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Jesus Walks on Water

Scripture: Matthew 14:22-33

Theme: Jesus is God , He does what only God can do

Jr High (Ages 12-14)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

"Walking on Water: Why Jesus Did What No One Else Could" (Lesson Overview for Junior High , Ages 12, 14)
Imagine you're in a storm at sea, waves crash over you, the boat's rocking violently, and fear grips your heart. That's exactly what Peter felt in today's story. After Jesus calmed the wind, He sent His disciples out in a stormy boat while He walked toward them on land. Peter, brave and excited, cried, "Lord, if it's You, tell me to come!" And Jesus said, "Come!" But here's the twist: Peter stepped out on the water... and immediately started sinking. Why? Because he forgot one truth: Jesus is God, He's not just a man doing something amazing, He's the One who can do it and always will. The disciples didn't understand at first, but Peter's panic taught them a life-changing lesson: God doesn't just walk on water, He holds you up when the world feels too big. Whether it's fear, doubt, or overwhelming circumstances, Jesus isn't asking us to imitate His power, He's inviting us to trust it. And trust isn't just a feeling; it's choosing to lean on Him when the waves come. How can you trust Jesus today, even when things feel like sinking? (Encourage them to pray, ask for help, or look for His "walk on water" moments in their lives, like when He provides, protects, or works in ways no one else can.) Keep it simple, personal, and hopeful! Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

Bible Story

Title: "A Brave Heart in the Storm" Matthew 14:22-33

The night was dark and choppy. The waves crashed violently against the small boat, knocking Peter's hat off and splashing his feet as he clung to the edge. The wind howled, and the sea seemed to swallow the ship whole. Peter had seen Jesus walk on water once before, during the miracle at the feeding of the 5,000, but this time, the fear was different. He wasn't just watching; he was inside the storm.

Jesus had sent the disciples away to pray, knowing the waves would test their faith. The moment the boat was far enough from shore, Peter stepped out of it, stepping not on land but on the rough surface of the water. His feet sank just an inch, but his confidence was real. He wasn't just following Jesus, he was leaning on Him. Yet as soon as Peter took his eyes off the man on the boat, the wind and waves came crashing back. "Lord, save me!" he cried, already drowning. The disciples were terrified, screaming to Jesus for help, but Peter's panic was louder.

Jesus didn't ignore them. He reached out and pulled Peter into the boat. The miracle wasn't just about walking on water, it was about faith. Peter's fear had been real, but his doubt came too soon. The disciples later asked, "Why did you let us go?" Jesus answered, "You're still here, aren't you?", proof that God's grace doesn't abandon us when we stumble.

Life Application: This story isn't just about walking on water, it's about real faith in a real world. Life will push us, make us doubt, and sometimes feel like we're drowning. But just like Peter, we can take a step of trust, even when the storm feels too big. The key isn't perfection, it's asking for help when we're afraid. And like Jesus, we're never too far out of reach.

Why This Story Matters: God doesn't call us to walk on water without fear, but He does call us to trust Him even when we're scared. Peter's failure wasn't his undoing; it was his reminder that faith isn't about never falling, but about getting back up with Jesus.

Key Verse

Matthew 14:31, 'You of little faith,' He said, 'why did you doubt?'

The Story Behind Matthew 14:31: "You of Little Faith, Why Did You Doubt?" Picture this: Peter, Jesus' closest friend, was standing on a stormy sea with Jesus walking toward him. The waves were crashing, the wind was screaming, and Peter's legs felt like jelly, "This isn't me!" He panicked, "I'll drown!" But just as he called out, Jesus reached out and grabbed him. Jesus didn't say, "You're weak." Instead, He asked, "Why did you doubt?" This verse isn't just about Peter's one big slip-up, it's a mirror held up to all of us. Life will throw curveballs (like fear, failure, or fear of failure), and sometimes, even our best friends in Christ might almost let us fall. The question isn't "Did you fail?" but "How did you react when you didn't have it all together?" Jesus isn't mad, He's calling us to trust Him even when we're shaking in our boots. Life Application: - Acknowledge the doubt: It's okay to feel unsure. Jesus sees your struggles, not just your strength. - Ask for help: Like Peter, reach out to friends, family, or even God with your fears. - Keep trusting: The next time life feels chaotic, remember, Jesus will catch you. And that's no doubt about it! Real Question for You: What's one thing that makes you doubt right now? Talk it out with someone you trust, like a friend, teacher, or God. He won't judge; He'll help you swim.

Activities

Activity 1:

1. Set the Scene (3 min)
2. "Imagine Jesus is in a boat with you. The waves are huge, like a giant wave of fear or doubt is rolling toward you. The wind is loud, and you're screaming, 'Why is this happening?' What do you whisper to God?"
3. Write students' responses on the paper plate (e.g., "Help me!", "Why me?"). Let them add as many as they want.
4. The "Water" Challenge (5 min)
5. "Now, pretend the waves are this big [hold arms out wide]. You're in the boat, and the storm is closing in. When Jesus calls you, 'Come!', what do you do?"
6. Give each student a paper plate (as a "boat") to hold while they take 2 steps toward a marked "water" area. "Trust Him to catch you!"
7. The Walk (3 min)

8. "Jesus walks toward the storm with you. He's not afraid. When you step out, do you notice anything different about the water?"
9. Have students clap or whisper: "It's calm!" Point to their plates, "Even when you step into fear, God's power is bigger than the waves."
10. Reflect (3 min)
11. "When was a time you felt like you were walking into a storm? How could Jesus 'walk with' you?"
12. Share answers in pairs, then circle up. "God doesn't fix problems, He walks through them with us."
13. LIFE APPLICATION:
14. For fear of failure: "Jesus walked on water, even when it looked impossible. Ask Him to make you brave in your next 'storm.'"
15. For loneliness: "He's right there in the boat with you. Ask Him to help you trust Him more."

Activity 2:

1. Write Your Storm (5 min)
2. "Close your eyes. Think of a fear or question you're carrying right now, something you're afraid to ask about. Write it on an index card. Trust me, we're going to 'bury' it in God's promises."
3. Students write 1, 2 fears (keep it personal but not overly sensitive).
4. Decorate the Jar (4 min)
5. "This jar is your 'faith container.' Glue a lid on it, then decorate it with God's promises or a verse from our story (e.g., 'Jesus walked toward the storm with me!')."
6. Example decor: Draw waves with "Fear not" written inside.
7. "Bury" Your Fears (3 min)
8. "Now, write your fears on another card. Tape it inside the jar. Close it. You're saying, 'I'm giving this over to God, even if I don't understand, He's with me.'"
9. Optional: Place the jar in a quiet spot (e.g., a backpack or locker).
10. Revisit the Promise (5 min)
11. "Open your jar next time you're scared. Read the promise you wrote on the outside. Ask God to remind you: 'He's already walked through this with you.'"
12. "When was a time you trusted God with a fear? How did it feel?"
13. LIFE APPLICATION:
14. For anxiety: "Your 'storm' isn't empty, Jesus is walking toward it with you. Trust Him to meet you halfway."
15. For future worries: "God doesn't promise smooth sailing, but He promises to be with you. Ask Him to show you where He's already walked before."
16. Bonus Tip:
17. End with a group prayer: "Lord, help us walk toward the storms in our lives with faith like Jesus, even when it feels scary."

Discussion Questions

- Lesson: Jesus Walks on Water , How Can We Trust in the Unimaginable?
- "The sea is huge, scary, and full of unknowns. When we're faced with something that feels impossible, like trusting God when our plans go wrong, or asking for help when we're afraid, what do we do? The story of Jesus walking on water shows us that faith isn't just about believing in the past; it's about stepping into the unknown with courage. Let's explore how this story can help us today."
- 1. Fear vs. Faith: What Would You Do Instead of Walking on Water?

- Imagine you're in a storm at sea, not just a little choppy, but terrifying. Your boat is rocking violently, the wind screams, and you hold on tight to the edge, your heart pounding. The people around you are panicking, but Jesus has already walked away. Some of His disciples are terrified and screaming to Him: "Save us, Lord!" But He doesn't just wave a hand and make the water smooth. Instead, He lets them experience the fear first, just long enough to remind them (and us) that their trust isn't in what they see, but in who they know.

- Discussion:

- If you were one of the disciples, would you have been afraid? Why or why not?

- Sometimes, when things feel impossible, we try to fix them ourselves, like making a plan, seeking help, or pretending it's not happening. What's a time when you felt like you had to step into the unknown, like walking on water? How did you handle it?

- Jesus didn't give them an easy answer right away. He let them experience their fear so they could learn that their real strength isn't in their courage, but in their relationship with Him. Where in your life right now do you feel like you're being asked to trust something beyond your ability?

- 2. When the Storm Comes: Do You Call Out or Give Up?

- The disciples' panic isn't just about the water, they're afraid because they don't understand why Jesus is walking away. They've seen Him do miracles before, but this time, He's leaving them alone in the storm. That's scary! But here's the thing: Jesus didn't just walk on water, He invited them to watch. "It is I; do not be afraid." (Matthew 14:27)

- Discussion:

- Have you ever been in a situation where you knew God was with you, but it felt like He was far away? What made you feel that way?

- Sometimes, we think God is only present when things are going well, like in a quiet moment at church or when we're doing something "spiritual." But the story of the disciples shows that God isn't only there for the easy parts. He's there when we're afraid, when we don't understand, and when we have to choose to trust Him.

- If you could ask Jesus one thing right now, like, "Why am I still in this storm?", what would it be? How would you respond if He said, "I'm right here, but I'm not going to fix it for you yet?"

- 3. The Real "Walk on Water": When Do We Get Out of the Boat?

- Peter wasn't the only one who felt brave at first. He walked toward Jesus, but when he saw the storm, his courage vanished. "Lord, save me!" he shouted, just like the others. But here's the thing about Peter: He wasn't foolish for asking for help. He was human. He was afraid. And that's okay!

- The story ends with Peter walking on water briefly, just long enough to prove he could trust Jesus in the moment. But then he looked down and started sinking. Why? Because he forgot: Trust isn't a one-time leap; it's a daily choice.

- Discussion:

- What's a time when you almost walked into something new or brave, but then got scared and gave up? What kept you from following through?

- Jesus doesn't always give us the perfect moment to trust Him. Sometimes He calls us to step out in the middle of the storm. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to choose to trust Him, even when it felt risky? What happened?

- If you could tell your younger self one thing about trusting God, even when it's hard, what would it be? What's a small step you could take right now to trust Him more, no matter how scary it feels?

- 4. The Sea We're All Walking On: Where Do You Need to Trust More?

- The disciples thought they were the only ones afraid. But Jesus knew they were. He knew they'd need to learn that their trust isn't in themselves, but in Him. And that's what He's doing for us, too.

- Discussion:
- What's one "sea" or challenge in your life right now, a relationship, a fear, a decision, that feels like it's too big for you to handle alone? Where do you feel most like you're being called to trust God, even when it's scary?
- The disciples didn't understand why Jesus walked away. They didn't know how this story would end. But He did. And so do you. Sometimes, the hardest part isn't trusting when things are clear, it's trusting before you understand.
- If you could have one conversation with Jesus about your fears or doubts right now, what would you ask Him? How would you respond if He said, "I've been right here with you all along, but I'm not going to fix it for you yet?"
- Closing Reflection:
- "The story of Jesus walking on water isn't just about a miracle, it's about a call to trust, even when we don't see the way out. The sea we're all walking on isn't just the ocean; it's the storms, the doubts, the times we feel like we're drowning, even when we're not. The disciples' fear wasn't their problem; their choice to trust was. And so is yours."
- Would you like to explore any of these questions in a small-group activity or prayer time next?

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus: "When Fear Grows, God's Strength Stays" Teacher: "Amen. Alright class, I'm praying for all of you today, not just to make today easy, but to remind you that when life feels scary or uncertain, Jesus isn't watching from far away. He's right there, walking beside you, whispering, 'Don't be afraid.' Like Peter in the story, we'll sometimes stumble, but His power is bigger than our doubts. Pray for courage to trust Him when the waves of worry feel too big, whether it's about school, friendships, or even just the fear of 'what if?' Let's give Him that prayer right now, because He's the One who can make us stand firm, one step at a time." (Pause for silent reflection or group response.) --- Life Application: "God doesn't just walk on water for our entertainment, He walks with us through every 'ocean' we face. His strength isn't just to keep us afloat, but to show us how to wade through fear when we're ready."

>> Missions Spotlight

Among the lake-dwelling peoples of Southeast Asia, like the Intha people of Myanmar's Inle Lake, who live on the water, the story of Jesus walking on water is astonishing. Missionaries share that the God who walks on water also walks with us through every trial.

-> To the Cross

Peter walked on water when he looked at Jesus. When he looked at the waves, he sank. At the cross, Jesus bore the weight of all our sins, waves of evil that would drown us. Because He conquered sin, we can 'walk above' the waves of life through faith.