

"How to Walk on Water"

By Allan Pole



Theme: God is calling you out of your comfort zone.

Text: Matthew 14:22-36

Show the "Manitoba Air Show" video clip (44 seconds) at www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz_VM6Ylfrs.

We are fascinated with the idea of walking on water. Jesus had just fed the five thousand then we join Him in Matthew 14:22-36:

22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. 25 During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. 27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." 28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." 29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" 32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." 34 When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. 35 And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him 36 and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed. NIV

Peter shows us how to walk on water:

Obey God's Word
Step Out of the Boat
Keep Your Eyes on Jesus
Ask for Help When You are Sinking

Peter shows us how to walk on water:

Obey God's Word (Matthew 14:28)

Two thousand years ago the Jewish people divided the night into four watches, with each watch consisting of three hours each. The first commenced at 6:00 p.m. and continued until 9:00 p.m.; the second from 9:00 p.m. to 12:00 midnight; the third from 12:00 midnight to 3:00 a.m.; and the fourth from 3:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. The first was called evening; the second midnight; the third cock-crowing; the fourth morning (Mark 13:35). It is probable that the term watch was given to each of these divisions from the practice of placing sentinels around the camp in time of war, or in cities, to watch or guard the camp or city; and that they were at first relieved three times in the night, but under the Romans four times. It was in the last of these watches, or between three and six in the morning, that Jesus appeared to the disciples, so that He had spent most of the night alone on the mountain in prayer (from <http://bible.cc/matthew/14-25.htm>)

It was a dark, windy night that started to toss these rugged men and their little boat around, perhaps four or five miles from the shore. What would you think if you were in a boat in the middle of a lake at 3:00 a.m. and you see someone walking toward you on the water? I would rub my eyes and cry out, like the disciples, "It's a ghost!" Having forgotten their high-powered LED flashlights at home, they could not rely on their eyesight to identify this figure walking on the water; they had to rely upon recognizing the voice to identify Him as their Lord. His calm words of reassurance made all the difference in this highly stressful situation.

Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 7:24-27:

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words [logos] of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." NIV

There are two basic Greek terms translated as "word" in the New Testament.

“Logos” refers to sayings or the general, written word. Jesus uses the term “logos” in Matthew 7:24-27.

The Apostle Paul uses the term “rhema” in Romans 10:17:

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word [rhema] of Christ. NIV

The term “rhema” typically means “spoken word” or “quicken word”. It is a dynamic combination when we immerse ourselves in the logos and when we hear His rhema.

I came across one artist’s rendition of Peter’s early attempts to walk on water:



Smith Wigglesworth (1859-1947) was used by the Lord in remarkable ways to heal people. He was originally a plumber then gave up this trade after he became too busy preaching. The large crowds which gathered twice daily to hear the messages God gave thru Evangelist Smith Wigglesworth of Bradford, England, were evidence that they were feasting on the Word. “For fifty years,” said Brother Wigglesworth, “I have read no other book but the Bible, which my wife taught me to read,” and the originality and freshness of the God-given messages convinced his hearers that the price he paid to so shut himself up with the Word of God, was worthwhile. He paid many tributes to the wonderful Word, and his grasp of the Scriptures created a hunger in a number of ministers’ hearts to know that Word in equal power (from <http://www.smithwigglesworth.com/life/usafall1922.htm>).

I am not saying that you need to throw out all your books, magazines, newspapers and your Kindle Reader, but I need to ask: do you take time each day to read, to study and to meditate upon the Bible? Do you still yourself regularly to hear God’s voice?

Peter shows us how to walk on water:

Obey God’s Word (Matthew 14:28)

Step Out of the Boat (Matthew 14:29)

Abram did not study geography in school. He did not get a GPS for Christmas. He could not go to Google Earth on his laptop. Nevertheless, check out Genesis 12:1-5:

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." 4 So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. NIV

Abram, later to be renamed Abraham by the Lord, did not know any place other than his homeland of Haran. He apparently had some history and relationship with God and he trusted Him enough to follow Him to an unfamiliar land. The Lord did not give Abram any details of where he was to go; He simply promised that He would lead him to a land that He would show him.

Some people have lived in the same place all their lives and they have vowed that they will never leave. They would not dream of leaving family and friends. Such a declaration limits the work of God in their lives. Maybe the Lord wants you to move somewhere you have neither visited nor know anything about. Maybe the Lord wants you to stay right where you are. The important thing is that you are willing to go wherever and whenever the Lord wants you to go.

Are your time, energy and money available to the Lord 24/7? Are you willing to go wherever and whenever He leads you?

Peter shows us how to walk on water:

Obey God's Word (Matthew 14:28)

Step Out of the Boat (Matthew 14:29)

Keep Your Eyes on Jesus (Matthew 14:30a)

Because it lies low in the Great Rift Valley, surrounded by hills, the Sea of Galilee is prone to sudden turbulence. Storms of the kind that Jesus calmed (Mark 4:35-41) are a well-known hazard for Galilee fishermen. With little warning, mighty squalls can sweep down the wadis (valleys) around the lake, whipping its tranquil surface into treacherous waves (from <http://www.seetheholyland.net/sea-of-galilee-article-israeloutside-jerusalem/>).

After Peter had climbed out of the boat and started to walk on the water toward

Jesus he took his eyes off of Jesus and became frightened by the wind and the waves and began to sink. At this point Jesus rebuked and questioned Peter with, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Ouch! Peter was the only one of the disciples to step out of the boat. Why did Jesus not rebuke them for staying in the boat? Jesus is the hardest on those who are willing to step out of the boat. He sees what faith, obedience, zeal and availability we have and He calls us to stretch more. He will leave most people to sit in their comfortable boat while He calls those who have stepped out to step out even further.

Do we remember Peter for walking on the water or do we remember Him for sinking when He saw the wind and the waves? It depends upon our perspective. In a world filled with armchair quarterbacks who find it all too easy to criticize we can cluck our tongues at Peter for sinking while we miss the remarkable fact that he actually walked on water!



Hebrews 12:2 gives us guidance when the wind and the waves are all around us:

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. NIV

Biblical faith is not something to be cranked up or manufactured. Faith is the result of keeping our eyes focused on Jesus. When Peter took his eyes off of Jesus fear rushed in and crowded out the faith. Did you notice in our text that the wind did not die down until Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat? Jesus could have calmed the wind before this time but He wanted Peter to walk on water and the disciples in the boat to endure the wind and the waves before He climbed into the boat with them. Here is another reminder that God is more interested in our character than in our comfort. Through the testing of wind and waves our faith is enlarged.

Is the wind howling around you today? What waves are tossing you around? Will you develop the daily habit of keeping your eyes on Jesus through prayer,

worship, meditating upon God's Word and being with God's people?

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Keep Your Eyes on Jesus (Matthew 14:30a)

Ask for Help When You are Sinking (Matthew 14:30b)

Give Peter credit: when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Peter's first instinct was not just to panic; it was to ask for help from the Lord. How many of us would have done even this? How many of us would have tried to swim and help ourselves rather than call out to the Lord to save us?

A man was standing on the top of his house, with a flood rising all around him. He prayed for the Lord to help and to save him from death. While he was standing there with the rising waters getting closer to him, a man with a boat came along and offered his help to bring him to safety. The man replied, "No, that's okay. I'm waiting for God to save me." So the man in the boat, confused, rowed away. The waters rose ever higher and the man was now surrounded by water up to his chest, then came a rescue helicopter who dropped a lifeline to save him. The man again refused, yelling as loudly as he could for them to hear that he was waiting for God to save him. They left because of the increasing danger and the man's refusal to be helped. Minutes later the man was standing before God. The man then asked God, "Why didn't you save me?" God replied, "What do you mean? I sent you a boat and a helicopter."

Sometimes the Lord intervenes directly and sometimes He sends others to help us. Refusal to ask for help will severely limit how far we go in our adventure with Him. If we are too proud, too shy or too stubborn to rely upon Him and to ask for help from others we will remain small people with a small vision and a small god.

John Wimber (1934-1997) would say that faith is spelled "r-i-s-k".

Compare Proverbs 24:16:

for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity. NIV

I am not saying that we should be foolish or presumptuous, but let's give up our predictable, perfectionistic tendencies and take some faith risks. Again and again I have found the Lord to be faithful when I step out of the boat. Sometimes I have walked on water and other times I have started to sink. Through it all He has helped me, strengthened me and stretched me. Last

Sunday marked four years since we as a church started to meet in Coventry Hills School. I still remember that first Sunday when we walked into the gym and I wondered to myself, "What have we gotten ourselves into? Will we be able to pay the rent?" I am pleased to report that the rent has been paid for the last 200 plus Sundays that we have met here.

In what ways have you grown comfortable? What is the next step you need to take in your walk with God? Will you commit to taking that next step today?

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