

## THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING CELEBRATION

### "IN THE RIGHT BOAT"

#### MATTHEW 8:23-27

#### **This Week's Core Competency**

**Peace** – I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, others, and me. Philippians 4:6-7, *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Disciples find peace in following Jesus. Jesus said as much in John 16:33. Toward the end of his "Upper Room Discourse," before he prayed for his disciples he let them know, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace." Doubtless "these things" refers to everything he taught them that night (13-17). In the world, they will face trouble, but in him they will find peace. His "in me" language is probably an allusion to the *metaphor* of the vine found in chapter 15. In 15:4 he tells them, "Abide in me, and I in you" (NKJV). And in John 8:31 he links abiding to following, "If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed" (NKJV). It's hard to miss the fact that following Christ entails obeying Christ and vice versa. On the meaning and implications of

---

*Unless we clearly see the superiority of what we receive as his students over every other thing that might be valued, we cannot succeed in our discipleship to him.*

– Dallas Willard

---

"abiding," "continuing," or "dwelling" in Christ's word, Dallas Willard writes:

"And what does 'dwelling' or 'continuing,' in his word mean? It means to center your life upon the very things we have been studying in this book: his good news about The Kingdom Among Us, about who is really well off and who is not, and about true goodness of heart and how it expresses itself in action. We will fill our souls with the written Gospels. We will devote our attention to these teachings, in private study and inquiry as well as public instruction. And, negatively, we will refuse to devote our mental space and energy to the fruitless, even stupefying and degrading, stuff that constantly clamors for our attention. We will attend to it only enough to avoid it.

"But dwelling in his word is not just intensive and continuous study of the Gospels, though it is that. It is also putting them into practice. To dwell in his word we must know it: know what it is and what it means. But we really *dwell* in it by putting it into practice. Of course, we shall do so very imperfectly at first. At that point we have perhaps not even come to be a committed disciple. We are only thinking about how to become one. Nevertheless, we can count on Jesus to meet us in our admittedly imperfect efforts to put his word into practice. Where his word is, there he is. He does not leave his words to stand alone in the world. And his loveliness and strength will certainly be personally revealed to those who will simply make the effort to do what his words indicate.

cont pg. 2

---

"In these efforts to see Jesus more clearly we should not dabble, but be thoughtfully serious. We should find a reliable and readable version of the four Gospels . . . If we can plan a week in a comfortable retreat, or at least several days, then we can read through the four Gospels repeatedly, jotting down notes and thoughts on a pad as we go. If over a period of several days or weeks we were to read the Gospels through as many times as we can, consistent with sensible rest and relaxation, that alone would enable us to see Jesus with a clarity that can make the full transition into discipleship possible" (*The Divine Conspiracy*, 282-83).

## For Discussion

If fear and timidity are traits of disciples Jesus would call lit., "little faiths," what would he call you and why?

## day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Matthew 8:23-27

23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

26 He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

### Cf., another translation

23 As he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. 24 And a great storm developed on the sea so that the waves began to swamp the boat. But he was asleep. 25 So they came and woke him up saying, "Lord, save us! We are about to die!" 26 But he said to them, "Why are you cowardly, you people of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it was dead calm. 27 And the men were amazed and said, "What sort of person is this? Even the winds and the sea obey him!" (NET)

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

\* Box "then" indicating *temporal connection* in v. 23.

\* Circle "his disciples" in v. 23.

\* Underline "followed" in v. 23.

\* Circle "furious storm" in v. 24.

\* Box "so that" indicating result in v. 24.

\* Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 24.

\* Highlight Jesus' words in v. 26a.

\* Circle "rebuked" in v. 26.

\* Underline "completely calm" in v. 26.

\* Highlight the men's words in v. 27.

---

## day 2

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Who got into the boat to cross the lake? Be as specific as you can from the text in its context.
2. The word translated "followed" in verse 23 has a *literal* and a *figurative* meaning. Which do you think it has here? Explain.
3. While fierce squalls were commonplace on the Sea of Galilee, perhaps this "furious storm" is something more. How so?
4. Explain the *contrast* in verse 24 and how it contributes to the story.
5. Note your initial assessment of the disciples' faith (v. 25).
6. Had they had more faith, what might they have said to Jesus?
7. Does Jesus concur with your assessment? Explain.
8. In Mark and Luke, Jesus stills the storm *first* and then rebukes the disciples. Why would Matthew reverse the order?
9. If the story is about discipleship *at the beginning*, what is it about *at the end*?
10. **Discussion:** Discipleship is an important theme in Matthew's Gospel. Talk about what he wants his readers to learn about following Jesus from this passage.

---

## day 3

# EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

John Ortberg has written a delightful book on discipleship with the catchy title, *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat*. It's a refreshing as well as insightful exposition of Matthew 14:25-32 describing Peter's brief walk on the lake. Perhaps he should write a companion volume on Matthew 8:23-27 entitled, *If You Want to See Jesus Calm the Sea, You've Got to Get Into the Boat*.

According to 8:18, Jesus ordered the crowd around him to cross to the other side of the lake. On the one hand, those who refused to follow him into the boat escaped a furious storm; on the other hand, those who climbed in experienced an awesome miracle. They all survived—those who didn't follow and those who did. But those who got onboard made the better decision because they got to see Jesus' astounding power and authority in action.

The story of Jesus calming the storm (vv. 23-27) must be understood in its broader context (vv. 18-27). One commentator's observations are helpful in this regard. He begins by saying: "By skillful editorial work Matthew combines discipleship sayings with the story about Jesus calming a storm by inserting the discipleship sayings into the sea narrative after the opening sentence" (Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew, Interpretation*, 94). He is simply commenting on the relationship of verses 23-27 to verses 18-22, pointing out that Matthew inserts verses 19-22, containing Jesus' comments on discipleship, into the narrative about crossing the lake that begins in verse 18. And then he explains: "That is, the journey has in principle already begun when the question of what it means to follow Jesus is raised. This impression is reinforced when the miracle story is resumed in verse 23: 'And when he got into the boat, his disciples *followed* him' (see 4:19; 9:9). In this way the storm narrative becomes an acted parable about what it means to follow Jesus" (94). In a *figurative* nutshell, following Jesus as his disciple entails climbing into the boat with him in obedience to his command to cross the lake. Clearly, the narrative begins with a focus on discipleship, but that's not where it ends.

The *lower story* is about *discipleship*. Disciples follow Jesus; they do what he commands. We can only speculate as to whether the two disciples mentioned in verses 19 and 21 climbed into the boat with Jesus or not. In any case, those who did got the

surprise of a lifetime. "Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake" (v. 24). Matthew describes this storm in terms that suggest to some that this was no ordinary squall. Although such storms were commonplace, they think Satan may have been behind this one. The term Matthew uses to refer to the storm, *seismos* (lit., "earthquake") has preternatural overtones, and the one Jesus uses to end it, *epitimaō*, is used elsewhere in exorcism stories (cf., Mk 1:25; 9:25; Lk 4:41). All of which leads one commentator to summarize what happened this way: "Jesus demonstrates power over the destructive forces of nature, which remain under the devil's sway" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew, NAC*, 150).

When the disciples see that they are about to drown, they wake Jesus, asleep through the whole hairy affair. "Lord save us!" they plead. "We're going to drown!" They have faith. They address Jesus as "Lord;" they ask him to save them. Seasoned fishermen turning to a carpenter for help in a squall, what delicious irony! But they don't have enough faith. They *fully* expect to drown. No wonder Jesus replies, "You of little faith," literally you "little faiths" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, v. 33a, *Matthew 1-13*, 165). "Here as elsewhere in Matthew's story, little faith manifests itself as a 'crisis of trust.' In this instance, it thwarts the disciples' ability to carry out the task, or mission, Jesus has given them. Jesus fully expects that the disciples should obey his command and sail across the sea. They succumb, however, to the malady of little faith, which assumes the guise of cowardice, and do not complete their task" (Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 135). It appears that Matthew reverses Mark's order, placing Jesus' rebuke of the disciples before his rebuke of the wind and the waves, in order to spotlight Jesus' teaching on discipleship.

The *upper story* is about Jesus. The story doesn't end with a focus on discipleship; it ends with a focus on *Christology*. The calming of the storm is one of a number of miracles found in Matthew 8:1-9:8, some of which are miracles of healing and others miracles of power. With regard to miracles in general and the calming of the storm in particular, one commentator writes: "Here the focus is on Jesus and the disciples, and the characteristic feature is that Jesus reveals, in the midst of situations in which the disciples exhibit 'little faith,' his awesome authority. . . . The reason

---

Jesus gives the disciples these startling revelations is to bring them to realize that such authority as he exercises he makes available to them through the avenue of faith. In the later situation of their worldwide mission, failure on the part of the disciples to avail themselves of the authority Jesus would impart to them will be to run the risk of failing at their tasks (28:18-20; chaps. 24-25)"

(Kingsbury, 70). In calming the storm the man Jesus demonstrates the same authority over nature attributed to Yahweh in the Old Testament. "How wonderful! Even the winds and the waves obey him" (v. 27).

## *The Message of the Passage*

*Follow Jesus because it will give you, his disciple, an opportunity to learn more fully who he is and to experience his authority and awesome power for yourself.*

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

- Write about how God is making himself known to you . . .

- Write about how God wants to change you . . .

- Write about how God is calling you to change your world . . .

---

# notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 23 **Then** Verse 23 could easily come immediately after verse 18, but Matthew inserts Jesus' remarks on following to make a point regarding discipleship. "From the way Matthew has structured this passage, with the inserted material of vv 19-22, the focus of this passage falls naturally on the disciples and discipleship" (Donald A. Hagner, Word Biblical Commentary, v. 33a, Matthew 1-13, 221). "Verse 23 resumes the story line of v. 18, The words 'disciples' and 'followed' link back with v. 21 and vv. 19 and 22, respectively. The two dialogues with the would-be disciples and the stilling of the storm narrative belong together" (Blomberg, 149).
- v. 23 **the boat** "The word Matthew used to describe the boat (*plouion*) could fit a boat of many different sizes. However, it is probable that this was a fishing boat that carried at least a dozen or more people, plus fish, across the lake. Matthew probably would have used a different word if it were a larger boat. 'If the first-century-A.D. boat recovered from the mud of the northwest shore of the lake of Galilee in 1986 (now preserved in the Yigal Allon Center at Ginosar) is typical of the normal working boats of the period, its dimensions (8.20 meters long by 2.35 wide [about 26 and a half feet by 7 and a half feet]) would suggest that the boat might be overcrowded with more than thirteen people.'" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Matthew," 2014 ed., 148, www.soniclight.com). "Many boats needed a crew of at least five to handle the boat (four rowers and one rudderman), though it could carry as many as sixteen. There was enough room for a person to lie down in the stern and sleep when not on duty, with perhaps a ballast sandbag for a pillow (cf. Mark 4:38)" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 351).
- v. 23 **his disciples** Only four disciples have been mentioned by Matthew to this point in the narrative (4:18-22). Since the twelve aren't mentioned until 10:1-2, "his disciples" may not refer to them per se. What's more, it's very unlikely that the entire "crowd" (v. 18) followed Jesus into the boat, yet quite likely that more than the two who addressed Jesus (vv. 19, 21) did so if they did.
- v. 23 **followed** "It is difficult to know how much Matthew may have intended to convey with his comment that the 'disciples followed' Jesus 'into the boat.' Perhaps it just describes their physical movements. Perhaps he meant that it symbolizes the disciples' proper response to Jesus in view of verses 18-22" (Constable, 148). The second is more likely as other commentators confirm. "The voyage, called the 'going away' in vv 18-19, represents discipleship as a response to Jesus' command to follow him in vv 18-22" (Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew*, 154).
- v. 24 **furious storm** Cf., "a great storm on the sea" (ESV). "Surrounded by mountain ranges to the east and west that rise over 2,650 feet from the level of the lake, especially infamous was an east wind that blew in over the mountains, particularly during the spring and fall (cf. 14:19, 24; John 6:1-4). The lake's low-lying setting resulted in sudden violent downdrafts and storms (cf. Mark 4:37; Luke 8:23; John 6:18) that produced waves seven feet and more, easily able to swamp a boat" (Wilkins, 351). However, this storm may have been something more. "Matthew's word for storm is unusual; it more commonly refers to an earthquake or the like (the addition in the sea makes it clear that a storm is meant). It is a vivid word and, reinforced with great, brings out the magnitude of the turbulence" (Morris, 205). "Matthew calls the storm a *seismos* (literally, earthquake), a term used for apocalyptic upheavals (cf. 24:7; 27:54; 28:2), often with preternatural overtones. This seems to be no ordinary storm but one in which Satan is attacking" (Blomberg, 149).
- v. 26 **little faith** The expression "points to a situation in which faith is present but weak and inadequate" (Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation, 96). The disciples have faith but not enough. "Here as elsewhere in Matthew's story, little faith manifests itself as a 'crisis of trust.' In this instance, it thwarts the disciples' ability to carry out the task, or mission, Jesus has given them. Jesus fully expects that the disciples should obey his command and sail across the sea. They succumb, however, to the malady of little faith, which assumes the guise of cowardice, and do not complete their task . . . despite the fact that the disciples have fallen victim to a crisis of trust, Jesus does not leave them to their own devices but hears their plea and assists them in their plight. The life of discipleship is susceptible to bouts of little faith. Such little faith is not to be condoned. Nevertheless, Jesus does not abandon his disciples at such times but stands ever ready with his saving power to sustain them so that they can in fact discharge the mission he has entrusted to them" (Kingsbury, 135).
- v. 26 **rebuked** "The idea of 'rebuking' (the same language used in exorcism [e.g., 17:18] but much more often in Mark and Luke) may presuppose evil spirits as expressing themselves in the storm" (Hagner, 222).
- v. 26 **completely calm** This "refers to more than simply the cessation of the storm. It instead means there was a mysterious, supernatural calm that testified to the sovereign power of Jesus" (222). "If a storm suddenly stopped naturally, the wind might cease but the waves would be disturbed for quite some time" (Wilkins, 352). "Astoundingly, Jesus has demonstrated the identical sovereignty over wind and waves attributed to Yahweh in the Old Testament (cf. Jonah 1-2; Pss 104:7; 107:23-32) . . . Quite understandably, the disciples wonder aloud about the identity of the man, bringing the narrative to its Christological climax" (Blomberg, 150).
- v. 27 **what kind of** In some contexts, the Gk. term can be taken as exclamatory, e.g., "How great!" or "How wonderful!" which is how one commentator takes it here (Gundry, 157).
-

### Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Confession time...my family is a little obsessed with the weather. We are all avid weather followers. Everyone has several weather apps on their phones. Once we were eating in a restaurant when a local anchor weatherman walked in the door. We all froze and stared. I know, it's a little embarrassing. One evening there was an amazing storm. Because we live in a neighborhood with many trees, we all piled into the car in our pajamas so we could drive to a more open spot and watch the lightning. It was a beautiful display of God's power. I imagine the storm in today's passage was one of those brilliant storms. However, the disciples weren't in the safety of a suburban in the middle of a parking lot. They were in a boat in the middle of the sea during the raging storm, being tossed back and forth. It must have been a frightening experience. However, the men knew exactly what they needed to do. They needed to call out to Jesus and ask Him to save them. Without Him they would surely drown. I have felt like that before and have cried out to Him to rescue me and He has - every time. Is your family in a place where you are feeling the waves of life overtaking you? Gather together and ask Him to save you. He can and will.

#### What Does The Bible Say

Read: Matthew 8:23-27

1. What happened when the disciples and Jesus went out on the boat?
2. What did the disciples say to Jesus?
3. How did Jesus solve their problem?

#### What Do You Think

1. Have you ever had a big problem that you cried out to Jesus for help? If so, what happened?
2. What does it tell you about Jesus that even the winds and waves obeyed Him?

#### What R U Going To Do

Draw a picture of a boat in the lake during a storm and place it somewhere in your house where everyone can see it. Each time someone has a prayer need this week, write it on the picture. As you pray for these things, remember that we serve a BIG POWERFUL God!

### MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Peace - I live without worry because things are good between God, myself and others.

Memory Verse

Philippians 3:9a - *Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

### KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC \_\_\_\_ and Verse \_\_\_\_\_. Family completed **Say** \_\_\_\_\_ **Think** \_\_\_\_\_ **Do** \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.  
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

#### 2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** Ephesians

#### 6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

**Tom Bulick** (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.  
Ft. Worth, TX 76120  
1-866-PANTEGO  
Fax 817-275-6403  
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you Belong, Become, and go Beyond as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).