

## **Dare to Walk on the Water**

Matthew 14:22-30 NIV

I was twelve years old and I was at the Youth Annual Conference. We were discussing the passage of Jesus and Peter walking on the water. I remember the leader of our group (it happened to be the Bishop of the Cuban Conference) asking us, “What happened after Jesus commanded Peter to get out of the boat?”

I was very familiar with the story. So, I jumped in with the answer, “Peter sank.” I answered without getting permission. I thought I had it right.

After I gave the answer I thought to myself, “The Bishop is going to break his arm patting me on the back.” But, it did not happen that way. The mean, cruel, unpleasant Bishop told a pure, virtuous 12-year-old boy that he was wrong.

I remember the moment as if it were today. He looked at me and said, “That is not right. When Jesus commanded Peter to get out of the boat he walked on the water.”

We have heard many times that Peter sank because he did not keep his eyes on Jesus, but we need to recognize and praise Peter’s courage to step out in faith and do what most people are not willing or don’t have the courage to do. Peter was willing to get out of the boat.

After reading this account, I began to think about the whole situation with the storm. Like the disciples, we are familiar with strong winds and raging waves. At the global level, we have the pandemic. At a personal level, we each have struggles that make us believe that our boat is taking on water. We know what panic is because most of us have been under pressure.

As I read the story, I noticed that storms are not good or bad. The way we react to them is what makes the difference. I am not saying that storms are fun; but, they don’t have to be a source of worries and fears neither. The storms of life can make us hang on to the familiar. Yet, they can also become spaces for us to experience boldness and practice faith in new ways.

Today, I want us to consider those things that are stumbling blocks to audacious faith. What is stopping you from entering the next chapter you have been ignoring and even avoiding? What is preventing you from putting the house up for sale, starting to look for a new job, or having that serious conversation? What is keeping you from moving beyond your hesitations and reservations? For eleven of the disciples, it was the boat.

The boat represents many things in our lives.

- For some people, it is a fixed salary.
- For others, it is a marriage full of abuse and pain.
- Still, for others, the boat is a secret that is taking the best of them.

- The boat of many individuals is an addiction (alcohol, drugs, or perhaps pornography). There are people who prefer to be slaves of their addictions. They don't want to be challenged and leave behind what is consuming their lives little by little.
- There are others who are more afraid of success than failure. They prefer to sail the calm waters of failure before living under the pressure of maintaining success.
- Others are afraid to risk. However, there are always risks. Life is full of risks, and those who do not risk do not gain anything.

Talking about risks, do you know that...?

- you can eat healthy, organic food to avoid diseases;
- you can opt to...
  - drink just water (no tea, pop, etc.),
  - get enough sleep (no staying up late),
  - not have *in-laws* (very important),
  - avoid controversial subjects so as not to offend anyone,
  - spend only what is necessary and save all you can in order to have a quality life, but still...
- You can break your neck in the bathtub, or become one of the half a million people who go to the emergency room because they fell out of their bed.

Life is full of risks and trying to prevent them is not the best strategy to follow. Staying on the boat does not mean that you will not sink. It is actually reducing your possibilities of surviving. Church, if you do not fail you do not live. Failures will always exist. Yet, we have help in God.

We need to accept and face challenges as they come. We cannot decide to stay on the same boat that is taking us nowhere because we fear failure. Let me tell you this, failures are the ones who prefer not to step out of the boat.

Walking on the water won't always make sense. Yet, faith is more than rational; it is relational. Peter was able to step out of the boat not because he was following logical instructions. Peter was able to get out of the boat because Jesus (his Master and friend) was calling his name. Peter's actions were not rational; they were relational. He trusted the One who said, "*Come...*"

There is something that has always caught my attention. The Bible says, "*When he [Peter] saw the wind, he was afraid...*" Peter *saw* the wind! In a natural state, no one can see the wind, but those who walk on the water see and experience what the majority cannot see or experience.

Get out of your boat and you will experience something new. Get out of:

- self-excusing, blaming and reactive attitudes... and walk into the territory of self-accountability and you will see a new you.
- the boat of procrastination, get rid of distractions, set new goals, and you will walk into new possibilities.
- the boat of intellectual contempt, walk on a terrain of creativity, and you will be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
- the boat of individualism and self-interest and you will be able to practice wise judgment that will better serve you and benefit the world.
- the boat of resentment, and you will walk into a space of freedom and peace.

Church, the mean, cruel, unpleasant Bishop was right by saying that *I was not right*. Peter did not sink. Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water.

The Bible says that Peter *began* to sink when he cried for help. God will not let you sink if you respond to his call to get out of the boat. Jump, walk on the water, do not be afraid to fail, God will be there to reach out to you and save you. The waters may come up to your neck, but they will never cover your head.

Do not let your days pass by while doing nothing because, in the end, you will regret it. You will live the rest of your life wondering what it would have been like if only you had decided to walk on the water. We must always be willing to reduce the gap between what God wants for us and what we dare to do. I want to encourage you to reduce the chasm between the life God wants you to have and the one you are deciding to live.

Many times, storms come our way to stir up our boats and help us make the decision to get out of our comfort zone. God uses the challenges we face to help us reach the abundant life He has for us. Do not stay in your comfort zone (the boat). Fight against conformity, get out of the boat, accept new challenges, and put your feet where no one else has walked. Begin by doing something that can only be accomplished by the supernatural intervention of God. Do things that demand you to fully trust and depend on God, knowing that there is no other possible way to carry out the assignment.

Self-reliance is the reason why sometimes equipped, trained, and talented people who know they are good at what they do make the mistake of not recognizing their need for God. These people place their faith in their strength, talents, abilities, position and titles. These people may believe that depending on God makes them weak. I have learned that it requires more character strength to recognize that we are weak and need God than to ignore our condition and deceive ourselves thinking that we are self-sufficient and can take care of everything.

This is what God told Paul, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*” Paul, reflecting on the word he received from God, continues saying, “*Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That*

*is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."* **2 Corinthians 12:9-11 NIV**

If we want God's power resting on us, we need to be truthful with ourselves and recognize our weaknesses, limitations, and imperfections. In order to walk on the water and experience the supernatural power of God, we need to accept that it is only through Christ who gives us strength that we can do all things.

Remember:

- Do not be afraid of the unknown.
- Take risks. Life is full of risks.
- Strive to reduce the chasm between the life God wants you to have and the one you are deciding to live.
- Recognize your weaknesses and your need for God.
- Those who walk on the water see and experience what the majority cannot see or experience.
- Dare to walk on the water. Begin by doing something that can only be accomplished by the supernatural intervention of God.