

## **Bible Study Guide: *Standing Through The Storm***

### **Matthew 14: 22-25 [NIV]**

*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.*

### **Introduction:**

One of the essential keys to knowing someone is to understand how they view time. Everything that we do on this earth is dictated by the passage of time and how we choose to use it. It seems that in any relationship there will always be one person that is time conscious and one that seems to be oblivious to time. i.e., get there on time, start on time, end on time **vs.** get there whenever, start when we feel like it and end whenever we're done.... *it will be alright*. Thus, when we fail to accept these differences, it leads to frustration.

### ***For example:***

A: *I've been standing out here for ten minutes. Why are you always late?*

B: *Why are you always stressing-- I'm here ain't I?*

The basis of this conflict is that one person sees time as a linear experience a straight line with brief increments 10:30, 12:55, Tuesday at 2:15-- a.m. or p.m.? The other person sees time as cyclic---- a circle with nothing on it. Imagine a clock without any numbers, so as the hands rotate these individuals are moving through time continually, floating, so whenever they show up, they are **in time** but not **on time**.

In order to know God, we must also understand how he views time. We see time as finite, whereas he sees it as infinite. We see our lives in terms of days and years with an uncertain end, whereas God sees our lives as an eternal experience.

### **II Peter 3:8**

*But beloved be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day*

Whenever we read of the miracles Jesus performed, it is apparent that his sovereign power is manifested not only by what he does but also when he chooses to do it. We will never experience the fullness of our faith until we understand and accept his timing.

How can we say that we trust Jesus on one hand and then get frustrated because he doesn't move according to our timing? Scripture reveals that there has always been conflict, concern and confusion regarding how Jesus used the element of time:

- If you ask Mary and Martha, they would say that they sent a letter telling Jesus that Lazarus was sick, but He showed up late---past the time when they thought he should have showed up and Lazarus died.
- If you ask Jairus he would say that Jesus is easily distracted. He would say, *“Jesus and I had a plan to go to my house because my daughter was sick but then a woman who was healed of an issue of blood showed up. At the time I felt that he wasted time by stopping to talk to her and then my daughter died.”*
- If you ask the man who lay at the pool of Bethesda, he would say that it took 38 years before Jesus showed up and spoke healing to his disabled body and commanded him to get up, take up his bed and start walking.

Nevertheless, if you could speak to them today, they would testify that: *“When it was all said and done--- He's an on time God. He may not come when you want him, but he'll be there right on time.”*

In each instance it seems that Jesus delayed his arrival so that the manifestation of his power would not only bring glory to the Father but also shout to an unbelieving world that Jesus is able to do the miraculous.

- ❖ *In the account of this miracle that was recorded in **Mark 6:30**, it is revealed that the disciples had been commissioned to go out on a temporary missionary journey. They had returned victorious but exhausted and Jesus had invited them to take a brief journey by boat to a deserted place so that they could get some well- deserved rest away from the crowds. However, when they arrived at the desired location there were more than 5,000 spiritually needy people waiting who had journeyed by foot when they learned where he was going. Out of his compassion Jesus ministered to them for the rest of the day. In the evening, Jesus commanded the disciples to feed the multitude with the only food they had, 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread. Because of their willing obedience they experienced the miracle of being able to feed everyone until they were completely full. After the crowd was dispersed, rather than rest, Jesus commanded them to get in the boat and sail back to Capernaum.*

## Analysis

It is interesting that the word “**constrained**” used in the KJV version of **vs.22** appears in the NIV as “**made**” or urged them get in the boat and return to Capernaum. This implies that the disciples may have questioned why he insisted that they leave at this **time**?

- Perhaps in their opinion it was **time** to rest as planned rather than get back on the boat--they were exhausted and in desperate need of some down time.
- Perhaps they didn't want to leave him alone, without any attendance, or any ship to wait for him-- how would get back across the sea? It wasn't the **time** or the place for Jesus to be by himself.
- Perhaps as professional fishermen they noticed the storm brewing and to go out on open waters during a storm was unwise. This was not the best **time** to leave because they should always wait for a better **time** when the sky would be clear

However, I believe that when Jesus saw the approaching storm, he knew that it was not **time** to stay in the desert place. Rather it was **time** to go into a deeper revelation of what it means to have absolute faith.

There are two kinds of storms: storms of **correction**, when God disciplines us; and storms of **perfection**, when God helps us to grow. Jonah was in a storm because he disobeyed God and had to be corrected. The disciples were in a storm because they obeyed Christ and had to be perfected.

- ❖ *It has been proven in the classroom that students retain knowledge more effectively when they are able to apply what they are learning to their lives. It has also been proven that you can lecture all day long, but if you really want someone to know something that will last for a lifetime, then hands on training is the most effective means to real understanding. You can't build a house, if all you do is watch other people do it on TV. At some point you need to pick up a piece of lumber and saw. You can't learn to make bread, if you don't want to put your hands on the dough.*

It is one thing to hear the preacher proclaim that “*He's an on time God*” or to hear the choir sing, “*Jesus will work it out*” but until the storms blow into your life, and you realize that your only option is to trust in the Lord, you will never truly know it for yourself.

The image of a weary and frightened group of disciples fighting a violent storm without the visible presence of Jesus makes this experience relevant to each of us:

- If you have ever prayed and it seemed as though the situation became worse **then you have been there.**

- If you have experienced a problem that showed up without warning and you couldn't understand why you didn't sense that something was about to happen, ***then you've been there***
- If you have ever waited and waited and waited and waited on a breakthrough believing that God was going to show up and show out, but it didn't happen when you thought it should, ***then you've been there***
- If you have ever said, "Lord I believe but help my unbelief" or "Lord, I know you can, but I don't know if you will" -- ***then you've been there***

The disciples saw Jesus, but to them his appearance resembled that of a ghost, which made a frightening experience even more stressful. We should note that Jesus' response centered on "***It is I***" which was the proclamation of his sovereign power that is inherent in the phrase "***I am***".

The disciples may not have realized this claim in the terror of the moment, but later they would fully understand the significance of what he had spoken which is first evidenced in the timing of this miracle. This is why Matthew makes a specific reference that Jesus came ***just before dawn***, which would have been designated as the ***fourth watch of the night***. Inherent in this simple phrase is a revelation of his timing:

- ✓ The **first watch** began at six o'clock in the evening, and lasted till nine--- no Jesus
- ✓ The **second watch** began at nine, and ended at twelve midnight--- no Jesus
- ✓ The **third watch** began at twelve midnight, and lasted until three---no Jesus
- ✓ The fourth began at three and ended at six in the morning. 3:00 a.m.-- **the ninth hour of the night**

The ninth hour or 3:00 occurs twice in the cycle of a day but if we are to make this more than a fantastic story then it must become relevant to our lives. Used 49 times in Scripture, the number 9 symbolizes **divine completeness** or conveys the meaning of finality. Christ died at the 9th hour of the day, or 3 p.m. to make the way of salvation open to everyone; therefore, the ninth hour commemorates **suffering, death, and sacrifice**.

**Acts 3:1** - *Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the [a]ninth hour, the hour of prayer.* This Scriptural reference also reveals that the 9<sup>th</sup> hour when it occurs at 3pm was a designated time of prayer.

Therefore, the **fourth watch** which began at 3:00am and ended at 6:00am becomes symbolic of those times when you are enduring dark days and lonely nights that cause you to question why Jesus would lead you into a situation that challenges your faith and

then abandon you. Apparently, he doesn't care about you or what you are going through. But this is the ideal time to remember the storms that he has already brought you through and trust that if he did it before, he will do it again.

When Jesus came walking on the water it was not just about calming the storm to save their lives, it was to prepare them to proclaim the gospel message of who Jesus is to an unbelieving world. Therefore, this moment stands as an eternal reminder that your present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in you. Simply stated, *"weeping may endure for a night, but joy will come in the morning!"*

- Now is the time to receive a new revelation of Jesus in your life
- Now is the time to believe that Jesus will *never* leave or forsake you
- Now is the time to experience His miracle working power

### **Matthew 14: 26-33**

*<sup>26</sup> When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.*

*<sup>27</sup> But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."*

[CEB-common English Bible] Just then Jesus spoke to them, "Be encouraged! It's me. Don't be afraid."

[ERV- easy reader version] But Jesus quickly spoke to them. He said, "Don't worry! It's me! Don't be afraid."

[GW-God's word translation] Immediately, Jesus said, "Calm down! It's me. Don't be afraid!"

*<sup>28</sup> "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."*

*<sup>29</sup> "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.*

*<sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"*

*<sup>31</sup> Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"*

*<sup>32</sup> And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.*

*<sup>33</sup> Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."*

I have always found it amazing that two people can look at the same thing and see something completely different. Similarly, people can hear the same sermon and receive a completely different understanding. How often have you heard someone say that we had the best worship service ever because the Holy Spirit was moving and then someone will call you on the phone to report that it was the worst service ever because everything seemed to be out of control.

It is a mystery of the complex human personality that two people can have similar problems that will cause one to withdraw and retreat whereas the other will tell anybody that will listen. One person will look at a difficult situation and see it as an opportunity to move whereas someone else will see the same situation as a warning to stay put.

This storm explores this familiar aspect of human nature by presenting the simple fact that 12 disciples obeyed Jesus and boarded the ship to sail back across the Sea of Galilee and as a result:

- 12 disciples found themselves in the eye of a storm
- 12 disciples were in the boat tossed by the wind and sea
- 12 disciples saw Jesus, walking on the water
- 12 disciples thought he was a spirit walking
- 12 disciples heard Jesus say clearly *“Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”*

**However, only one was able to see for a brief moment, the unlimited possibilities of walking by faith.**

In the Bible, men and women literally walked with Jesus. Today when we speak of the act of walking in the biblical sense, it has nothing to do with how physically capable we are, rather it is symbolic of the way we live, the way we act, and the way we conduct ourselves. It references the fact that life is a journey, and we are all walking---- moving from life to death.

As believers, we understand that we are just *“pilgrims who are passing through this barren land”*. We are on a journey from mortality to immortality and we strive to walk by faith. Because our journey is fueled by faith, it implies that the way we live, the way we act—the things we say and do, the places we go and the company we keep ought to be determined by our understanding of what it means to have a personal relationship with the Lord.

**To walk by faith is to live in the confident expectation that regardless of what is happening in our life, the Lord will never leave or forsake us.**

Those who are not *“walking by faith”* are influenced by things that they can see, touch or and hear. They live to acquire wealth, to fight for power and to “get all they can and can all they get.”

But the believer looks beyond this visible world into the invisible, with a conviction that he is walking through life in fellowship with an all-powerful, all-knowing Savior who is everywhere at all times, and this is all that really matters.

To “walk by faith” requires that we become familiar with the promises that the Lord has given to us in the Word. *“Faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God”*—**Romans 10:17**; therefore, *faith* is confidence that God will do whatever he has promised according to his Word.

Matthew’s account is clearly a lesson in fear vs. faith, i.e., how one person who is wrestling with a problem will become frozen in fear whereas another will say this is just an opportunity for the miraculous. Understanding this simple principle of faith is *not* our greatest challenge because according to **Hebrews 11:6** our salvation is built on the principle of faith.

**Hebrews 11:6** *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Our greatest challenge is overcoming negative people with limited faith who think that they can keep God in a box. There will always be those who claim that they know who Jesus is because they have received and believed the Word. They may even claim to have a testimony or two but when trouble arises, they speak words of fear and failure than words of faith and victory.

#### **Analysis:**

This passage focuses on Peter’s walk of faith. At this stage of his spiritual growth, he was a man of “little faith”; nevertheless, he was the only one who responded and said to Jesus, *“Lord, if it’s you, tell me to come to you on the water.”*

Jesus did not invite the disciples to walk on the water, so Peter’s request to walk on the water was a most unusual. Some have even criticized Peter for trying to show-off in front of the other disciples. I contend that Peter probably looked around the boat at 11 wet and weary men, paralyzed by fear, worry, despair and defeat. He looked at the storm that was raging around him, then he looked at Jesus walking on the water and he simply weighed his options.

He could stay with the others on the boat and become just as depressed as they were, or he could get closer to Jesus by any means necessary. There are some situations when you simply have to separate yourself from those who are weak in the faith, or you will become just as defeated as they are.

**II Corinthians 6:14** *Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*

I can easily imagine the conversation: *“Peter, you better stay in this boat. Man, don’t be no fool. You don’t know if that’s Jesus or not. It’s rough out there all by yourself. How are you gon’ make it out there without us? —We are your boys---you think you can make it with just you and Jesus? —Man, you must be crazy.”*

**You cannot stay with “Boat People” and get closer to Jesus. To get closer to Jesus requires that you make a decision:**

- To not allow “boat people” define who you are and what you can do
- To not allow “boat people” bind you up with advice that is not based on the Word of God
- To not allow “boat people” keep you from making a change in your life
- To not allow “boat people” steal your blessing
- To not allow “boat people” stop you from taking a step of faith, so that you will know for yourself that God will do what he said he will do

You may have to say, *“I love y’all—you’re my boys, you’re my home girl and if you need me call me, but I can’t stay in this boat with y’all. Y’all ain’t going anywhere..... staying in this boat ain’t doing anything for me.... I got to get up out of here because y’all in the dark and I see some light over there. Why would I stay here when I have a choice?”*

When Peter asked to walk on the water, Jesus simply told him *“Come.”* Peter didn’t have any evidence that he would be able to walk on the water—to stand upright during this storm; nevertheless, he made a decision to get out of the boat by faith based on just ONE WORD.

Yes, the water was deep, the wind was strong, and the waves were high, but Peter still stepped out on the Word. As a church, if we are going to experience the power of God: then one by one, in whatever way we can— each of us must make a decision to stop sitting in the boat, watching from the sidelines. We must stand up and start walking by faith and not by sight.

When Peter started walking by faith, he began to experience the miraculous. *Only two people ever walked on the water—Jesus and Peter.* However, in a brief moment when his focus shifted and he realized that he was still in the storm, he began to sink.

**Let’s get real.** Even when Jesus calls us to join him where he is and to do what he is doing we can still experience a crisis of faith, which is the momentary feeling that the obstacles and problems of life are more powerful than the One who called us to join him in what he is doing. Peter was just as human as we are; consequently, he had a crisis of faith, and he became afraid. Fear cancels faith and clouds our vision of God’s presence and power.

Fortunately, as Peter was sinking, he had just enough faith to start praying. The Bible says that Peter cried out, *Lord save me*. The lesson for us is that when Peter's faith became weak, he did not drown in his troubles, instead he went to the Lord in prayer. In the midst of a raging storm and the eminent possibility of drowning, he still believed that prayer changes things.

When Peter called out, Jesus reached down immediately, pulled him up and rescued him. We sing: "...we fall down but we get up"; however, we must understand that when the storms winds were blowing and the waves were crashing in our lives if it had not been for the Lord's presence, power, grace and mercy, we would not have been able to rise up in our own strength.

**This is the revelation**, after Jesus rescued Peter, he verbally chastises him, "*You of little faith, why did you doubt?*" ---Then without waiting for Peter's attempt to justify his lack of faith, Jesus lifts him up and together they continue to walk on the water.

**You don't have to have it all together to walk in fellowship with the Son of God. You don't have to be perfect to start walking by faith....**

- Even when you take my eyes off of Jesus
- Even when you fall short of his standard
- Even when your faith is weak
- Even when you don't believe you can do what you been called to do

You can be assured that wherever you are going, Jesus will walk with you--- He will not allow you to fail if you can just believe.

*The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand. ---Psalm 37:23-24*

### **Summation:**

Peter and Jesus could have walked back to the shore, instead they walked back to the boat. Jesus has a plan, to walk with you—so that your life will be witness that his power is real for the benefit of those people that knew you when, who thought that there was no hope for you and who even expected that would be dead and buried by now.

***Be bold enough to walk back to the boat as a living testimony that:***

### **II Samuel 22:4-5**

*I will call on the Lord who is worthy to be praised so shall I be saved from my enemies. When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid, the sorrows of hell compassed me about, the snares of death prevented me.*

### **II Samuel 22:7**

*In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried to my God, and he did hear my voice out of the temple.....*

