

“Take The Step”

Matthew 14:22–33

Series: Cliff Notes Week 10: Faith

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March 15, 2026

“Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.

When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.””

WELCOME

Hello Church family! I want to welcome everyone this morning and give a warm welcome if you are joining us for the first time either in person or online. I want everyone to know that you belong before you believe! We welcome you with opened arms! I am going to ask everyone to stand up real quick as we open in a word of prayer.

PRAYER

Please remain standing and I want everyone to high five 3 people around them before finding their seat! If you have been traveling with us this far we have been in our series called “Cliff Notes” on the bible where we have been walking through the bible! Starting in Genesis and just a few weeks ago we transitioned into our second section which is looking at the life of Jesus. Today we are talking about miracles. IF you don’t already have your bibles I would like to encourage you to open up Matthew 14. We will be journeying through this passage today. I would also like to ask that if you are a note taker to write down today’s title:

“Take the Step”

When I think of miracles there are many things in our life that can point to the magnificent workings of God. The thing about this is that I can get stuck understanding the mind of God. I think that’s a lot of us. We want a miracle but don’t know what part we play in it since Jesus isn’t with us. Well that’s where our story starts. We get this picture and a story that is well

known. Jesus walks on water. But to understand all that happens here we have to know where in the grand scheme of things does this fall. Looking at the section before this we see that Jesus just wrapped up feeding the 5,000.

Which was a huge miracle. The crowds are fully satisfied and there are 12 baskets leftover for the disciples to snack on. Now we would expect that from there we get Jesus leaving the crowd with his disciples like we've seen before but we get the opposite. It says here:

“Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.”

I think often we skip over this part but it tells us a lot about us in today's world. We see the disciples on their own and Jesus went up on a mountain to pray by himself. This is us. Jesus has ascended up to be at the right hand of the father and we are here below traveling through life. I just thought that really shows that even when we don't think God is there he can be closer than he appears.

So Jesus sends the disciples away, goes to pray by himself. Matthew then transitions into the scene of the disciples but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. The disciples were “a long way from the land” but the total distance from one side of the sea of Galilee was 8 miles. They had to have been 3/4 of the way there. And on that way they were being beaten. Other translations say “buffeted” which means: tortured, tormented, harassed. They were being beaten up physically and probably mentally by this storm. The wind and the waves were trying to overcome them. The disciples here display to us what it looks like to face a storm with perseverance while facing opposition. That's us. We are facing opposition all the time and the craziest part is we may not even know why.

Something interesting here is that Jesus knew the storm was coming and willingly sent them into it. Just as God knows that there are storms ahead in our stories and still sends us ahead. For every storm we may not understand the why behind it but we need to remember the one who is looking out for us and in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear. The fourth watch of the night would've been between 3:00-6:00am. They had been rowing across this sea for a while. We know it had been since evening (Jesus was alone) and now it's the early AM. I don't know how many of you have ever tried staying up all night but your mind can play tricks on you. This may be what they thought. But there's more to it. The disciples along with others in that region understood that the winds, waves, and storms can be so abrupt and violent on the sea of Galilee that they have taken some people's lives. Storms and winds would come out of nowhere because of the mountains that surrounded the sea. Many lives were lost to them.

The first instinct of the disciples is that it's a ghost because of those that lost their lives to that sea. Their posture changes here from one of perseverance to face the storm to one of terror and fear. But the only thing they had to do was look down. The disciples should've understood the power of God given they had the remembrance of the feeding of 5,000 with them. So often I think that we can see God do one thing in our lives, answer one prayer, heal one person, give us that promotion, take us into new doors but then right when we face opposition we fail to see what

He's brought us from. And I can't stand up here and call you out if I myself have not reflected on this. God has done miraculous things in my life but when storms hit, when family members get sick, when things don't go as

planned and detours are taken I have failed to see God's blessings.

So let me ask you, "What remanence of God's previous blessings are you carrying through this storm?" This I think is one of the greatest schemes of satan. That he causes us to grow numb to the blessings God's given us which causes us to forget where He's brought us. • The greatest scheme of the enemy is to cause us to forget.

But lucky for us God doesn't leave us in our storms but is always there. And there he is arriving just on time. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." This is the part of the passage that I always find interesting. With a show of hands how many of you would recognize your mothers voice if she called your name? Right! I would too. How many of you (that are married) would recognize your spouses voice?

This is the point I'm trying to make Jesus at this point has spent a significant amount of time with the disciples. So much so that they would have recognized his voice. Just as the sheep recognize the shepherds voice. This is the point with Jesus here reaching out verbally

to his disciples saying, "take heart; it is I" We should be able to put 2 and 2 together. This would be like if I put pastor Doug in the other room gave him a mic and he started reading off your names. If you have gone here for any length of time you would recognize his voice. The disciples would be in that same boat. They would've known what Jesus's voice sounded like. And the same thing goes for us. When you spend time with your savior his voice gets more and more familiar.

So I think it is kind of funny that Peter says "Lord, if it is you..." in this Peter is acknowledging that it is Jesus based off of the sound of his voice and then challenging that thought with "if it's really you". I imagine Peter said it kind of like this (say the line funny and sarcastically) but even through that sarcastic funny way Peter said it Jesus responds. We see him respond Immediately saying,

He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. Jesus's response to Peter's faith was just one word, "Come". I look at this story from the beginning until now and I cannot help but believe that Jesus was not talking to just Peter. If he was I would think Jesus would say, "Peter come". Jesus here is doing something very interesting.

That is challenging the faith of the disciples in the boat. He is inviting them to take the step of faith it would take to have belief past physics and walk on water. I see this as an opportunity many of us are faced when it comes to our lives. We are faced with believing and having faith and being paralyzed by fear. Many people when they read this passage and hear about miracles that happen in today's world they think that they need this extraordinary faith that is surging through their veins. That is not the case here and we see that in the following verses. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Even though Peter had faith to take the first step he let his fear fog his sight of Jesus. He became distracted. But Jesus doesn't say "oh you of no faith" no no no he says "of you of little faith." Peter when he stepped out of the boat had 51% faith and 49% fear. His mind was not believing that He would walk on water but his faith believed he would. It was at the moment he took his eyes off Jesus that he began to switch to 49% faith and 51% fear. • Because all it takes is 1% more faith than fear to walk through the storms of life.

It's when we grow distracted that we can't see God clearly and it's not because he's gone anywhere but it's because we've shifted our focus. We start to worry about the wrong things. These distractions cause us to lose sight of the one who will save us and carry us through them.

Peter here loses focus just for a second and his faith turns to 49% and his fear to 51. He starts to sink in fear but we do not serve a God who let's us drowned in this fear and in these storms because it says that IMMEDIATELY Jesus reached out his hand and took hold of him. This is what Jesus desires to do for us. Jesus's response here tells us everything we need to know. I used to imagine that Jesus's response was in a disappointing tone but I don't anymore. I think that Jesus says it in this kind of funny tone because he understands that we are not perfect and we will make mistakes.

But there are some of you in this room that are sitting here wondering when Jesus is going to reach out his hand to help you. You feel like you're drowning and gasping for air. You feel like you're yelling and nobody can hear you. Well let me tell you that when we find ourselves in a storm we have to understand our limitations just like Peter did. I think he knew he couldn't save himself and he said, "Lord, save me." and then he leaned into God's unlimited effort. Those are two steps that you can make today.

Recognize your limitations and lean into God. Here in verse 32 we get this very powerful moment that I have skipped over every time I've read this. It says And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." "And when they got into the boat."—This to us tells us that since Peter had to walk out on the water and come to Jesus. **THEY BOTH HAD TO WALK BACK.** This is the beauty of this story. Jesus walks back hand in hand with Peter all the way to the boat because Jesus never leaves us alone in the storms to sink but walks with us.

It is in this moment along with the disciples that we can recognize God's almighty power and worship him with all we've got. • We've got to remember: It only takes 1% to take that first step.

Let me pray!