

# Bible Studies

## Walking on the water



**Read Matthew 14v22-36** Mark 6v45-56, John 6v16-24

Three of the gospel accounts record this incident, all three place it in the context of another great miracle. **What was it?**

Neither John nor Mark, record that Peter walked on the water.

Jesus has gone up into the hills alone to pray. He had sent His disciples on ahead of him to the other side of the lake.



**What was the disciples current position and problem?**

**Were they in any immediate danger?**

**What kind of a mood do you think they were in?**

It had been a long day, they were tired and probably frustrated. According to Mark they were rowing hard against the wind. (6v47).

Mark comments that Jesus was walking past them not to them, perhaps in the manner of Luke 24v28. The fourth watch of the night is between 3 and 6am.



**Who did the disciples think Jesus was?**

**What was their state of mind as a result? Mark 6v50**

**Why do you think they made this assumption?**

**Does this mean the Bible endorses the existences of ghosts?**

No, it doesn't, it only says that the disciples, in their fear, assumed it was a ghost, as it turned out they were wrong. The Bible is quite clear that after death we leave this world for the next. There is no place in Biblical theology for disembodied souls roving the earth. Orthodox Christianity, where confronted with the possibility of ghosts attributes them either to demonic activity or sees them as a form of vision.

**What happened when He reached the boat? Matthew 14v32 Mark 6v51**

**Why do you think Jesus chose to walk across the water?**

It has to be more than just the shortest route between two points. Jesus did not do miracles gratuitously. John only records seven of Jesus miracles, including this one. Each miracle he selects is intended to teach us something.

**What did Jesus want the disciples, and us, to understand?**

In many ways this incident is similar to the calming of the sea. *Matthew 8v23-27, Luke 8v22-25 and Mark 4v35-41.* The basic meaning is the same Jesus has mastery over nature, He is not an ordinary man, we should stand in awe of Him. Matthew puts it like this: *Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."* *Matthew 14:33*

**Is it significant that the disciples worshipped Jesus? Matthew 4v10, Rev 22v8-9**

**What similarities are there between this story and the calming of the sea?**



Mark gives us a clue about the reason Jesus walked on the water.

**What is it? Mark 6v52**

**What does Mark mean by the loaves? Mark 6v30-44**

(Now would be a good time to familiarise yourself with the story.) The question is,

**What was it about the loaves they hadn't understood?**

Again it is about Jesus amazing power, but I think it is more than that.

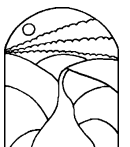
*But he answered, "You give them something to eat." Mark 6:37 Matthew 14v16 Luke 9v13*

**Why do you think Jesus said this?**

I think Jesus was trying to stretch their faith and their participation in His work. Trying to break their conservative ideas about what God can do. Shock them into broadening their spiritual horizons.

**How does this apply to us today?**

If this is so then Peter was the only disciple who grasped it.



**When the disciples cried out in terror what did Jesus say? Matthew 14v27**  
**Do we still fail to recognise Jesus at work and respond in fear and dismay?**



**What did Peter say? Why?**  
**Was this a rational thing to suggest?**  
**As a test to see if it really was Jesus, what weakness did it have?**  
**What other risks did he face?**

This is typical Peter, rash and impulsive, but quick to learn and follow.

Sometimes it is a thin line between faith and presumption.



**What is presumption?**  
**What is faith?**  
**What is the difference?**

The difference is found in one simple word in v29, *come*. Presumption is assuming on God, faith is obeying Him.



**What kind of courage did it require to step out of the boat?**  
**Why do you think he did it?**  
**Did he walk on water?**  
**What caused him to sink?**  
**What did Jesus do?**

### **The Application**

An application for us is not hard to find.



**What do you think the boat represents?**  
**What do you think walking on water represents?**

Peter was a fisherman, the boat represented everything he knew and was comfortable with. Walking on water represented the exact opposite. It is after all impossible, it cannot be done! The boat is the natural the water the supernatural. Walking on water is living by faith.

**What does living by faith mean?**

As Christians we talk so much about faith and how important it is but very often we will do everything possible to avoid having to exercise it.



**Do you think this is a healthy attitude?**  
**Why do we avoid situations that might require faith?**  
**What does getting out of the boat mean for us?**

**What sort of things are you going to need before you set out in faith?**

A word from God! Courage and some faith might help.



**What do you think the waves and wind represent?**  
**What happens when we look at them?**  
**Where should we look?**  
**What enabled Peter to walk on water?**

**Is it promised that we will never fail?**

No in fact from Peter's example quite the opposite! Peter got very wet. But there is a promise in this passage, that when we do fail, Jesus will be right there to rescue us.

**What are the risks in stepping out in faith?**

**Why do you think fear of failure is such a problem for so many people?**

There are many things that can and will fail, God will never fail.

**Who suggested that Peter walk on the water, Jesus or Peter? v28**

**Who authorised it? v29**

Often we wait for God to tell us what to do (which is right) but sometimes it needs to be us taking the initiative saying; *'Lord is this what you what from me?'*

Well I guess you could say Peter made a fool of himself, again. Eleven disciples, watched, eleven disciples stayed dry, respectable and safe. One got wet, one failed, one made a fool of himself, but one for a brief moment walked on water. I know which group I would rather be in.