



LESSON 13

Jesus walks on water

MATTHEW 14:23–33



Jesus is God present with us.



“And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God’” (Matt 14:33).

Supporting Truths

1. Jesus is the Son of God.
2. Jesus is with His people.
3. Jesus’ presence is powerful to save.
4. Jesus delights in the Father’s presence.
5. Jesus uses trouble to show His presence.

Objectives

1. Recite Matthew 14:33.
2. Retell how Jesus came to the disciples and invited Peter to come to Him.
3. Give two examples of Jesus’ divine power.
4. Evaluate how much you delight to live in God’s presence.
5. Explain how the storm helped the disciples see the power of Jesus’ presence.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

Jesus walks on water • Matthew 14:23–33



Lesson Summary

After feeding the 5,000, Jesus sent His disciples across the sea and dismissed the crowd. Then He spent almost all night in prayer while His disciples struggled through a storm. After many hours, Jesus walked to the disciples on the water, encouraging them with His presence. He let Peter come to Him, and He saved him when he started to sink. Then, when Jesus got into the boat, the storm immediately stopped, and the disciples worshiped Him as the Son of God.

Spotlight on the Gospel

Jesus' prayer shows that He found protection and pleasure in the presence of God the Father. And by walking on the water, Jesus showed the disciples that they could find the same protection and pleasure in His presence. Jesus came to earth so that we can once again be with God. Through His sinless life and perfect sacrifice, we can be restored to God, where we can go on living in His presence as we trust, love, and worship Jesus.

LAST WEEK



Jesus feeds the 5,000

John 6:1–15

THIS WEEK



Jesus walks on water

Matthew 14:23–33

NEXT WEEK



**Jesus defines
discipleship**

Mark 8:27–38

JESUS' MINISTRY IN GALILEE

Lesson Commentary

Jesus is God present with us.

When Gabriel announced Jesus' birth, he said, "They shall call his name Immanuel," which means God with us (Matt 1:23). But what is that name to you? To many people, this name is only a reminder of the Christmas season, and they don't think of it the rest of the year. But if you long to experience God's powerful presence in your life, then read on. The story of Jesus walking on water not only proves that He is in fact God with us, but it also shows what a powerful difference His presence can make in our lives.

Jesus sought the presence of His Father (14:22–23)

Jesus had already displayed His power that day. He had miraculously fed a huge crowd (14:13–21), proving that He was the One Moses had prophesied about (John 6:14). Therefore, He was right to claim honor equal to God's (5:23), and the people needed to listen to His message (Deut 18:15). But instead of coming to Jesus on His terms, the crowd tried to force Him to become the kind of king they wanted (John 6:15). So Jesus sent the crowds away (Matt 14:22b).

Jesus also sent the disciples away (14:22a) to protect them from being confused by the crowd. Like the crowd, they did not yet know Jesus correctly (Mark 6:52). But unlike the crowd, they wanted to know Him. They loved to be with Jesus, yet Jesus made them leave, because He knew that they would appreciate His presence much more by the time the night was over!



THINK ABOUT IT

Jesus allows trouble in our lives to help us see the power of His presence.

Jesus also sent everyone away so that He could be alone in His Father's presence (Matt 14:23). He prayed because He is fully human. As a human,

He could be tempted, and the crowd had just tempted Jesus as Satan had (4:1–11). Instead of suffering rejection, pain, death, and wrath, Jesus

could have accepted the crown that day, marched into Jerusalem with a huge crowd of followers, and taken the kingdom by His own great power. But thank God He did not! Instead, in that moment of temptation, He turned to His Father. There, in His Father's presence, He found the strength to humbly obey, even though He knew it would cost Him His life (Phil 2:8).

But He also prayed because He is the Son of God. As God's Son, He submits to His Father, depends on His Father, and delights in His Father (John 5:19; 17:4). He loves to be with His Father and do the things that make His Father happy (4:34). He found greater joy in doing His Father's will than in anything temptation could offer (Heb 12:2). This is the lesson Jesus wanted to teach His disciples—to find protection and pleasure in the powerful presence of God.

Jesus came to be present with His disciples (14:24–27)

Meanwhile, by late evening, around 9 PM, the disciples were in the middle of the Sea of Galilee (Mark 6:47). They should have been close to the northern shore of the lake, but the wind had blown them several miles off course (John 6:19). All night they rowed against the wind, until sometime between 3 and 6 AM (Matt 14:25). No doubt they wished Jesus was with them as He had been in the last storm (8:23–27)!

Why did Jesus let them struggle so long? Why does He sometimes seem to stay far away from us and leave us in difficulty? David wondered this too: "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" (Ps 13:1). But God knows what He is doing. He is teaching us to trust Him (13:5). "Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope," and when we hope in God, we are never disappointed (Rom 5:3–5). Those "who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength" (Isa 40:31).

THINK ABOUT IT

A believer is someone who waits eagerly and confidently for God (Isa 25:9; 26:8).



STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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We can wait eagerly for God because He sees, He cares, and He comes with great power to save. Jesus saw the disciples struggling (Mark 6:48), and when they could not come to Him, He came to them walking on the water as only God can do (Job 9:8; Ps 77:19; Isa 43:16). But instead of being comforted, the disciples were terrified! They could not imagine a human walking on the water, so they were swept away by superstition and believed they were seeing a *ghost*—*an imaginary creature* (Matt 14:26).

Then they heard Jesus' voice: "Take heart; it is I," or, literally, "I AM" (14:27). This is the same way God encouraged Moses at the burning bush, when He said, "I AM" (Exod 3:14). God told Moses, "I will be with you" (3:12), and by His presence with Moses, God brought Egypt to its knees. Later, when Moses despaired, God let His presence "pass by" to encourage Moses (Exod 34:6). He did the same thing to encourage Elijah (1 Kgs 19:11). Now, Jesus put Himself in God's place. He planned to

"pass by" the disciples (Mark 6:48), to display His divine presence to them just as God had done to Moses and Elijah. By His own powerful presence, Jesus would rescue His disciples.



THINK ABOUT IT
"Fear not, for I am with you" (Isa 41:10).

Jesus invited Peter into His presence (14:28–31)

Peter got the message. When he said, "If it is you," (Matt 14:28), he was not doubting. He knew it was Jesus. This was *faith*. First, Peter was fully *trusting* in the presence of Jesus. Despite the craziness of jumping into the stormy sea, Peter figured he would be safer outside of the boat next to Jesus than in the boat away from Him! Second, Peter was *fully submitting* to Jesus' will, seeking permission before jumping out (14:29). It was also love, as Peter wanted nothing more than to be with Jesus. In response, Jesus welcomed Peter to come to Him.

The trouble came when Peter took his eyes off Jesus and focused instead on the howling wind (14:30). What he saw with his eyes challenged what he believed in his heart, and he began to sink. Yet despite his hesitation, he still had faith, crying out, "Lord, save me." Jesus responded with ever-present love (14:31). In love He saved him, and in love He rebuked him, for the Lord disciplines the one He loves (Heb 12:6). He had used this extreme situation to show Peter, and the rest of the disciples, that His presence was more powerful than they had realized before.

Jesus' presence is the presence of God (14:32–33)

This time, Jesus did not even have to speak to stop the storm (cf. Matt 8:23–27). He simply got into the boat, and the storm stopped. Not only that, but the boat was immediately at their destination, even though they had been two or three miles away (John 6:21). The first time they had seen Jesus calm a storm, they only wondered who He was (Matt 8:27). This time, they knew: Jesus is the *Son of God*. Jesus is of *the same nature as God*, just as a child of a human is human. In other words, Jesus was *God*, *the Son*, the One to whom every knee will bow (Phil 2:9–11).

The disciples realized they were in the presence of God. As humans, God designed us to be in His presence (Gen 3:8). He was present with Israel in the tabernacle and in the temple (Exod 40:34–35; 1 Kgs 9:3). He was present on earth in the life of Jesus (Col 2:9). He is present today in the Holy Spirit living in the hearts of believers (1 Cor 6:19), and one day He will be fully present as King over the New Creation (Rev 22:3). Yet we often live as if His presence did not matter to us. But today we have seen that His presence—His powerful and loving presence—makes all the difference (Ps 27:4; 84:10). Truly Jesus is worthy of our faith, love, and worship.

THINK ABOUT IT
We stumble when we take our eyes off Jesus.



Lesson Outline

Jesus is God present with us.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Jesus did not let His disciples stay with Him (14:22–23).
2. Jesus walked on water to be with His disciples (14:24–27).
3. Jesus let Peter come be with Him (14:28–31).
4. Jesus was God with His disciples (14:32–33).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Jesus sought the presence of His Father (14:22–23).
 - Jesus sent the disciples and crowds away (14:22).
 - Jesus prayed on the mountain alone (14:23).
2. Jesus came to be present with His disciples (14:24–27).
 - The disciples were in trouble without Jesus (14:24).
 - Jesus came to them, walking on the sea (14:25).
 - The disciples were terrified (14:26).
 - Jesus encouraged them with His presence (14:27).
3. Jesus invited Peter into His presence (14:28–31).
 - Peter wanted to go be with Jesus (14:28–29).
 - Peter doubted but cried out in faith (14:30).
 - Jesus was there for Peter (14:31).
4. Jesus' presence is the presence of God (14:32–33).
 - Jesus joined the disciples and stopped the storm (14:32).
 - The disciples realized Jesus is the Son of God (14:33).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **Was Jesus with the disciples in the boat?**
No. He had sent them away right after dinner.
2. **How did Jesus come to be with the disciples?**
He walked on water.
3. **Who got out of the boat to walk to Jesus?**
Peter.
4. **What happened when Jesus got into the boat?**
The storm stopped and the boat was immediately at the shore.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **What does “Immanuel” mean?**
God with us.
2. **Why did Jesus pray?**
To find protection (from temptation) and pleasure in the presence of His Father.
3. **How long were the disciples on the lake?**
All night, rowing against the wind.
4. **When the disciples saw Jesus, what did they think He was?**
A ghost.
5. **What did Jesus say to them?**
He said, “It’s Me,” which is the same as “I Am.” He was saying He was with them like God was with Moses.
6. **How did Peter show his faith in Jesus?**
He trusted Jesus enough to jump out of the boat. He submitted to Jesus by asking permission.
7. **When did Peter start sinking?**
When he took his attention off of Jesus.
8. **Who did the disciples say Jesus is, and what did they do?**
The Son of God, which means Jesus is God. He is God the Son. So they worshiped Him.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

SMALL PAN OF WATER

Using a small pan of water (pie pan, shallow bowl) demonstrate some features of water from the lesson, such as wind on the water (blowing, using a fan, blowing through a straw) or a boat race across the pan.

WILL IT FLOAT?

Bring to class a tank or pitcher of water where the children can observe what floats and what sinks. Bring in some objects such as a piece of wood, a doll, a coin, etc. Begin by asking the children if they think different objects will sink or float. Put the objects into the water and let them watch it float at the top or sink to the bottom. Ask the children what would happen if a person were to get into the tank. Would they float or sink? Would a person be able to stand on top of the water? Explain that in today's lesson someone will stand right on top of the water. The disciples were very nervous, but then they realized who it was. Let's listen to today's lesson and find out who was walking on the water.



ILLUSTRATE

SON OF GOD

Jesus proved that He is God in today's lesson. The title, "Son of God," does not mean that Jesus is less than God; it means He is equal to God, having the same nature as God. You might illustrate this by showing the class a baby doll. A baby is a human, just like his parents. The same is true of a puppy or kitten (bring stuffed animals or pictures to class). A puppy is a dog, just like its parents. And a kitten is a cat, just like its parents. A puppy is not a cat, nor is a kitten a dog. They are just like their parents.

TIME

Much time passes in today's lesson (disciples struggle on boat for many hours). Use a clock with movable hands to show the passing of time (maybe 6–9 hours). Or, start with the sun up in the sky, have it travel west and down, and bring out a starry, moonlit sky (use a felt background or paper sun and moon hanging from a stick or string from the ceiling. You could also briefly turn out the lights for the part of the story that happens at night.



APPLY

JESUS AND PETER

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, glue, scissors, and crayons.

Directions: Have the students color and cut out the pictures from the craft sheet. Glue pieces to a sheet of blue cardstock. Draw lines on the cardstock to make waves.

Jesus and Peter
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

A WALK ON THE WATER

Wear a swimsuit (over your clothes), life preserver, snorkel, and flippers. Tell the class you are getting ready for a walk on the water. After the children tell you these things will not help you walk on water, ask them what would help you. Nothing! Nothing except the power of God! We will learn about this power in today's lesson.

MIRACULOUS TIMELINE

Write the following phrases on the bottom of separate sheets of cardstock: (1) Jesus' disciples got into a boat, (2) Jesus sent away the crowd, (3) Jesus went up on the mountain alone to pray, (4) the disciples were in a storm while in the boat, (5) Jesus walked on water to the boat, (6) Peter walked on water to Jesus, (7) Peter began to sink, (8) the storm ceased, and (9) the disciples worshiped Christ. Ask the children to draw a picture on each card matching the description. Which card occurs first in today's lesson? Tape this card to the wall. Continue taping the papers in the order the class gives. During the lesson, point out which papers were placed in proper order and which papers needed to be moved.



ILLUSTRATE

THE DEAD SEA

Can any of the children float on their back in the water? The easiest place to do this is in the Dead Sea, near Israel. Standing 1,407 feet below sea level, its surface is the lowest elevation on land. It's also one of the saltiest bodies of water. Has anyone tasted salty ocean water? The Dead Sea is 9 times as salty as the ocean (34% salinity, 66% water). That means your body is more watery than the Dead Sea! This salt makes it especially easy to float in the Dead Sea, but even there, it is not possible to walk on the water.

DO NOT BLINK

Peter began to sink when he took his eyes off Jesus. Find out who has the best stare by challenging a child to a blinking contest. The first one to take his eyes off the other loses. Do not blink!



APPLY

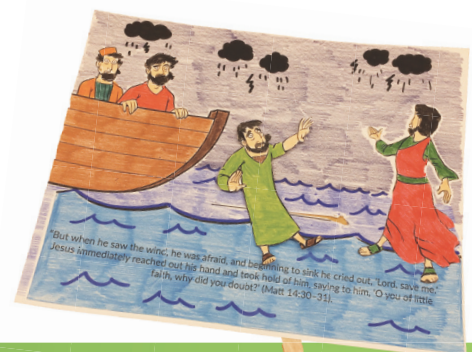
PETER'S FAITH TESTED

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheets, tape, glue, scissors, and crayons.

Directions: Precut the slit on the first craft sheet. Have students color the pictures on both craft sheets. Cut Peter and Jesus out from the second craft sheet. Glue Jesus to the right side of the page. Attach Peter to a craft stick and then insert him through the slit. The student can move Peter across the water and have him sink. Attach the waves and verse to the bottom of the page to cover the slit.

Peter's Faith Tested
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

BASILISK LIZARD

The Basilisk lizard, found in Central and South American rainforests, is known for its ability to run on the surface of the water. It lives near rivers and streams in order to escape predators. When trouble is near, the basilisk runs across the surface of the water with its large hind feet that are equipped with flaps of skin by the toes that allow it catch on tiny air bubbles (you might show a video of the basilisk running across water). Young basilisks can run ten to twenty meters on the water before they begin to sink and must start swimming. However, this amazing creature cannot compete with its Creator, Jesus, who may walk across water as long as He pleases.

OUT ON THE WATER

How many children have been out on a boat in the ocean or on a lake? What are some things they like to do out on the water (swim, ski, fish, snorkel, etc.)? Can anyone walk on the water? In today's lesson, we'll meet someone who can.



ILLUSTRATE

SECURITY BLANKET

Ask the children if any of them ever had a security blanket or stuffed animal. Then ask them why they desired to keep this object close (it brought comfort). They have probably outgrown this object. However, there is One whom we will never outgrow, One who *actually* brings security to our lives—His name is Jesus. He walked on water not only to prove that He is in fact God, but also to show what a powerful difference His presence can make in our lives.

MAPS AND PICTURES

Use a map to show the children where the disciples traveled to and from on the boat. Explain where Jesus may have gone to pray and explain what the overall region was like. Use the map to show how far the disciples got off course. Normally, people traveling across the northern end of the Sea of Galilee would stay within a mile or so of the shore. But the disciples were "a long way from the land" (Matt 14:24), having been pushed several miles south—close to the center of the lake—by the strong winds.



APPLY

HAPPY PLACE

What makes you the happiest? Is it sports? Food? Video games? Clothes? Friends? Attention? Awards? Jesus was happiest when He was in the presence of God, His Father. He sent everyone away so that He could be alone in His Father's presence (Matt 14:23). He prayed to His Father, submitted to His Father, depended on His Father, and delighted in His Father (Matt 14:23; John 5:19; 17:4). He loves to be with His Father and do the things that make His Father happy (4:34). He found greater joy in doing His Father's will than in anything temptation could offer (Heb 12:2). What about You? Do find protection and pleasure in the powerful presence of God, or in someone or something else? Do you keep your eyes constantly trained on Jesus, or do you allow them to wander to other things?