



Discipling Disciple

Session 2: Walking on Water



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Part 1(looking back: Hospitality/Catching up/Review/)

identity

worship

community

Spend time catching up with everyone's week – consider that eating food together can be a good context of building friendship and trust in the group.

After everyone has shared a bit, ask how everyone found crafting and telling the story.

This is the time for caring for those in your group, hearing about what's going on in their lives, asking questions, listening, and praying.

Prayer and worship

Spend some time at the beginning in worship – this can be singing together, or it can be declaring truths about God, each person reading a verse or psalm from scripture etc.

This sets the tone for all that follows – we are engaging with the living God - not learning a syllabus.

Part 2 (story)

identity

mission

worship

(Matthew 14: 22-33)

Story Crafting Through the Week

Part of Discipling Disciple stage will involve participants learning how to dive deep into the scriptures and craft the story for themselves. This will involve them learning a devotional story crafting process which they can follow through the week. In the 1st Session, the group leader will explain and model this process with the group so each participant is equipped to take into their week.

Day 1 & 2– Finding the Central Image of the Story

Day 1 - Read the story in the scripture 3 times in 3 different translations. (e.g ESV, NIV, NLT)

Day 2 - Speak out the scripture, and record it on your phone, then listen to the story 3 times.

Meditate on the story and note down what you think is the main point or the main image of the story.

Day 3 – Experiencing the Story

After reading and listening to the story and meditating on the main point or image, the next day will be given to walking through the story slowly, listening to the recorded story and putting yourself in the shoes of Peter/the disciples, contemplating on the emotions and experience of that character through the narrative. For example, in the story of Jesus calling Peter, you will imagine yourself as Peter, who has been fishing all night and caught nothing, hearing Jesus teach from his boat, obey his command to throw his net on the other side of the boat, receiving the huge catch of fish, kneeling at the feet of Jesus.



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As you are doing that, you are asking yourself the questions

- i) How is Peter feeling at this moment?
- ii) How would you feel if that was you?

This process should be done prayerfully in conversation and communion with the Holy Spirit asking Him to guide you and to reveal things to your heart and mind. You will want to note down any things that come to light for you.

Day 4 – Research the Story

At this point, after reading and internalising the story we can begin to ask questions concerning the contextual/literary gaps in our comprehension of the story which we can research with the help of study notes/commentaries etc.

These materials will provide some studies notes on some of the main points where a bit of information relating to (language meaning/ phrasing/ literary context and design patterns/geography/historical context etc.) can serve to really aid one's comprehension of the story as a whole. We have also provided a list of commentaries that have been used in the crafting of these stories and their accompanying notes to go deeper with.

Day 5 – Group Session

Read the Scripture, Act out the story, Re-tell the story, Questions.

The hope is that when the group gathers, through this crafting process each participant has engaged with story at a deep level. It is helpful to complete this process together, so the middle section of the session will include telling the story and then getting the group to act out the story. (This may feel odd for a few, but even if all the group does is physically act out the movements of the story, engaging the whole body really helps internalise the story). After acting out the story, it is helpful then for each person to retell the story before moving in to the questions section.

- i) **Ask each person to read the passage in a different version (E.G ESV, NLT, NIV)**
- i) **Act out the Story** - Talk about the characters in the story and choose them. If you know anything about the characters, talk about the person.
 - a. Determine where the scenes will be acted out and the spacing of the story.
 - b. Act out the story with one person narrating.
 - c. Act out the story at least one more time, with people switching parts. This time, stop at crucial points in the story, and certainly at the main action(s) of the story that illustrate the main point of the story. Each time you stop consider how each of the characters must have felt. Describe the scene to each other a bit more, describing what everyone in the scene is doing.
 - d. If you forget parts of the story, the entire group can work together to remember what happened next, or what was said.
- ii) **Ask the questions**
 - 1. What do you like about this story/What stood out to you?
 - 2. What bothered you about this story?
 - 3. What does this story show you about God?
 - 4. What does this story show you about people?



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Part 3 (application and commission)

identity

worship

mission

Ask the remaining questions:

5. If this story is true, what does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story? What is God showing you? What does this story show us about what it means to be a follower of Jesus? How will you respond? (it is really important to give time in this section for reflection and response. Don't settle for superficial answers, hopefully as you model honesty and vulnerability this will be imbibed by the group. However, you may want to help people go deeper, by asking some follow on questions. Don't be afraid to do so.)
6. Who are you able to tell this story to?

iii) Now, Get each person to tell the story they have crafted

Encourage everyone in the group to think of people in their life whom they could retell the story to; mention that at the next session we will recap the story and ask who remembered to tell the story. Again it is helpful to emphasise the reason for going and telling the story ourselves is that it is the best way for us to remember the story and we are learning these stories to share the gospel with others.

Responding in Prayer and Worship

Make sure time is guarded to pray and worship (at least 20 mins). This time is key for responding to God after a deep dive into his word. This should be led sensitively, being aware of who is in the room and what has come out in each session.

This time can be led in a variety of ways,

- i) Listening to worship music
- ii) Singing
- iii) Sharing the Lord's Supper
- iv) Silence
- v) Each person sharing a psalm or a verse of scripture
- vi) Each person thanking God
- vii) Praying for one another: bringing words of encouragement and prophecy

A Note on Storying

In our discipleship materials, we have chosen to craft the stories of scripture into an oral format to be learnt, internalised and re-told. This process is done carefully and seeks to faithfully represent the heart, meaning and narrative of the biblical text in spoken form. We have done this for the following reasons;



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- 1.) The spoken story format requires those in the group to internalise the scripture to some degree. We believe that scripture tells God's unified story that leads to the person of Jesus. God invites us to encounter and respond to him through the hearing, believing and living out in accordance with the truth of his story and the good news that it tells. The process of learning and retelling the story requires and allows the scripture to 'live within us', to shape and guide us, to convict and challenge, to comfort and encourage us. Storying is not the only way this can happen of course, but we have found it to be an especially helpful and intuitive way of forming our worldview to that of Jesus Christ through the internalising the story that reveals him.
- 2.) Once this story is learnt and internalised, those in the group have it to share with others. This can be especially engaging when sharing with people with who don't know Jesus, and even more so in age of authenticity. By sharing a story that is 'living within you', you are imparting to someone something that has changed and/or encouraged you, and therefore it comes with more weight and significance.

How to lead a group in internalizing and retelling the story

These are a few creative ways that people can delve into the Story. Use discernment as to what would best help your group and what they'd be comfortable with.

1. Retell the story: as a group, each person tells as much as they can remember and passes on to someone else. Or.... split up the group in pairs, get each pair to tell the story to each other
2. Scenes: Ask the group to think of the story in scenes like a movie, ask each person what is scene 1, 2 etc. Try and see if you can get people to visualise each scene, the geography, the movements, which characters are doing what etc. This will help internalise the story.
3. Feeling the emotions of the story a. Retell the story in sections, or re-read the story in sections b. For each section, talk about the feelings of each character in that section...
4. Being a character in the story: ask each person which character they are in the story, as well as helping to remember the story, this will also help your group engage personally with the story from God's word.
5. Art a. Draw a picture of the key theme or key feeling in the story/passage.
6. Music a. Listen to a song related to the key theme of the passage and draw your feelings about it/or about God. (Art and Music are especially helpful mediums for people who may struggle with oral learning, and appreciate creative outlets)
7. Act out the story: Get everyone to act out the story as a group

Day 4 Study Notes for Walking on Water Session – to be sent out to the group

Why does Jesus insist his disciples get in the boat and go ahead of him?

In this story, both Matthew and Mark use the rather strong Greek verb, *anagkazō* to describe the moment when Jesus *Insisted or Made* the disciples get in the boat to go before him while he dismissed the crowd. In the New Testament this verb carries a sense of compelling or strongly encouraging. Why this unusually forceful verb?



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The context of the story happens in the wake of the feeding of the five thousand- where Jesus has miraculously provided lunch for this great crowd from 5 loaves and 2 fish. In John's account of this event, this miracle leads to a potential political coup, as the crowds seek to 'make Jesus king' – John 6:15. This is not the type of kingdom that Jesus brings, a theme that John highlights throughout his gospel, we can legitimately infer that Jesus' disciples would not be unsympathetic to the excitement of the crowds and so, Jesus' decision to isolate them quickly is his way of taking his disciples away from a potentially seductive bid for power. However, Matthew himself gives us none of this political dimension, he simply shows Jesus as firmly in command.

Why do the disciples think Jesus is a ghost when they see him walking on the water?

The word for ghost recorded in this story is used nowhere else in the New Testament. R.T France in his commentary writes a concerning this reaction from the disciples, that 'it represents an instinctive superstition rather than a theologically formulated belief, and may reflect the popular belief that evil spirits lived in the sea or that those who drowned haunted the water.'¹ In any case, Jesus responds to their cry of terror, with the reassuringly ordinary words of 'it is I, do not be afraid'. Luke records a similar interaction between Jesus and his disciples post his resurrection from the dead (See Luke 24;37-39).

What is the significance of Jesus walking on the water?

On a surface reading of Matthew's account Jesus is walking on the water in order to come to his disciples, presumably to help them in the midst of this storm, which of course he does as the wind ceases when he gets in the boat. However, within the Hebrew Scriptures there is deep symbolism to this action that the gospel writers would not have been oblivious too. In Bible the Sea or the waters, are often symbolised as the place of chaos, disorder and death. This mindset would've have contributed to the fear of the disciples that this walking figure may be an ghost, as the sea would also have been understood as the home of evil spirits (See Rev 13:1. This also makes some sense as to why in Matt 8:28-38 the evil spirits cast into the pigs, immediately rush into the sea.)

From the beginning of the biblical narrative, God, in his creative action, is shown as being in control over the waters by separating them to bring forth sky and land. This theme of God's mastery over the waters is recapitulated in the stories of Noah and the flood and the parting of the Red Sea for the salvation of his people. The Old Testament image of Israel's God having mastery over the waters is even specifically symbolised in the action of walking on the chaotic waters (See Ps 77:16, 19; Job 9:8; 38:16). These links between Jesus as Israel's God are further reinforced with his response 'It is I' which in Greek is *Ego Eimi* = *I Am*. Donald A. Hanger in his commentary makes the case that these words of Jesus 'probably had a deeper meaning to Matthew and his readers than the simple self-identification of Jesus that it is to his disciples.

¹ R.T France, *Gospel of Mathew*, NICNT, 14;22-33



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In a context such as this, the words (Ego Eimi = I Am) allude to the definition of the name Yahweh given in LXX (Greek Translation of the Old Testament) of Exodus 3:14. God is uniquely present in Jesus.'

Therefore with some confidence we can deduce that both in his walking on the chaotic waters and his declaration 'It is I', Matthew wants us to see Jesus as intentionally identifying himself with the Lord, God Almighty.

Why does Peter try and walk on the water to Jesus? Is this an example to be followed or a cautionary tale?

When the disciples hear the confirming words that this truly is Jesus walking on the water, Side note - (*Matthew makes it clear that the disciple were in deep water at the time when Jesus came, his account leaves no room for any modern view that Jesus was walking in a shallow part of the sea, as those acquainted with the geographical nature of the Sea of Galilee will be aware – no such 'shallow part' exists in the deep waters of lake.*)

Peter's response is to say 'if it is really you....ask me to come to you walking on the water.'

It is difficult to know what motivation lay behind Peter's request, and also how we as the reader are meant to interpret this event in the story. Some have argued that Peter's request is presumptuous or foolhardy as it puts God to the test, an action that is forbidden Mt 4:5-7. On the other hand, Peter's response could be read as a positive action of trust that Jesus command would grant Him to participate in the miracle of walking on water as the disciples participated in the feeding of the five thousand.

Either way, Peter's initial request is granted by Jesus and he is able to for a short time to walk on the water. Furthermore, in his rebuke, Jesus seems to imply that had Peter not doubted when he saw the waves and the wind, he would have succeeded in coming to him v31. Throughout Matthew's gospel, Peter is viewed as prominent among the disciples and is often used as an example of discipleship, both in a positive and negative sense. This story seems to show us Peter as impulsive yet seeking to participate in the supernatural power of his master. The words of Jesus offer us an interpretative clue that, his expectation of his followers is total trust. He doesn't comment on Peter's motivation for getting out the boat, instead he focuses his attention on the "doubt" of Peter that distracted him and led to him falling into the sea. R.T France comments on this, he writes 'the verb for "doubt" ...denotes not so much a theological uncertainty or unbelief, but a practical hesitation or wavering. Peter's problem was not so much a lack of intellectual conviction as the conflict between the evidence of his senses and the invitation of Jesus.' However, once again as in the previous story of Jesus calming the storm, Jesus overrides Peter's lack of faith and reaches out to save him from drowning. The disciples likewise are saved as the storm calms immediately as Jesus and Peter enter the boat.



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Feedback from Group Leader

In our vision for discipleship, we have identified 4 key ingredients to healthy and growing disciples. As you are leading your group, for each session, make some notes under each heading for how the group is faring in each of these areas.

identity

worship

community

mission