

Jesus Walks on Water

DOUBT

Matthew 14:22-33

What's happening in this story?

After the death of John the Baptist, Jesus sought solitude. He went to a mountain to pray. The crowds followed him and he ministered to them, culminating in his miraculous feeding of the crowd. After the crowds had been dismissed, he returned to do what he had come for: to pray. In the meantime, the disciples went on ahead of him on the lake and encountered a storm. Jesus noticed what was going on, walked across the water, and came to their rescue. Peter responded that if it really were Jesus, he would command Peter to walk on the water, too. Jesus invited him with the same word he used to call him as a disciple: "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to sink. When Jesus rescued him, he questioned the strength of Peter's faith.

What does this story mean for kids?

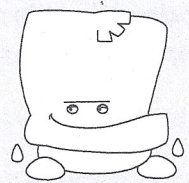
Jesus walking on the water wasn't just a cool thing that he could do, but it helped his disciples understand who (the Son of God) and what (the Messiah) he was. Jesus not only encouraged Peter to do something amazing, but when Peter felt himself sinking, Jesus was there to catch him. It's a pretty wild account, yet with some very relatable points for kids this age.

Why this theme?

Like faith, doubt is a normal part of an active Christian life. It is not wrong to ask questions, nor should a kid be worried that their doubt will somehow make them less normal. Nothing could be less true.

TEACHING TIP

- * Don't miss this great opportunity to *normalize* doubt! Expressing doubt can be a healthy part of our ability to process our environment. What we want to avoid is getting *stuck* in doubt, where we let critical thinking slide into hopelessness. Doubt prepares us for action, not inaction.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Markers
- Scissors
- Clear tape

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Bowl of water
- Assorted items that sink or float
- Painter's tape (blue)
- Drinking straws (1 per kid)

WHIRL SUPPLIES • WHIRL KIDS STORY BIBLES • WHIRL KIDS STUDY BIBLES • DVD • LEAFLETS

WELCOME 15

DO SOME KIDS ARRIVE EARLY? TRY THIS.

Provide a bowl of water and assorted water-safe items. Kids can see which items float and which do not.

Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

When have you seen something unbelievable? Have you ever doubted whether what you were seeing was real? Let them respond. In the Bible, there are many stories in which we find God doing amazing things, often surprising even the people in the story. The people who saw these events probably felt a mixture of doubt that it was possible and amazement that it happened. In today's story, Jesus does something that seems impossible. One of the disciples decides to try it too, but he experiences doubt—which means he's not sure he can do it.

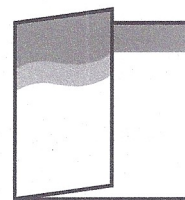
Pray together: ~~Dear God, thank you for all the amazing ways you lead us and teach us about how wonderful you are. Help us to believe! Amen.~~

Be still and know that I am God...

Pass out leaflets and markers.

Take a look at the swimming pool on your leaflet.

Imagine if all those things were in the pool. Circle the pictures of things that you think would stay on top of the water. Put an X over pictures of things that you *doubt* would stay on top of the water. Invite kids to share a few of their choices with the group. In our story today, the disciples see something unexpected staying on top of the water. I wonder what they see. Collect their leaflets until Respond.



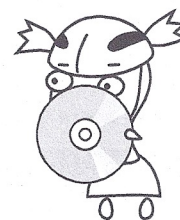
Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

Today Clara is doubting her abilities during a swimming lesson. As you watch, consider times when you feel nervous.

View Episode 7, "Faith Floats," on the Year Blue Winter DVD. (4 min, 20 sec)

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- What was Clara afraid about?
- * How did her friends encourage her?
- She did well at first. What got her mixed up?
- When have you felt nervous?
- * Who encourages you when you doubt yourself?



HEAR 15

Use Whirl Kids Story Bible,
"Jesus Walks on Water" pg 202

Open your Whirl Kids Story Bibles and Whirl Kids Study Bibles.

Have younger kids find an older buddy. Invite them to find Matthew 14:22-33 on page 1175 of the Whirl Kids Study Bible. After Jesus finished talking to a large crowd, he sent the disciples out in a boat and went to pray by himself. While the disciples slept in the boat, it blew out into the middle of the Sea of Galilee. When they woke up, they saw something unexpected and scary.

Invite kids to huddle together with their buddy like they're trying to protect themselves from strong wind. Read the story aloud. Pause after each verse and invite kids to make sounds like blowing wind. Even when Peter doubted that he could do it, Jesus was there to help him out. Jesus is with us when we experience doubt too.

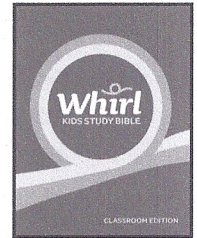
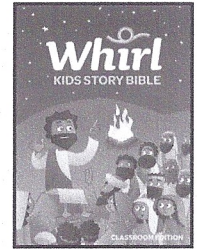
Read what Gabe says about Matthew 14:22-27 on page 1175. Then read Ada and Otto's questions and comments on page 202 of the Whirl Kids Story Bible.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- How do you respond when the wind suddenly blows really hard?
- The disciples were on a boat in strong winds. How did they respond?
- How did Jesus catch up to the disciples?
- What surprises you about Peter's request for Jesus to ask him out on the water?
- When have you seen something amazing and unexpected?

Play together!

Use painter's tape to make a straight line, about 10 feet long, on the ground. In another place, use painter's tape to make a similar, but wavy, line. Finally, use painter's tape to make a circle. Help kids find a buddy. We're going to pretend the painter's tape is the water. Decide who will be Peter and who will be Jesus. Have Peters stand at one end of the straight line and Jesuses stand at the other. Invite the first Jesus to say, "Peter, I'm calling you out on the water." The first Peter then walks across the blue line like a balance beam. If they step off the line, Jesus helps Peter make it the rest of the way. Repeat, giving each kid a chance to be Peter and Jesus on the straight line, and to try out the wavy line and circle. Did you experience doubt that you could make it all the way along the line? Why or why not?



BIBLE BIT

The feeding of the 5,000 that precedes this miracle is found in all four gospels, but Jesus walking on the water is only reported in three: Matthew, Mark, and John.

WATCH IT AGAIN

If you watch the video again, pay attention to all the ways Clara's friends try to encourage her.

OUR CHURCH

What does your church believe? Do you have it contained in a creed or statement of faith? Spend some time sharing that with your group today.

RESPOND 10

A fun quick game to play solo, with partners, or tournament style.

Pass out leaflets, scissors, ~~drinking straws~~, and ~~clear tape~~.

Unfold and tear off leaflet square.

1. Peter was brave to step out of the boat and try walking on water, but the strong winds distracted him and he had doubt about his ability to do it.
2. Cut Peter out from the top of the Launch panel. Place him on the boat on your leaflet. ~~Use your straw to blow Peter across the water to Jesus.~~ (Just blow without a straw)
3. Help kids find a buddy. Place one leaflet between you and your buddy. Place one Peter on the boat.
4. One buddy will attempt to blow Peter across to Jesus, while the other buddy blows in the other direction back to the boat. Once Peter reaches Jesus or goes back to the boat, the game is over. Give kids time to play once or twice.
5. Now put both leaflets together, and play again, trying to get Jesus across both leaflets to Jesus.
6. ~~Tape a Peter onto the water on your leaflet.~~
7. When have you tried to do something that seemed scary at first? Why did you feel doubtful about it? What happened?

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

What was the main reason for Peter's doubt? Give them time to respond. What causes you to doubt sometimes? Pause again. Doubt is a perfectly normal part of faith and belief. Peter stepped out in faith and only wavered when he became distracted from Jesus guiding him.

Pass out leaflet panels.

If there's time, you can play this other quick game, helping each other guess the number they print to. Otherwise, skip this. Find a buddy and take turns closing your eyes, placing your finger on the leaflet, and guessing what number you're on. Are you confident or doubtful about the number? How can we help each other when we doubt?

~~Send kids out with a blessing.~~ → Help and Thanks prayers

~~Circle up with kids. God blesses all of us. And that means me (place a hand on your chest). And that means you (place your other hand on the shoulder of the kid next to you). Each kid passes the blessing by repeating those words and actions. When the blessing makes it back to you, say, Go and bless the world.~~

Thank kids for coming today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.