

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, August 7-13 (A) - Matthew 14:22-33

Tips of Discipleship: *Trust in Christ*

Focus Question: *When have you needed to place the most trust in Christ?*

word *of life*

"Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Matthew 14:31 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 14:22-33

It has been quite a day for Jesus as described in Matthew 14. After he learns of the death of his cousin John the Baptist, Jesus heads to a deserted place only to be interrupted by the thousands who gather to follow him. Jesus responds with compassion by healing and feeding them. On that day, thousands are fed with five loaves and two fish. (See Matthew 14:1-21) Afterwards, Jesus desires to return to a time of prayer and solitude, so he sends his disciples ahead of him.

1. *What role does prayer have in the daily life of Jesus?*
2. *How might prayer and solitude help Jesus to cope with the stresses of his ministry?*

It is easy to picture the disciple's boat far from shore, battered by the waves. It is a bit more difficult to imagine Jesus actually walking on the water to reach the boat. Certainly, the disciples in the boat are not expecting to see their teacher walk to them on top of the water. They are terrified, believing him to be a ghost. Describe how you imagine that night when Jesus walked on water. Some suggest Jesus only walked in the shallow part of the water and not on it.

3. *How would you respond to someone who doubted Jesus actually walked on water?*
4. *How essential is it to believe that Jesus walked on water?*

To reassure the disciples Jesus says, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." (Matthew 14:27 NRSV) Those are simple enough words. Yet some scholars put emphasis on the phrase, "It is I" as the same formula used in Exodus 3:14 when God replied to Moses, "I am who I am." If that is the case, instead of reassuring the disciples, that phrase might have caused more fear because Jesus would be claiming to be God. Other scholars reject that, suggesting Jesus is identifying himself in a traditional way.

Bold Peter wants to join Jesus with his walk on water. When Jesus consents, Peter jumps on the water, walks a bit, then becomes frightened by the storm and sinks while crying, "Lord, save me." Jesus does just that - he grabs Peter and returns him to safety.

5. *What possesses Peter to walk on water?*
6. *What prevents Peter from walking further?*
7. *What can we learn about faith from this story?*

Jesus chastises Peter for doubting and not trusting in the power of Jesus to keep him safe. Take a moment to reflect on the awesome power of God to work in Jesus in such a way Jesus can walk on water, empower others to do the same, and still a storm. Take time to ponder how Jesus might work in our lives to do the impossible, use us to support others, and still the storms in our lives.

8. *What is the message from this passage?*
9. *How does this story inspire trust?*

word among us

I grew up in a large church with a seating capacity in the sanctuary for at least 800 people. An impressive balcony wraps around the sanctuary and helps draw your eye to the stained glass window on the west wall. In that window there is an image of a life-size Jesus standing beside a boat and on top of water. His hands are stretched out to a man with a white beard who is waist deep in the water.

As a young child, I would look at that window and wonder what that white-hair, fully-clothed man was doing in the water. As I got older, I learned the story of Peter attempting to walk on water, but losing the faith in Jesus to sustain the walk, he sinks and is rescued by Jesus.

1. *Why might this story have been selected to be placed in a church window?*
2. *What is the primary message of this story?*

Poor Peter. On the one hand, his bold and confident attitude is refreshing. Or is it foolish? One minute he seems like a saint who has the ability to confess his faith in Jesus, but then he puts his foot in his mouth. He is able to jump out on the water, only to doubt with the first gust of wind. At least, he knows to turn to Jesus in his hour of need and pray, "Lord, save me."

3. *How would you describe Peter?*
4. *Can you relate to Peter? How so?*

When a dripping wet Peter and Jesus get back into the boat, the winds cease. The disciples in the boat are filled with awe and worship Jesus. In one day, these disciples witness Jesus feeding of thousands, walking on water, and stilling the storm. What more might Jesus have in store?

5. *What might the other disciples have said to Peter once he was back in the boat?*
6. *Why would the other disciples not try to walk on water?*

Imagine yourself in the story. In your mind, try to see the boat and water. Try to experience the fragrance of the water and feel the breeze.

7. *Where do you find yourself in the story?*
8. *Would you be like Peter and jump out to walk on the water? Why or why not?*
9. *If so, how long would your trust in Jesus sustain you on your walk on water?*

Matthew's Gospel is the only one to record the story of Peter walking on water. It is a story which fits with Matthew's overall theme of discipleship. Peter has enough trust to walk on water, but not enough to sustain the walk. Take a moment to connect this story with your own faith journey.

10. *Share a story when you were like Peter and boldly acted in faith.*
11. *Share a time when you doubted and called upon Jesus to rescue you?*
12. *What do you hope you remember from this story?*

Prayer

Lord, we join Peter's prayer and cry, "Lord, save me." Amen

Dig Deeper

Romans 10:5-15

last word

Find a time this week to "walk on water"
and boldly act in faith.

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Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

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