it our family or our friends? Do we hold the church or church leaders responsible when we fall? Who do we look to for salvation?

Other verses about the power of God over the sea: Psalm 89:9; Isaiah 51:10,15; Jeremiah 31:35

Way to Introduce the Story:

Ask how many of the children know how to swim. Spend some time talking about the fun that you have had in the water. Can anyone float? How do you float? Can anyone float on your back? Stomach? Knees? Can anyone float in the water standing up? Of course not! But someone in today's story could stand up and walk on top of the water.

The Story:

Jesus and his disciples had been around crowds of people for a long time. Now Jesus wanted to spend a little time alone so He could pray. In the evening, He told his disciples to get in the boat and row over to the other side of the lake (which is called the Sea of Galilee). The disciples set out in the boat, and Jesus went up to the mountainside to pray.

The water in the lake was rough. The disciples had to row very hard. Between 3 and 6 o'clock in the morning, they had only rowed to the middle of the lake. Jesus had finished praying, and He looked out on the lake and saw them trying to row. (It was amazing that Jesus could see four or five kilometres out in the lake even though it was dark).

Jesus began walking out on the water as if it was dry land. He did not swim or tread water. He just walked on top of the water but did not sink. What do you think the disciples thought when they watched him walking by?

You guessed it. The disciples were very afraid. They did not think it was Jesus walking by. They thought it was a ghost floating by. They began to scream.

When Jesus heard them, He called out to his friends, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."
Peter couldn't believe his ears. That didn't sound like a ghost. That sounded like Jesus. Maybe it was a trick. Peter decided to test the ghost.
"Lord, if it's you," Peter called out, "tell me to come to you on the water."

Then he heard Jesus' voice, "COME."

Peter got out of the boat and began walking toward Jesus. He was walking on the water just like Jesus was. Then Peter started looking around and noticing all of the waves and wind. He stopped thinking about Jesus and started thinking about the water. Then Peter began to sink into the water.

He yelled out to Jesus, "Lord, save me."

Jesus reached down and caught Peter. "Peter," He said, "why did you start doubting me? You should always have faith in me."

Then Peter and Jesus stepped into the boat, and the storm immediately died down. Everyone in the boat worshipped Jesus. They knew it was very important to always have faith in Jesus.

Do you have faith in Jesus?

top

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

View this slideshow and download it from the original source:
https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/jesus-water/

top

Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- Why was Jesus not in the boat with the disciples? (He wanted to pray alone)
- When the disciples first saw Jesus walking to their boat on the water, what did they think they were seeing? (A ghost)
- What did Jesus say to the disciples when they saw Him? (Take courage, it is I)
- What did Jesus tell Peter to do? (Come to Jesus on the water)
- Who walked on the water to meet Jesus? (Peter)
- Was Peter able to walk on the water? (Yes)
- While walking on the water towards Jesus, when did Peter begin to sink? (When he looked at the waves instead of Jesus)
- What happened to Peter when he began to sink? (He cried out for Jesus to save him, and Jesus did)
- What did you learn about God from this story? What did you learn about Jesus from this story?
- What did you learn about people from this story?

Reflection:

- Why do you think Jesus was walking on the water?
- How do you think Peter felt when he first walked on water?
- If you were one of the disciples, would you have gotten out of the boat and walked to Jesus on the water? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Peter started looking at the waves instead of Jesus?
- If you were walking on water, what would you be thinking about?

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- Who do you know that trusts Jesus a lot?
- Is there something very hard you're going through right now? How can you keep your eyes on Jesus instead of the waves- how can you stay focused on Jesus?
- Peter asked Jesus to save him when he was in trouble. What do you need to ask Jesus to save you from? What do you want His help with? (Suggestion: pray for these things together or have individual prayer time)
- What is something you wonder about in this story?
- What part of this story do you find most interesting?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a lifelong friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- Sea of Galilee Song
- He's Still Working on Me Song
- J-E-S-U-S Song
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

top

Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- Before you gather, half-fill two clear drinking glasses with water. Stir three tablespoons of salt into one of the glasses. Label the salted water "faith" and the plain water "doubt." Draw a face on an egg to use for this activity. Review the story and talk about what would happen if you tried to walk on water. As you do this, gently drop the egg into the "doubt" water and watch it sink. Then talk about how Jesus walked on water while you dropped the egg in the "faith" water. The egg should float. Continue to tell the story showing how Peter floated (faith glass) and then sank (doubt glass). Then describe some real-life situations that the children might face and let them place the egg in the "faith" or "doubt" glass according to how they would act. Practice this at home first!
- Small children will like using large boxes to make a "boat." Everyone can sit inside the boat as you tell the story. You can call out "row" and bounce around in the waves. Be sure and be very afraid when you think you see a ghost!

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- Outing: Gather at the beach or at a pool and “practice” walking on water before telling the story. Try some of the magician’s tricks to make it appear people are walking on water. Refer to this fun video for ideas: https://youtu.be/31pp22ETjx4
- Use a water bowl and experiment to see which items float and which sink.
- Snack: Make blue jelly (Jello gelatin) in a clear glass or cup to represent water. As you explain the story, have the children place a chocolate on top to represent a boat. On top, two jellybeans or small lollies (candies) can represent Jesus and Peter.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- Make a boat from paper or a cardboard box.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

top

Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page and worksheets about Jesus walking on water (Calvary Curriculum)
- Colouring page (Sermon 4 kids)
- Craft: Illustrated instructions to make a paper boat (Kirsty McAllister)
- Craft: Papercraft (DLTK)
- Craft: Food craft using jello(jelly) (DLTK)
- A number of different activities (Sermon 4 kids)
- Printable, Maze (DLTK)
- Printable, Puzzle page (Sermon 4 kids)
- Children’s sermon (Children’s sermon)
- Snack idea (Proverbial homemaker)
- Another snack idea (Bible school teachers)
- The Youtube clip shows various ways to make it appear that people are walking on water. One is a scaled-down version you could try is a paper doll person floating across the water.

top

Date

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