



## Jesus Walks on Water/Experience

### 4th Confirmation Class Lesson

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**Supplies Needed:** Notebooks; Handout; one foam or fleece ball (a 9" foam ball works well) and a stopwatch.

#### EXPLAIN OPENING ACTIVITY

- Last class, we talked about how our perspective can be shaped by where we stand in relation to what we're looking at and also, just where we place our focus.
- We're going to do an activity now that demonstrates how difficult it sometimes can be to *stay* focused.
- We're going to play a game where I tell you to touch a body part.
- For instance, I'll say, touch your elbow.
- So you do that until I tell you the next thing to touch, like "Touch your ankle."
- Seems simple enough, right?
- So we're going to do this first round to see if you can do this.
- We gotta stand up to do this.
- Here we go!

Touch your nose

Touch your pinky finger

Touch your knee

Touch your ear

Touch your big toe

Touch your hip

Touch the top of your head

Touch your elbow

Touch your tongue

Touch your ankle

Touch your bellybutton

Touch your nose

- Easy enough, right?
- Ok, we're going to do that again, only this time, you don't touch the body part until after I call out the NEXT body part.
- So I'll say, "Touch your nose" and you don't do anything until I say "Touch your pinky finger" and it's at that point that you'll touch your nose.
- And then when I say the next thing, that's when you touch your pinky finger and so on.
- When I get to the last body part to touch, I'll just say "Next" so that we can end the list correctly.

(use the same list)

- That was a little bit tougher than the first round, wasn't it?
- We're going to play the game one more time, only this time we're not going to touch the body part until TWO other body parts are called out.
- So for example, when I say touch your nose, you'll just stand there. Then I'll say "Touch your pinky finger" and you'll still just stand there. Then when I say "Touch your knee" you'll touch your nose.
- When I get the end of the list, I'll just say Next and then Next

(use the same list)

### ASK

- Why was the last round harder than the first round? (because there were more things happening and you had to really stay focused to remember what to do and when to do it)

### TELL

- There's lots of different things we can focus on in life.
- But we're designed so that when we seek God first, the other things in life line up more clearly.
- So just like in the first round of the game, where our focus was on the first thing, that's what we want to do in life with God – we want to focus on God first.
- But often times, we instead focus on other things first, and then we start to get confused and lost like we did in the second and third round of the game.

## OPENING PRAYER

### REVIEW: Challenge of the Week

- "May you be covered in your rabbi's dust." So what or who are you following so closely that you are covered in its/his/her dust?

*HINTS to help you think about this:*

- On what do you spend the majority of your time?
- On what do you spend the majority of your FREE time?
- On what do you spend the majority of your money?
- If you had more time, more money, what would you LIKE to spend it on?

### REVIEW of past few classes

- We've talked about the groups that surround Jesus. What are the three groups we've talked about? (the disciples, crowd and Pharisees)
- Two classes ago, we talked about one reason why we believe what we believe. It's because of where we stand and where we focus. This focus provides us with a certain perspective/view point. The disciples, crowd and Pharisees all have a different location in relation to Jesus and therefore they all have different understandings of Jesus.
- Last class we learned that Jesus was a rabbi. What is a Rabbi? (Teacher who had the status of a Rock star during Jesus time and day).
- And what does the word *disciple* mean? (student).

- What did a disciple do? (followed their Rabbi, as closely as possible – tried to be just like their teacher).
- In 1<sup>st</sup> Century Israel, what did it mean if you were a disciple of a Rabbi? (It meant you were chosen, that you were the best of the best of the best and that you had the opportunity to become a Rabbi yourself).
- What does it mean that Jesus was a Rabbi? (It means that he was one of the best of the best of the best. It also means he was a 1<sup>st</sup> century Israelite Rock Star and looking for disciples)
- Who did Jesus choose as his disciples (Not the best of the best of the best)
- Another component that determines perspective (in addition to location and focus) is experience. We're going to read a story now about a certain experience that the disciples had.

### **READ MT 14:22-32**

22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, Jesus was there alone, 24 and the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. 25 So early in the morning, Jesus came walking toward them on the sea. 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." 28 Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29 Jesus said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30 But when Peter noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

### **ASK**

- What was Jesus doing in verse 23?
- Does this surprise you? Why/Why not?
- verse 25, why do you think Jesus would do this?
- In verse 24, Jesus can see the struggles of the boat, but it is not until later in the night that he goes to join and help them. Do you think it was difficult for Jesus to let them struggle by themselves, especially since he could see them struggling? (it takes some focus to keep praying and not let such a distraction interrupt - I think most of us would jump up and try to go help right away)
- Are you surprised by the disciples' reactions in verse 26 to Jesus? (seems pretty reasonable to me, considering the circumstances)
- verse 28 – what do you think of Peter's request? A little bold? A little crazy? Right in-line with what a disciple is supposed to do?
- verse 29 – Jesus commands and Peter does it! But in verse 30 – what seems to be the cause of Peter's sinking? (He's paying attention to things other than Jesus)
- Verse 31 – Why DID Peter doubt? (Once he started paying attention to things other than Jesus, he was reminded that what he was doing was impossible – that he shouldn't be able to do such things)
- Verse 33 – After this experience, who do the disciples think Jesus is? Do you think their perspective has changed or been strengthened?

## TELL

- Two classes ago, we talked about perspective. We talked about where you stand and what you focus on shapes what you believe.
- One tool that helps you to decide what perspectives you wish to keep and what perspectives you wish to let go of is the “tool” of experience.
- Sometimes you might think a certain thing is true, but it’s not until you experience it whether you *know* it to be true.
- For example, Peter wouldn’t know if he could walk on water until he tried it.
- So we can sit here and go, “No way did Peter walk on water.” But, if Peter did walk on water, then no matter what we say, it doesn’t change what *Peter* experienced for himself.
- Another perspective to consider about this story is that the sea was a symbol that the Israelites (those hearing this story for the first time) would hear as “chaos.”
- So Jesus isn’t just walking on top of water, he’s walking above the chaos (just like the spirit hovers over the sea/chaos in the first chapter of Genesis).
- Continuing with that idea, Peter when keeping his eyes on Jesus also stays above the chaos, but once Peter starts looking at the chaos, then he sinks into it. Just like with our opening activity, if we put other things before seeking God, then we start to sink into the chaos; we start to forget and get confused.

## SNACK

### TELL

- So now, we’re going to do an activity that will most likely challenge your beliefs of what you can do.

## Overview

Warp Speed engages the students in attempting to improve. In successive attempts, the class practices and improvises to improve the speed at which the ball travels through the group.

### EXPLAIN Warp Speed

- First, we need to stand up and form a circle.
- Now, I’m going to start by tossing this ball to someone else in the circle.
- Once you receive it, toss it to someone else in the circle who has not yet received the ball and is not immediately on either side of you.
- That person will then toss it to another person who has not yet received it and again not immediately on either side of him or her.
- Throwing continues until the last person tosses the ball back to me.
- **Remember who you tossed to because we will try to recreate the pattern in the next round.**
- Any questions?"

[DO: Toss the ball to someone across from you (the teacher). The cycle continues until the ball comes back to you. Repeat one more time so that everyone is clear who they toss the ball to and from whom they receive it. The ball must follow the same pattern both times.]

- We are now going to see how quickly we can send this one ball from start to finish without dropping it.
- Also, the ball must *pass through* the same order that we have already established.

[Note: MAKE SURE you say “pass through” AND NOT “hand-off” or “toss.” How you state this guideline will define the boundaries for how this task can be accomplished.]

[Optional: I (the teacher) am going to step out of the system now, so the person that I toss to will become both the beginning and the end person.]

- I will start time as soon as the ball leaves the first person, and I will stop time when it returns to him/her.
- You may begin when ready.
- Any questions?

[Time their first attempt. Applaud their attempt, whatever it is (one second per participant or longer is quite normal). Then tell them to do it faster!].

### **NOTES ABOUT THE ACTIVITY**

- As they try to go faster, they'll probably start making mistakes - dropping the ball, throwing it past their target. This is when the frustration can seep in.
- Encourage them to trim 2 or 3 seconds off their fastest time.
- If they get stuck, prompt them to identify, and then eliminate, ways that there is waste or gaps in their system of passing the ball.
- Allow for planning, additional attempts and more planning.
- At some point, you'll want to tell the class you've heard of groups with 20-plus members doing this activity in 2 seconds or less.
- Continue until the group attains the elusive "warp speed" or ceases to be actively engaged in trying to reach it.

### **HINTS and the SOLUTION**

- There are two things that will need to be changed in order to pass the ball faster: The amount of space between the students and how the ball is moved from person to person.
- You will want to encourage them to figure this out. But not too obviously.
- When you tell the group that Warp Speed can be done in 2 seconds or less, they might say, “No way” or “How?” or “That’s impossible.” That’s the idea. They have a belief, but reality is different than their belief. They CAN do it in 2 seconds or less. This is where experience and belief collide.
- If they can’t figure out the way to do it under 2 seconds, then at some point, you’ll have to tell them.
- Have the person who started hold the ball in one hand. Then have everyone else line up in the order in which they caught the ball.
- Now they all hold out their hand and the first person with the ball hits all their hands with the ball. Another way to do this is the first person stands in the middle of the circle, everyone else holds out a hand and the person in the middle spins with the ball reached out to hit the outstretched hands.

**After the activity, TELL**

- Regardless of whether the teachers helped you or if you figured it out yourself, you proved, by successfully reaching WARP SPEED that this activity can be done in 2 seconds or less.
- This is how it works with experience and perspective and beliefs.
- You may have believed that moving the ball through the group in 2 seconds or less was impossible.
- But your experience changed your beliefs, right?
- The same thing is true for the disciples with Jesus.
- Maybe they think they *can't* be like Jesus.
- But Jesus keeps providing them opportunities to try - and like in today's story, Peter sees that even if he can't walk on water as well as Jesus, he *can* walk on water.

**Weekly Challenge:** Think of and identify some things that you believe about God, but you would like to somehow experience so that you can cement that belief into an experienced fact.

**CLOSING PRAYER**