

Faith and Doubt

Spiritual doubts. We all have them at times in this life, right? “Is God’s will good?” “Will God come through?” “Is this promise really for me?” Doubts are normal and natural. But doubts can become roots of unbelief in our lives if we leave them unaddressed. If we want to live a life that pleases God, we need to address our doubts because it is a life of faith that pleases God (Heb. 11:6). In today’s passage, we will see how Jesus helps with Peter’s doubt and points him toward faith.

Opening Discussion: Have you ever gone through a time of genuine doubt about the reality of a personal, gracious God?

Read Matthew 14:22-33

1. What are the details of what the disciples experience in this situation? What do they see, feel, hear, etc. (vv. 22-26)?
2. What is commendable about Peter in this passage?
3. Where does Peter fail? What created fear and doubt in him?
4. Jesus names Peter’s doubt (v. 31). How might this have helped Peter move through his doubt and helped him grow in his faith?

Steve said:

Remember that Peter’s doubt never would have been exposed if he hadn’t taken the risk and stepped out of the boat. And remember that he first checked with Jesus to see if doing so was His will. He said, “Jesus, command me to come to You on the water.” When we “step out of the boat,” we take action based on our best understanding of the will of God. We search the Scriptures and get counsel from other believers and pray for God’s leading. We have an abundance of wisdom and guidance available if we want to step out of the boat.

5. What is a faith issue in your life in which you need to “step out of the boat”? What does stepping out of the boat look like? And what is the risk involved?

Steve said:

Peter's doubt was exposed as he walked on the water. He took his eyes off of Jesus; he became frightened and began to sink. Jesus labeled this doubt: Peter doubted Jesus' ability to enable him to walk on the water. Until he understood this, he couldn't grow in his faith. In a similar way we need to notice when we're "sinking" so that we too can name our doubts. The goal is to move past these doubts. If we allow our doubts to take root in our hearts, we can become cynical people. Unlike Peter who cried out to Jesus, we can become arrogant in our cynicism. We can have pockets of unbelief that sabotage everything God wants to do in our lives. Instead, we should name our doubts in order to move past them by the power of the Holy Spirit.

6. How do we actually name our doubts? What might this look like in practice for you?

7. How might learning to name your doubts help you move in the direction of faith?

8. What might it look like to keep crying out to Jesus in any area of doubt with which you are struggling?