

Life of Peter: Lessons In Discipleship

Life Group Series, Autumn 2020 – Birmingham City Church

Part 5: **Faith**

Series Overview

There is a huge amount we can learn from the disciple Peter! This series unpacks key experiences and events from Peter's life to see what discipleship lessons there are for our own lives, as follows:

- Part 1 Discipleship
- Part 2 Friendship
- Part 3 Destiny
- Part 4 Insight
- **Part 5 Faith**
- Part 6 Integrity
- Part 7 Leadership
- Part 8 Suffering

Introduction

Let's watch Mario 'stepping out in faith'!

<https://youtu.be/iFAT6BqhE5A?t=4805>

It shows Mario on a computer game stepping into nothing, and then platforms appearing to support him. It's our opening illustration about faith.

When we trust God to be our platform, we can step towards where He is and He will support us.

But we have to step **before** he puts the platform there.

Matthew 14: Great Demonstrations of Faith!

Matthew 14 is an enormous roller-coaster ride for Jesus, and a huge 24-hour period on all sorts of levels:

- He receives news of the horrendous beheading of his cousin John the Baptist in Herod's palace, and He withdraws to a solitary place.
- From a place of both grief, and from the shadow that John's death will have cast over his own future destiny, somehow Jesus changes gears and finds compassion for the large crowds of sick and hungry people who track Him down.
- He prays all night, until just before dawn.
- Jesus then walks on water across the lake.
- He challenges, invites and encourages the disciples, especially Peter – and also rescues him from drowning.

It's a major day for Peter, too: after experiencing terror along with all the disciples, he becomes the first and only person in history to walk on water momentarily.

This session explores the nature of faith – and what we can learn from both Jesus and Peter about faith in this extraordinary chapter of scripture.

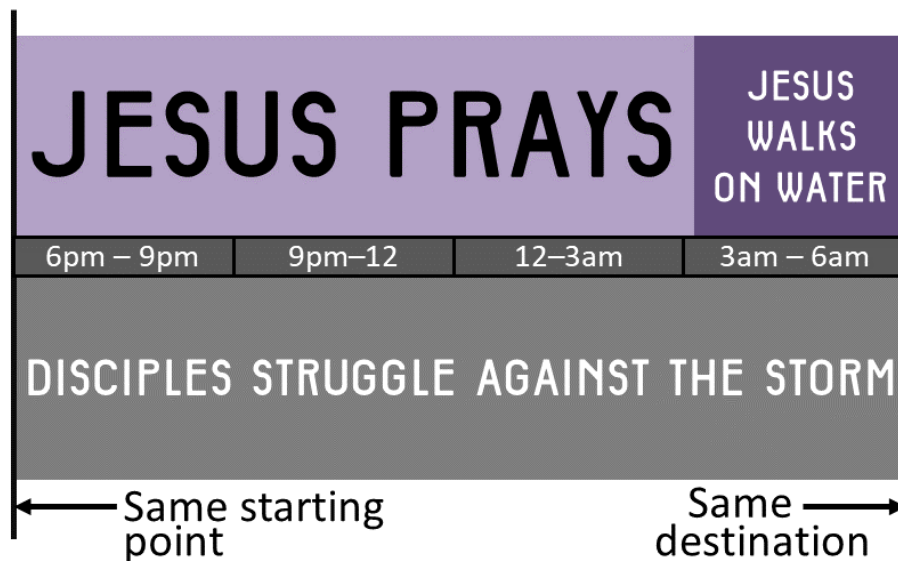
7 Lessons In Faith From Peter Walking On The Water

1. Prayer prepares the way for great acts of faith

This episode really convicted me about the power of prayer to bring about amazing results, versus us struggling in our own strength.

Ask yourself this – who has the best time of things in crossing the lake? Jesus or the disciples?

WHO HAS THE BETTER TIME OF THINGS ?



- **FOR DISCUSSION:** “All great acts of faith – both in us and in others – must be set up in and through prayer first.” How true would you say this is?

2. Peter’s faith rises up in response to the miraculous he sees in Jesus

Our faith increases whenever we see Jesus moving in power. As soon as we grasp what has just happened, or what might be possible, our faith grows.

Faith is therefore ‘infectious’ – in a great way!

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** Christians are like individual coals in a roaring hot coal fire – take one coal out and the fire gradually goes out for that coal. Is this true in your opinion? If so, what practical steps should we take to guard against this?

3. Where we gaze directly affects our level of faith

Matthew 14:29-30

"Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Where we point our attention has a huge impact on our level of faith!

Pointing it towards our circumstances often leads to dismay, uncertainty and fear – but pointing it at Jesus builds up our faith enormously!

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** Does it follow that we can train our attention and focus in a way that increases our faith – or is the growth of faith all down to Jesus? (Bear in mind that Hebrews 12:2 declares we should be "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith"...)

4. Faith is trust in the character and nature of God

Faith is often mistakenly seen as 'the bit we cannot explain after reason and science runs out'.

In reality, faith is confidence in God.

When we know someone really well, we can predict what they will be like, in character and behaviour.

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** Is it true to say: "The more you know God, the more faith you will have"?

5. Faith always has risk embedded with it

Like Mario stepping out into the unknown, or Peter stepping onto the water and then finding he could walk on it, faith always has some kind of risk associated with it – or it's not faith.

Think of the opposite for a moment: it takes very little special faith to walk along the same pavement to the shops every week, because any uncertainty has been swapped for experience and track record.

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** Suggest some ways we could give good advice to a new Christian to help them take the right risks in God.
- **FOR DISCUSSION:** What clues should we look for that God is genuinely inviting us to take a step of faith?

6. Faith always has obedience embedded with it.

Notice how Jesus tells Peter *not* to be afraid (v27), but then Peter *was* afraid (v30) – and it all unravelled quickly after that!

It's hard not to have a particular feeling sometimes, but in the moment, Peter went with the feelings that came as soon as he stopped looking at Jesus - and then he started to slip, and Jesus had to grab him.

- **FOR DISCUSSION:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how much would you say is obedience to Jesus helpful in building our faith? (1 not that important > 10 absolutely critical)
- **FOR DISCUSSION:** What steps can we take to ensure that we mature into disciples who don't react in a knee-jerk way from our feelings, but instead practise decision-making from obedience to Jesus?

7. Faith produces fruit at different levels

This is such a wonderful episode, because it speaks to all of us, at our different levels of development:

- "I can't do this, but I can see that others can" (the other disciples in the boat watching Peter 'have a go')
- "No-one has ever done this, but I want to be the first" (Peter watching Jesus)
- "Only God can do this, but I'd love to try and join Him!" (Peter watching Jesus; and also maybe even Jesus after praying all night to his heavenly Father – or do you think Jesus could just walk on the water without praying...?)

The first bullets above can be done with or without God's involvement, because we see this all around us in the world, as individuals take personal faith steps into either a personal unknown; or an unknown things that all people share e.g. being the first person to jump from a plane into a large net.

The third bullet can only be shown us by God.

All three work much better with God leading us into them, for His purposes.

Peter was someone who wrote about us 'participating in the divine nature'.

Our faith can mature to the level where we can be like Jesus'; and also do things that Jesus can do.

Holy Spirit Pause

- Ask the Spirit to show you what boat you need to step out of next in your faith journey

Life Application

This week's application works by making our faith like coals in the fireplace for one another – it builds up others strongly through encouragement.

Think of someone you know who has inspired you in your faith: contact them this week, and encourage them by letting them know how their faith has helped you.