

## Walking on Water

**Thesis:** Focused walking (keeping our eyes on Jesus) keeps us steady, distracted walking (focusing on the wind and waves) causes us to sink.

Matthew 14:22-33 (NLT)

Jesus Walks on Water

22 Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home. 23 After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone.

24 Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. 25 About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!"

27 But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here! [b]"

28 Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water."

29 "Yes, come," Jesus said.

So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the strong [c] wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

31 Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

32 When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. 33 Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Psalms 40 (NLT)

1 I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry.

2 He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire.

He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along.

3 He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God.

Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the Lord.

### **Magic Eye: 3D Viewing:**

Check out a book or two from the library, or find some images online. Spend time as a group seeing who can discover the hidden images and who cannot.

You can find quite a few online. Individuals can use their phones to try the images.

twitter : [www.twitter.com/MagicStereogram](http://www.twitter.com/MagicStereogram)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/stereogram.s/](http://www.instagram.com/stereogram.s/)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/stereograms](http://www.facebook.com/stereograms)

How: Hold the center of the printed image right up to your nose. It should be blurry. Focus as though you are looking through the image into the distance. Very slowly move the image away from your face until the two squares above the image turn into three squares. If you see four squares, move the image farther away from your face until you see three squares. If you see one or two squares, start over!

When you clearly see three squares, hold the page still, and the hidden image will magically appear. Once you perceive the hidden image and depth, you can look around the entire 3D image. The longer you look, the clearer the illusion becomes. The farther away you hold the page, the deeper it becomes. Good Luck!

*Note: (Magic Eye images may be easier to see if viewed on paper rather than a computer screen. If possible, print this image and follow the instructions below. (You don't need to print in color.)*

**Opening Question:** What is your favorite water based recreational activity? (swimming, scuba diving, water skiing, etc)

### **Is walking on water possible?**

- Say: Today we are looking at the story of Jesus walking on the water.
- Discuss: Is walking on water possible? Have people in your group come up with ways that a person might "walk on water."
- Read: Here is a brief article (at the end of the lesson) the article from Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walking\\_on\\_water](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walking_on_water)
- Ask:
  - Why can some animals walk on water?
  - Why can't people (naturally) walk on water?
  - What do you think of the "sheet of ice" explanation?
  - The article concludes that there is no scientific argument for Jesus doing this, and Christians must rely on faith. Is this a good or bad thing when telling people about Jesus?

### **Eminem: Walk on Water:**

*The concept of walking on water is found in pop culture, often pointing to the illusion that someone is extremely special or gifted. Famous Detroit rapper admits that his specialness is an illusion, and people should not put to*

*NOTE: This song had quite a few expletives, and please do not play the song.*

I walk on water  
But I ain't no Jesus  
I walk on water  
But only when it freezes  
'Cause I'm only human, just like you  
Making my mistakes, oh if you only knew  
I don't think you should believe in me the way you do  
'Cause I'm terrified to let you down, oh

Discuss:

- Why do we look to famous people, as if they will give us meaning?

- Why does Eminem admit that it is all an illusion? (I walk on water/But only when it freezes)
- Why does he not want people to worship him? ('Cause I'm terrified to let you down)
- How might putting our hope in people (other than Jesus) cause struggles for us and for them?

**Bible Study:** Read Matthew 14: 22-33

**Understand the story:** Here are some basic observation questions, before we dive deeper.

- Why did Jesus send the disciple ahead of him?
- What troubles did they face when they were away from Jesus?
- Why were the disciples confused when they saw Jesus (they thought he was a ghost)?
- How does Jesus try and assuage their fear? (vs 27)
- Why do you think Peter challenged Jesus to invite him onto the water (vs 28)?
- What causes Peter to sink? How is he rescued?
- What happens to the storm when Jesus steps onto the boat?
- What happens to the disciples when Jesus steps on the boat?

**Digging Deeper:** These questions will take your discussion into the interpretation and application

- The disciples hit trouble out on the open water. What are some of the troubles that we face that feel like giant storms of life?
- The disciples see Jesus coming toward them, but are confused and scared. How do our “storms” keep us from clearly seeing Jesus?
- Why do you think Peter challenged Jesus to invite him onto the water (vs 28)? What challenge would you like Jesus to help you meet?
- The other disciples never offer to walk on water? What might be some of their excuses for not stepping out of the boat? What are some excuses that we make that keep us from taking risks in our faith?
- The wind and the waves quickly overcame Peter’s faith. What things tend to pull you down when you are trying to be faithful to God?
  - What are some of the things that distract people from walking with Jesus?
  - What are some things that distract you from having a focused faith walk? (What things keep your eyes off of Jesus?)
- As Jesus steps on to the boat, the storms stop and the disciples worship Jesus. What are some storms that Jesus has calmed, and how did that lead to worship?

### **FIXING OUT EYES:**

Read Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

- How might the “thing that hinders and sin that entangles” compare to the storms of life? What might it mean to throw them off?
- When Peter focused on Jesus his faith strong, when he looked away and became distracted he began to sink. How does this story compare with the Hebrews passage?
- Why should we fix our eyes on Jesus? (according to vs 2 & 3)
- What are some things that are distracting you in your faith?
- How can you keep your eyes “fixed on Jesus” during these storms so that we “will not grow weary and lose heart”?
- How can the church/small group support that?

## **FORTY**

Read Psalm 40: 1-3 (NLT)

1 I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry.

2 He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire.

He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along.

3 He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God.

Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the Lord.

U2's song 40: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3z\\_LBNF\\_-xl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3z_LBNF_-xl)

- **Ask:** How might you patiently wait from Jesus as you go through storms?
- **Say:** Just like Peter, Jesus will lift you up and place you on solid ground, and just like the disciples it will lead to worship.
- **Listen:** to the U2 Song 40, and spend time in silent prayer asking God to help you stay focused on Him during your storms (or the storms of others), ask God to rescue you (or others), and ask God to put a new song in your (or their) heart?
- **Pray:** As a group, pray for specific storms that people have mentioned

## Is Walking on Water Scientifically Possible?

### ANOMOLY

From a scientific perspective, an act of walking on water would be anomalous because it doesn't fit with what we know to be possible. It defies basic laws of hydrodynamics. Even though the burden of proof is with the believers, scientists have looked to the 1,200 different species that are actually able to walk on water in order to understand and explain the underlying processes that come into play with the notion of humans and walking on water.

Smaller animals are able to walk on water because they do not break the surface tension that water holds. Insects have hydrophobic oils that force the water molecules to move out of the way when they walk on water. However, humans are clearly able to break the surface tension, so scientists look to larger animals and find that they have the ability to create a force that allows them to walk across water by slapping their feet on the water, which creates cavities in the water surface supporting them for less than 1/10th of a second allowing them to hydroplane. Examples are the basilisk lizard and the western grebe. According to Thomas McMahon, professor of biology at Harvard University, walking on water would "require a power output at least 15 times greater than ever achieved by humans". Going on to support da Vinci's design above and suggest that humans could design machines to do it better for us.

### PRAGMATIC VIEWS

However, perhaps the claims of walking on water are not even anomalous at all; Walking on water can be considered a false anomaly because there are other possible explanations for the accounts other than religiously inspired explanations that claim supernatural causes. US and Israeli scientists published a study in the Journal of Paleolimnology claiming that, "Jesus may have appeared to be walking on water when he was actually floating on a thin layer of ice, forced by a rare combination of weather and water conditions on the Sea of Galilee". Given all of the conditions, it is highly possible that somebody observed Jesus standing on a small sheet of ice not visible at a distance, making him appear to be floating on liquid water when he actually is not. How can illusionist Criss Angel's account of walking on water be explained? Most likely a mixture of illusions created by plexiglass or something similar, possibly a small wire holding him up, and/or video editing skills. What is clear, however, is that he would not be able to successfully walk on water in a controlled experiment.

Walking on water is not only falsely anomalous, but also very characteristic of pseudoscience. First, it hasn't proven to be self-correcting over time; nobody has been able to replicate or document a human walking on water. Even though it's been a subject of concern for literally thousands of years, there is no evidence supporting humans having the ability to walk on water. In fact, there is actually evidence and explanations about why humans are not able to walk on water. Additionally, since there are no theories explaining how humans would be able to walk on water successfully, we can assume that it's pseudoscience. Even further, pseudoscientific claims do not change much over time, and claims appearing in religious texts have never changed. Supporting a claim with anecdotal evidence in a book does not add any substantive value to offering an accurate explanation about various alleged accounts of walking on water. Furthermore, such claims are not falsifiable and have no way of being tested. Therefore, no causation can be attributed because it's not even possible in the first place. People who believe Jesus walked on water are subject to religious bias, and cannot offer any scientific evidence or support that such events happened as they did in the bible. Rather than science, they rely on faith.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walking\\_on\\_water](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walking_on_water)