

The Risk of Faith (*Matthew 14:22-32*)

Introduction

In Matthew 14, Jesus appears to His disciples, walking on water in the middle of a storm. While initially the disciples are terrified, Jesus comforts them and tells them not to be afraid. Soon after, Peter asks Jesus to command him to come to Jesus. Peter starts out walking confidently on the water, despite the difficult weather situation, but succumbs to fear as he allows his gaze to shift from Jesus to the wind and the waves. Peter's focus determined his level of operational faith.

Faith in Christ requires a risk. It involves the believer's engagement in taking risks where the outcome cannot be proven or guaranteed. It can be a matter of risky business to ignore your circumstances and to go where God is asking you to go. Peter was willing to move forward into an adverse situation because he was confident in the One who called him out. As long as Peter's eyes were on Jesus, he was on top of his circumstances, rather than his circumstances being on top of him. However, the moment that Peter loses sight of Jesus, his situation and surroundings took over, and he succumbed to his fears.

As you seek to exercise faith or even to take a risk of faith, your focus is critical. Even though you cannot deny the circumstances of your life, you do not have to be controlled or defined by your storms. Peter's focus determined the outcome of his risk of faith. In the same way, the focus of your attention will determine whether you rise above difficulties in your faith journey or sink in them.

Getting Started

1. Do you tend to be a "risk-taker" or do you avoid risk altogether? Share a little about yourself and use an example from your life that illustrates your general approach to risk-taking.
2. Does your personality spill over into your spiritual life? Have you ever taken a risk of faith? What was the outcome?

Let's Get Personal

1. When Jesus approached the disciples walking on the sea (vs. 25), they were initially terrified. They didn't recognize Him partly because they weren't looking for Him. Are you consciously looking for the Lord to show up in your circumstances? Or, are you primarily focused on your problems?
2. The disciples and Peter are all gripped by fear in this passage. What are your greatest fears in your walk of faith? How are these fears affecting your ability to focus on Jesus? How did Jesus respond to the fears of the disciples and Peter?
3. Are you currently moving forward despite what may appear to be difficult circumstances? Has God given you peace about doing so? Share your experience of receiving God's peace.
4. Peter's initial focus on Jesus, and later the lack thereof, completely determined the outcome of his faith experience. Think about what is currently of great concern to you. Where are you most focused? On the sea or on the Savior?

Take the Next Step

1. What will you do this week to refocus on Jesus in the midst of your storm? Share practical ideas within your group for ways to refocus on Jesus Christ and His direction for your life. If you are led to do so, partner up in your group for one-on-one accountability and prayer throughout next week.
2. Peter was honest with Jesus. When he started to sink, "...he cried out, 'Lord, save me!'". If you are sinking, it's okay to say so. Jesus reached out to help Peter in response to his request for help. Do you need to be honest about where you are? Allow your group to pray for you. Commit to be honest with God this week as you seek to stay focused on Him.
3. If you would like to read and reflect beyond today's text, there are additional accounts of Jesus at work during a storm in Mark 4:35-41, Mark 6:46-54, and John 6:16-21.

Renew Your Mind

"You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Matthew 14:31