



John (So That You Might Believe) (Week 6/12) Walking on Water

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect: *How do you keep 'feeding on Jesus' every day as you seek to live for him?*

Warm-Up

1. What is the worst condition you've ever experienced on a boat?

Read John 6:16-19

2. What has happened this day *already*? (Hint read John 6:1-14)
3. Read verse 15. Why is Jesus withdrawing from the crowds? Where do the disciples go?
4. What are the conditions like on the water? What experience do the disciples have in handling this? How do the disciples react to the storm?
5. What would worry you most about this situation?
6. What are the disciples frightened of? *Why* would they be more frightened of Jesus than the storm?
7. Do you ever find Jesus frightening? Do you ever find God frightening? When are you more likely to be apprehensive or afraid of God?
8. How does Jesus walking on water point to his identity as God? What important events does it echo?
9. How should we respond to God's holiness?

Read John 6:20-21

10. In response to their fear, what does Jesus tell the disciples?
11. How do you normally feel when someone tells you to *not be afraid*?
12. Why is their fear a right reaction to who Jesus is?
13. Read Genesis 15:1, Genesis 26:24, and Isaiah 41:10. What is the reason given to not be afraid?
14. Have you ever felt distant or far from God? Why don't we need to be afraid in Jesus' presence?
15. How is it possible we can be in God's presence? How does God overcome the gap between our lives and his holiness?
16. What does Jesus' statement 'It is I' echo? How does it reveal who Jesus is?
17. How do the disciples respond to Jesus? How can we respond like the disciples?
18. What might get in the way of responding like the disciples?
19. What happens immediately after the disciples welcome Jesus?
20. How can Jesus walking on water, give us confidence of God's presence with us?

Apply *What reminds you each day that Jesus is with you and wants to be with you?*

Pray *Heavenly Father, thank you for drawing close to us in Jesus. Please Lord, help us not to be deluded to think we can manage our sin and brokenness on our own, but help us believe in Jesus, be ready to welcome him with joy, and find peace in his presence. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

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Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Front Line this Week

Who is someone God is laying on your heart at the moment? Look for small ways to show them God's love.

For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* “The Terrifying Jesus” by Tim Keller:
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/the-terrifying-jesus/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Anxiety to Assurance” by David Turner:
https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=50458&show_file=54117
- *Listen (sermon):* “Walking on the Sea” by Dick Lucas:
<https://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/1968/>

Series Resources

- *Read:* “John: An Expository Commentary” by R C Sproul.
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Don Carson.
- *Read:* “The Message of John” by Bruce Milne. 
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Leon Morris.
- *Read:* “John for Everyone: Part 1” by Tom Wright. 
- *Read:* “Can We Trust the Gospels?” by Peter Williams. 
- *Read:* “Signs of the Messiah: An Introduction to John’s Gospel” by Andreas Köstenberger
- *Watch:* “John” by the Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-john/>
- *Previous Series* from St Bart’s (including Children’s Resources):
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/jesus-is>
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/i-am>
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/truth-glory>

 Available to borrow from the St Bart’s Library (Toowoomba): stbarts.com.au/library

JOHN (SO THAT YOU MIGHT BELIEVE)

Week 6/12 “Walking on Water”

by Amy Norman (08/03/2026)

물 위를 걸으심 | Cäth nē Piu nhiim | 水上行走 | கடலின் மேல் நடத்தல்

Bible Passage: John 6:16-21

*Gracious Father, thank you for all the ways you've revealed your Son to us.
May your Spirit prepare our hearts and minds to welcome him.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

- Jesus has just fed the 5000 in a remote place.
The disciples and Jesus had really gone there to get away from the crowds, for time alone, but the crowds followed them, searching for Jesus.
- When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them.
He taught them, he healed them, and he fed them.
- But rather than just thanking Jesus for dinner,
the crowd decided they wanted to make him king *by force*.
- But Jesus' hour has not yet come. So he leaves the crowd.
As the night approaches, strangely Jesus and the disciples head in opposite directions.
Jesus heads to the mountain.
But the disciples get in the boat, and head towards Capernaum.
- The disciples were probably hoping this time to be alone *with Jesus*,
but instead they are alone in a boat *without Jesus*.

- Jesus walking on water might be a very familiar story!
But as we slow it down, it helps us to see Jesus more clearly,
so that we might recognise and respond to him.
- So let's step it through in three parts: **The Storm; The Call to Not Be Afraid; The Reason.**

THE STORM | VERSES 16-19

폭풍 | Puət də Yöm | 风暴 | பெருங்காற்று/புயல்

First, let's have a look at **the storm**. *Verse 16 ...*

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. *John 6:16-19*

- It is dark, a strong wind is blowing, and the waters are growing rough.
- This was a pretty common occurrence on the Sea of Galilee.
Even though it called a lake here, it is pretty large:
about 21 km north to south, and 11km east to west.
- One of the known and unique features of this lake is just how *quickly* storms could arise.
- This storm is not surprising.
In fact many of the disciples have spent their entire lives as fishermen *on this lake*.
They know the conditions, it would seem all within their control.
- At this point, they've rowed 4-6 km. They are in the middle of the lake at night, all alone.
- Jesus isn't there!

3

- We're not really told how they feel about the whole situation.
And we don't really know *how* they expect Jesus is going to reach to them
on the water, at night, in a storm, when there are no other boats available
(let alone the time and effort it has taken for them to get to this point).
- It's not like the disciples had 'find my friends' to just look up Jesus' location.
And equally they couldn't tell anyone else where they were, if things went really bad.
The shore (and anyone else) was a long way off.
- If I was there, I'd be feeling pretty apprehensive.
But the disciples - at this stage - seem to be calm.
At least we are not told they are worried.
A storm is raging, but these are conditions they know how to manage.
It might have appeared suddenly and ferociously, but they know what to do.
- It seems they are only scared by what happens next. *When Jesus shows up!*
Verse 19 ...

When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. *verse 19*

- It doesn't seem to be the storm, the wind, the dark, or the waves which are frightening,
they are scared of Jesus!

4

- In fact in the other gospels, Matthew says the disciples *thought* they saw a ghost!
How else do they explain what they are seeing!
It would be easier to make sense of a Jesus-like ghost walking on water,
than the very *man* Jesus who they left on the other side of the lake.
- But as they're about to find out *this is no ghost*,
but the reality is more mind boggling than they first imagine. /
- At first glance, the disciple's fear is surprising.
If anyone knows Jesus - it's the disciples.
They've had a front row seat to the incredible things he has done.
They've tasted the wine Jesus turned from water.
They've been there as Jesus has healed the sick with just a word.
They've eaten the bread that Jesus multiplied.
- *But this sign*, Jesus walking on the water - terrifies them!
- It scares them because the sign points to the gravity of *who* Jesus is.
- All through their childhood, as they grew up as adults,
the disciples would have recalled again and again the events
when God rescued and formed his people.

5

- They would have recalled the Exodus,
the time in history where the Lord parted the Red Sea and parted the Jordan River
to rescue his people from Egypt and bring them to the promised land.
- They know there is only one who can command the waves and the sea, God himself.
- And now, as Jesus walks towards them, is that who they are looking at?!
Is the man walking towards them (on water) also God?!
No wonder they are scared.
- At one level, coming face to face with the all powerful and holy God *should* provoke fear.
- The disciples (and all God's people) *knew* it was dangerous to come face to face with God.
God is holy. He is both different from all creation and perfectly pure and good.
The problem is that God is holy, and we are not.
There is a big gap between his perfection and our sin.
- That's why, in order for the Holy God to be with his people,
he gave a detailed system of sacrifice and atonement for sin,
that protected the people and enabled them to be close to God.
- But even with all these sacrifices,
only one person, once a year, in one place could approach God.
Sin was still a problem!

6

- When the high priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, it *still* wasn't face to face!
- Our sin is still a problem compared with God's holiness. Even on our very best day, we know we still do or think things that are *not* perfectly good.
- We can all think of scenarios that we would be a bit embarrassed or even scared, if Jesus showed up.
- If he saw some of the thoughts we have, appeared in a heated moment, or just in a part of our life we've sealed away from him.
- But of course God knows our thoughts, he knows our desires, and sees all parts of our life.
- There is a big gap between God's holiness and our lives. And we should be scared of judgement because of our sin.
- For the disciples coming face-to-face with Jesus (as they thought they knew him) didn't cause them to be afraid, but perhaps realising they were coming face-to-face with God did.

7

THE CALL TO NOT BE AFRAID | VERSES 20-21

두려워하지 말라는 부르심 | Duokë Riöc, ëë yä | 不要害怕的呼唤 | பயப்படாமல் இருக்க அழைப்பு

But Jesus tells them **not to be afraid**. Verse 20...

But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading. verses 20-21

- Jesus can see that the disciples are scared, so he calls out to them "Don't be afraid."
- Telling someone to not be afraid when they are clearly terrified, is normally *not very helpful!*
- If someone says that to me, when I'm really frightened, it does not make *anything better!* I can feel like they don't really *care* about how I'm feeling, or are not *interested* in the reason why I'm scared. It can feel like they are underestimating the whole situation and questioning my assessment of it. And ultimately their words can't change the situation.
- But Jesus, he *does* care why the disciples are afraid, and their fear *does* point to danger.

8

- They are watching Jesus walk on water!
It is a sign of *all the* power he holds. Power that has *never* been seen in a person before.
Their fear is not imagined or an over-reaction.
It is a right reaction to who Jesus is.
- In the *Chronicles of Narnia*, the hero of the story is Aslan the Lion.
In many different ways through his character and actions,
the author C.S. Lewis depicts Aslan like Jesus.
- At the beginning of the story the children are trying to understand who Aslan the Lion really is, and *if* they should be afraid of him.

[Susan asks]: Is he—quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.”

“That you will, dearie, and no mistake,” said Mrs. Beaver; “if there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than most or else just silly.”

“Then he isn’t safe?” said Lucy.

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver; “don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? ’Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

9

- Jesus said to them, “It is I; don’t be afraid.”
When he said this, immediately the disciples welcome him.
- But why? How do they go from being terrified to welcoming him - just like that?!
How can Jesus’ words transform their fear?
- The call to *not be afraid* is not new.
It is the invitation and assurance God has offered again and again,
as he has drawn close to his people.
 - To Abram the Lord said “Do not be afraid, Abram.
I am your shield, your very great reward.” (Genesis 15:1)
 - To Isaac the Lord appeared and said
“Do not be afraid, for I am with you.” (Genesis 26:24)
 - To the exiles in Babylon the Lord sent the message
“... do not fear, for I am with you” (Isaiah 41:10)
- The call to not be afraid is *paired* with the presence of God,
and is *grounded* in *who* God is.
That is why the disciples can move from *fear* to *welcoming* him.
- The dissipation of their fear is grounded
in the identity of the one who is with them. >

10

- We can often feel scared of coming close to God, maybe because we think God can't stand us, that he could never love us, or that he is just waiting for the opportunity to get rid of us.
- But the testimony of the Bible, in fact the very life, witness, and word of Jesus is the opposite. His holiness doesn't cause him to run away from us, but to come to us!
- Even though there is a vast chasm between us and God, God by his grace has found a way to bridge it. To be with us, to be close to us. It's not our doing. It is his doing.
- He doesn't say don't be afraid because there is nothing wrong. He says "It is I, don't be afraid."
- Maybe right now you're in the thick of something, you feel distant from God (or you have for awhile). Maybe you even feel apprehensive about God. But you don't need to be. Not because of who you are, or how your actions have measured up. You don't need to fear because of *who* Jesus is. Because the one who draws close, "It is I" is the one we need, who has loved us, and sought us out first.

11

THE REASON | VERSES 20-21

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Finally, **the reason** why the disciples are not to be afraid is because of *who* is with them.
Verse 20 again ...

But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." *verses 20*

- It is interesting that Matthew focuses on Peter's response of faith, Mark focuses on the the disciples hardened hearts, but John focuses on how Jesus reveals himself.
- When Jesus says "It is I" it has echoes of God's identification as the "I am". Before this, Jesus has explained how he does the same work as the Father. The next day in fact, Jesus will explain how he has been sent by the Father to do his will.
- Jesus is not merely a son, but he is *the* Son of God. His work is in perfect alignment with the will of the Father. The one standing on the water before them *reflects* the power of God, for he is God.
- Jesus is not just anyone, he is the Son of God, given authority to judge everyone.

12

- We can't stand in the presence of the holy without judgement.
- And yet folded into Jesus' invitation *to not be afraid*,
is the beautiful implication that God *has made a way* to deal with our sin
so that we can be in his presence without fear. //
- At this point, the disciples didn't know *the reasons why* they could be in Jesus' presence.
They just responded to his invitation - *do not be afraid*.
- Maybe you're not yet a Christian, but you're intrigued by Jesus.
The invitation to *not be afraid* is for everyone.
Jesus doesn't first ask for perfect understanding of all he has done,
but coming to him simply requires *recognition* of who he is,
and loving him as your Lord.
- I can imagine how this whole experience shaped how they understood him.
Seeing him on water, coming to them in the dark,
was a sign of who he really is and his heart to come to them.
- And it is a sign for us too.
- He has come into the thickest storm we'll ever face - of sin and evil.
And he didn't just come to us *during* the storm,
helping us withstand the effects of our sin.

13

But has gone further, he has taken our sin on himself on the cross.

- Sometimes we're blind to the fact that there is even a storm going on. *But Jesus isn't*.
- We can approach him with great confidence, with no fear,
Solely on the basis of *who* he is and *what* he has done for us.

14

CONCLUSION

Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading. *verse 21*

- The disciples have gone from the middle of the lake, and with Jesus they are *immediately* at shore (instantly!).
- The gospel accounts are full of lots of ordinary, time consuming travel. The disciples and Jesus criss-crossing the countryside, spending days walking up to Jerusalem, cutting through Samaria, travelling on boat to beat the crowd. But in this instance, their journey was immediate. It's like a mini miracle snuck in.
- When John tells us the disciples were instantly transported to the shore, I think about the day when Jesus returns, and we will be instantly transformed.
- We will be taken from our sin and brokenness, and brought immediately into the New Creation.
- Mortal bodies transformed into immortal bodies. Perishable changed to imperishable. Sin and evil completely vanquished. A future face to face with Jesus, with no fear. >

15

- Even as the storms rage on, we can be confident not only that Jesus is with us, but that one day the storms will be no more, because of what he has done for us.
- That's someone worth believing in.

16

*Heavenly Father, thank you for drawing close to us in Jesus.
Please Lord, help us not to be deluded to think we can manage our sin and brokenness on our own,
but help us believe in Jesus,
be ready to welcome him with joy,
and find peace in his presence.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*
