

**IF YOU WANT TO
WALK ON WATER
YOU'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THE
BOAT**

Session six:
Learning to Wait on
Our Big God

Learning to Wait on Our Big God

When human beings get out of the boat, they are never quite the same... Every time you walk on the water, each time you trust God and seek to discern and obey his calling on your life, your God will get bigger, and your worship will grow deeper, richer, and stronger

John Ortberg

Questions to Think About

1. When in your life has God seemed unbelievably big to you? What impact has this experience had on your life?
2. How do you feel when you have asked God to help meet a particular need, yet your situation doesn't seem to improve over time? [Maybe it even gets worse!]
3. What do you think it means to wait on the Lord? In what ways does our fast-paced, horn-honking, express-line lifestyle make waiting difficult?
4. In what areas of your life do you find it particularly hard to patiently wait on God for his answer or action? Why?

1. What kind of things can keep us from fully trusting God?
2. Why, as John Ortberg explains, does Christ get “bigger” the more we trust him?
3. If we really believe that God is always with us, backing us up in the midst of our difficulties [even when we have to wait], how does that belief change the way we live?

Large Group Exploration

How Big Is Your God?

John Ortberg writes, "I strongly believe that the way we live is a consequence of the size of our God." If our God is too small, we are not convinced that we are absolutely safe in the hands of a fully competent, all-knowing, ever-present God. That is why so many of us keep living as if everything depends on us.

In light of our tendency to live with the consequences of a small God, let's explore some Scripture passages that will open our eyes to the wonder of our great, big God

1. What does scripture say to those of us who live in fear and anxiety because we think everything depends on us? [See Matthew 6:25-34; 1 Peter 5:7]
2. What does Scripture say to those of us who shrink back from boldly stepping out of the boat because we feel inadequate? [See 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Philippians 4:13]
3. What does Scripture say to those of us who believe our financial security depends on us? [See 2 Corinthians 9:8-11; 1 Timothy 6:17]
4. What does Ephesians 3:14-21 reveal about how much God loves us?
5. How do we know our big God cares enough to watch out for us and will act on our behalf when we are hurting? [See Psalm 9:10; 1 John 5:14-15]
6. Job. Who went through great trials that tested his faith, maintained an amazing trust in God. Despite what had happened to him, and his desire to question God, Job's God did not shrink. What was Job's response when God actually showed up and Job, who already knew God was big, saw God as he had never seen him before? [See Job 42:1-6]

Worship in Perspective

Worship is a word for the process by which we come to perceive and declare the vastness, worthiness, and strength of God. John Ortberg explains worship this way: "Worship is not about filling God's unmet ego needs. God has made us so that when we experience something transcendently great, we have a need to praise it... We worship God not so much because he needs it, but because we do. "In other words, worship is a recognition that God is "soooo big!"

So why is it important to worship God?

- Without worship, we forget that we have a big God beside us and live in fear.
- Without worship, we forget God's calling and begin to live in a spirit of self-reliance and stubborn independence.
- Without worship, we lose our sense of wonder and gratitude to God. We plod through life with blinders on, unaware of God's work in our lives.
- Our understanding of God grows as we reflect on what God has done and respond in worship.

Think about It

What God does in us while we wait is as important as what we are waiting for... Waiting is not just something we have to do while we get what we want. It is part of the process of becoming what God wants us to be.

John Ortberg

It's All a Matter of Timing!

It is particularly difficult for us to step out in faith and *wait* on God. Yet waiting is part of what God wants us to do.

In the story of Jesus and his disciples in the boat [Matthew 14:22-23], some of Jesus' actions were decisive and *immediate*. For example, he immediately answered the disciples' fearful cries and immediately saved Peter from drowning. At other times, Jesus *waited*. He waited until "the fourth watch of the night" – after 3:00 in the morning – before coming to the disciples on the stormy sea. Meanwhile, the disciples had been in the boat since before sundown. We can almost hear their thoughts as they fought to stay afloat: *Where is Jesus? Has he abandoned us? Doesn't he care about us out here?*

Peter also waited for Jesus' permission to step out of the boat.

It's no different with us. If we want to do what God has called us to do, we usually want to do it as quickly and successfully as possible. In contrast, God often wants us to wait on him. By waiting, we learn to depend on him and learn valuable lessons about faith, prayer, obedience, and trust that can change our

Group Discussion

1. When we realize how big our God really is, how does that realization affect us in the following areas:
 - a. Our view of ourselves?
 - b. Our belief that we are what we do?
 - c. Our hope for the future?
 - d. Our courage in stepping out of the boat?
 - e. Our ability to wait on God?
2. Why is learning to wait on God so important as we prepare to get out of the boat?
3. John Ortberg writes that “prayer allows us to wait without worry.” What do you think he means?
4. How will what we’ve explored today influence your response to “waiting on God?”

Personal Journey

When we step out of the boat and walk with God, anything can happen. We may soar, but that's not the only way we walk with God. Isaiah 40:31 describes soaring, but it also describes running and not being weary and walking but not fainting. Although we might think that soaring is the only way to go, God might have a different idea. His purposes may require that we run or walk.

1. Which of the following verbs from Isaiah 40:31 best describes you in your walk with God right now?

You're soaring. Things are great spiritually. You find yourself borne up by God's power. You are out of the boat. God is answering your prayers, using you in special ways. You are productive in your life's work and flooded with strength and wisdom beyond your ability.

You're able to run and not be weary. Life is challenging, with few miracles. But you are running the race with persistence and determination. You feel stretched but also feel God's pleasure in your obedience. You continue to run – faithfully serving, obeying, giving, and praying.

You're walking but not fainting. You are hanging on to God but don't seem to be fruitful or productive. You are hardly triumphant, but you won't let go. You keep obeying God and putting one foot in front of the other. You refuse to quit even though you stumble.

Walking with God Is More Than Soaring

Even Jesus didn't soar all the time. Consider what he experienced as he walked with God during his earthly life:

- *Soaring* [Matthew 17:1-9; John 11:38-44]. Jesus was transfigured in front of Peter, James and John and spoke with Moses and Elijah. Jesus also raised his friend Lazarus from the dead.
- *Running but not becoming weary* [Matthew 16:5-11; Mark 3:4-7; Luke 19:41-44]. Jesus was frustrated by the slowness of his disciples, he faced great opposition from religious leaders of his day, he wept over the defiance of Jerusalem, but he kept on running. Relentlessly he pursued God's calling.
- *Walking and not growing faint* [Matthew 27:27-35]. Jesus wasn't running when they put the cross on his bruised and bleeding back. He stumbled and fell as he walked, so another man had to carry his cross. Life was hard for Jesus, but he refused to quit. He kept on walking – to the cross, for us.

2. Considering where you are right now, what does the next step out of the boat look like for you?

3. Think about how your life is going right now in terms of stepping out of the boat.
 - a. In what areas do you need to rediscover God's greatness and trust him?
 - b. What temptations are you facing that, if acted on, would be quite contrary to waiting on and trusting God?
 - c. In what areas do you find it hard to hope?
 - d. Is this a time when you need to act or wait on God? Why?
 - e. When are you going to take that next step?

We each have the opportunity of a lifetime to get out of the boat and walk with God. No matter how much we know about God, or how much we have experienced with him, getting out of the boat is still a big step. There's always risk and the possibility of failure, but it's the only way we'll ever get to soar!