

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

Session One:
What's Water-Walking?

Preface

I want to invite you to go for a walk.

The Bible records many instances when God asked people to walk with him. There was the hard walk Abraham took with his son Isaac on the road to Moriah. The liberating walk Moses and the Israelites took through the Red Sea, followed by the frustrating, forty-year walk through the desert. And don't forget Joshua's triumphant walk around Jericho. Or the disciples' illuminating walk to Emmaus. The list goes on.

Perhaps the most unforgettable walk of all was Peter's walk when he stepped out of the boat one stormy night and walked on the water. When Peter went treading on the waves, I think he was experiencing walking at its finest.

Peter's walk stands as an invitation to everyone who, like him, wants to step out in faith and experience more of the power and presence of God. Water-walking is a picture of doing with God's help what we could never do on our own.

I believe there is some aspects of your life in which God is calling you to walk with and toward him. During these six sessions, you will learn the skills essential to water-walking: discerning God's call, transcending fear, risking faith, managing failure, and trusting God. When you are through, my hope is that you, like Peter, will accept God's invitation to go for a walk on the water.

John Ortberg

Small Group Exploration

Topic A **Where Do We Place Our Trust When We Are Afraid?**

God knows how fearful we are, and he sometimes uses uncomfortable, real-world challenges to cause us to choose where we put our trust. John Ortberg explains it this way: “the decision to grow [spiritually] always involves a choice between risk and comfort. This means that to be a follower of Jesus you must renounce comfort as the ultimate value of your life.” Let’s explore what God says about fear and choosing where we place our trust.

1. What happens when we place our trust in “boats” of our own making instead of placing our trust in God? [see Psalm 49:1-13]
2. What did David realize about finding security in God rather than things? [see Psalm 20:6-7; 118:6-9]
3. What do the following verses reveal about God?
 - a. Psalm 18:1-3
 - b. Psalm 56:3-4
 - c. Jeremiah 17:7-8
4. What has God said to his people over and over again, and why do you think he repeated it? [see Genesis 15:1; 21:17; Joshua 8:1; Daniel 10:12]

Who Deserves the Credit?

It's not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena... who, at best, knows in the end the triumph of great achievement, and who, at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly. So that his place will never be with those cold timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Theodore

Roosevelt

The Pluses of Water-Walking

It is the only way to real growth.

It is the way true faith develops.

It is the alternative to boredom and stagnation.

It is part of discovering and obeying our calling.

The water is where Jesus is!

Group Discussion

1. Fear of failure is one reason many of us don't step out of the boat. Some people view Peter's walk on the water as a failure, but note that there were eleven bigger failures sitting in the boat. In what ways does our perception of failure affect our willingness to start water-walking?
2. How much does our view of God's character and competence influence the degree to which we are willing to trust him and, in faith, to accept his calling and take risks?
3. Would you agree that sometimes the "boats" we create – whatever gives us an illusion of control, whatever or whomever [besides God] we are tempted to put our trust in when life is stormy – might actually be more dangerous than water-walking with Jesus? Why or why not?
4. If we keep choosing not to step out of our boats, what happens to us? To people around us? To our relationship with God?

Think about It

Failure is not an event, but rather a *judgment* about an event. Failure is not something that happens to us or a label we attach to things. It is a way we think about outcomes.

John Ortberg

Personal Journey: To Do Now

1. In *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat*, John Ortberg writes, "I believe that there is some aspects of your life in which God is calling you to walk with him, and that when we say yes to his calling, it sets in motion a divine dynamic for beyond merely human power." In what ways might God be Calling you to get out of your "boat" and step out in faith?
2. Usually anyone who begins water-walking has to face personal fear. What deep fears keep you from really walking with and obeying God, from stepping out in faith and with his help doing what you could never do on your own? List fears that are specific to the calling you wrote down for question 1.
3. Looking back on your life so far, when have you said no to God's call? When have you said yes? Why? What happened as a result of those choices?
4. Which small or large steps can you begin taking this week to get out of your boat a little each day?

Personal Journey: To Do On Your Own

You've learned a few basics about water-walking and have been encouraged to think about your choices, your boats, and the opportunity to water-walk. It's easy to seek comfort and create boats, isn't it? That's why so many people choose that path. But God is calling you, as he calls every believer, to put your faith in him and start getting out of your boat a little more each day.

Set aside some quiet time to think about the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers, and nobody needs to know your responses, unless you choose to discuss them with someone. What's important is that you take time to reflect on some issues that you explored today, issues that may cause you to become uncomfortable or even a bit angry – at yourself, God, or someone else. By their nature, some of the boats people create are pretty ugly and secretive. Remember, though, that God loves you just the way you are. Whenever you are willing to get out of the boat, he is ready to help you do things you could never accomplish on your own. One of the first steps in the process of water-walking is assessing honestly where you are right now – and where you want to be.

1. Look back on your life. When have you stepped up to the plate, to use a baseball analogy, and tried to hit the ball? When have you refused to get out of the dugout when your name was called? Why? How have those decisions influenced your life – for better or worse?
2. Are you excited about your relationship with God right now? Is it dynamic and growing, or pretty stale? Why? How might what you've learned about water-walking start making a difference in your relationship with God?
3. Do you think you are a risk taker or a comfort seeker? Why? Write out some ways in which you have taken risks in your walk with God and ways you have deliberately chosen to seek comfort rather than take the risk of what God was calling you to do.
4. Ask God to make your heart and mind open to what he wants to reveal to you through this study and to give you the courage to face whatever issues come up in the remaining sessions.