

sermon study guide

January 23/24 2021

Press On: How God Grows Our Faith

Dr. Henry Schorr

IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. Which do you prefer: hearing about someone's great adventure, or going on a great adventure yourself? Why?
2. What is the greatest challenge you are facing in this season? How is this challenge beyond your own capabilities?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Matthew 14:13-33

3. Compare the two accounts: What initial challenge did the disciples face in each? What was their initial reaction? How did Jesus respond?
4. How might these events have caused both Peter's and the other disciples' faith to stretch and grow?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. How does this passage increase your faith for the challenges you are facing?
6. How might God be calling you to take a risk this week? What is making you reluctant to "step out of the boat"?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Looking back over the past year, what storm came that caused an increase in your faith? How can you take that faith gain and step into what God is calling you to now?

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 14:13-33

¹³ When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. ¹⁵ As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

¹⁶ Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

¹⁷ "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

¹⁸ "Bring them here to me," he said. ¹⁹ And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

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. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴ and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵ Shortly before dawn 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."

sermon study summary

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What would you impart to those you loved if your time in this world was coming to a close? Jesus knew He needed to prepare His disciples to carry on after Him and He started by building and exercising their faith (Heb 11:6). Similarly, God wants us to seek Him, and to grow our faith and trust in Him, for that pleases Him. While our default trends toward comfort and safety, God knows that our true fulfillment comes from a vibrant relationship with Him undertaking faith-filled adventures. To coax us along and build our faith, God challenges us to move out of our comfort zones. He did this with His disciples to grow their faith. How?

1. **By multiplying what they gave to Him.** Matthew 14:13-21. Jesus taught a large crowd (10,000+) and healed their sick. But they had no food and it was getting late. The Twelve suggested Jesus dismiss the people so they could forage in nearby towns. Jesus countered this by suggesting they feed the crowds but the best they came up with were a few loaves and fish. This was something they could not succeed in without God's help. Jesus stepped in (v. 19) and fed the thousands with food to spare. If Jesus calls you to a task impossible in your own strength, give Him what you have. He will bless it and use it to accomplish His kingdom purposes to His glory.
2. **By allowing storms in their lives, forcing them out of their comfort zones.** Matthew 14:22-27. Knowing that the crowds were considering making Him King, Jesus made the disciples row to the other side of the lake by themselves. While on the lake, they encountered a storm that thwarted their progress, exhausting them. Storms may arise in our lives by not following a call of God (ex. Jonah) or by disobedience. But never assume storms are because of disobedience. God has faith-growing plans for us. He uses storms in two ways:
 - a. To get our attention. We can hear His voice in storms in ways we never will in the calm.
 - b. To bring us to the end of ourselves and recognize our total need of Him and really hear Him when He says, 'Take courage! It is I! Don't be afraid'.
3. **By getting out of the boat.** Matthew 14:28-33. After the past two faith lessons Peter was ready to step out in faith – a BIG step out of his comfort zone! This is the kind of step that pleases God (Heb 11:6) when we trust Him to do what only He can do. Peter experienced a kind of intimacy and bond with Jesus that the other eleven in the boat did not.

Getting out of the boat means saying no to our draw to fleshly comfort and choosing to trust and follow Jesus in a way that not simply believes 'IN' Him but 'Believes Him'. The Israelites fell into this trap at the doorstep of the promised land and as a result wandered the wilderness for 40 years (Numbers 14:11). We insult the Lord by choosing comfort over obedience to His call, wasting our lives on lesser things.

Is God calling you to step out in faith? Fear will come. It is only a problem if it keeps you in your comfort zone instead of trusting in God. Faith is obeying in spite of fear (Ps 56:3). Faith is not a positive mental attitude. Faith is in a person. Trust Him. Step out of your boat. The God who was faithful then is the God who is faithful today.