

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Ministry: A Study of Matthew 14–20

STUDY THREE

What Brings Us to Our Knees?

Matthew 14:22–33

None of these tests—the dark night, the huge storms, even those sinking moments when we think we'll drown—are designed to finish us off. They're designed to bring us to our knees in worship.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

As we learned in the previous study, when Jesus miraculously multiplied a snack for one person into a feast for thousands, He taught His disciples to trust Him in impossible situations. In His hands, a little would become a lot. His provision would be more than enough to feed every hungry soul under their care.

But trusting Jesus to *provide* in impossible situations was only the first lesson. Dangerous storms of persecution awaited them, so Jesus also needed to teach His disciples to depend on Him to *protect* when waves of opposition threatened their lives—even if they couldn't imagine how He'd protect them.

What better place to learn about faith in life's storms than the Sea of Galilee? This body of water rests in a deep valley, and a sudden burst of wind can sweep down the cliffs and churn the water into capsizing waves without warning. A quiet sail across a calm sea can escalate into a fight for survival against the surging squall.

The night Jesus sent His disciples across the sea, they encountered such a sudden storm. Would these men who had just witnessed Jesus multiply fish and loaves trust Him to master the wind and waves?

Let's join the disciples in their boat on that fretful night, recounted for us in Matthew 14:22–33. Putting ourselves in their life-and-death situation, we'll experience Jesus' full power and the importance of keeping our eyes fixed on Him.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

What Brings Us to Our Knees?

Matthew 14:22–33



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Perhaps troubles like rough seas have washed over you lately. Like the disciples, you're just struggling to keep from sinking. Before you open the Scriptures today, write down the trials you have been enduring and commit them to the Lord. Ask Him to reveal Himself through His Word and strengthen your faith during your stormy night.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As we enter the passage, we recall that Jesus originally went to a remote area on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee “to be alone” (Matthew 14:13). However, the crowd had interrupted His time to Himself, and now, after tending the people’s needs, He was ready to tend His own need for communion with His Father.

Write down what Jesus did, according to *Matthew 14:22–23*.

The stage was set for the disciples to experience Jesus’ power and presence in a way they never imagined. Let’s use *our* imagination to enter the scene as if we were in the boat with the men on that dark, stormy night.



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Observation: An Unimaginable Miracle

In *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll encourages us to observe a passage by engaging our senses.¹ What expressions do you see on the men's faces? What do you hear? What do you feel? What do you smell? "As we learn to read with all our senses, the passage comes alive in our minds . . . and ultimately in our lives!"²

Struggling On Their Own in the Storm—Matthew 14:24–26

Put yourself in the scene as you read [Matthew 14:24](#). In the dark of the night, harsh winds slap your face, the swaying boat makes your full belly turn, seawater floods around your feet. The fierce storm drives the boat far from shore, battering it mercilessly.³ Describe the sensations you feel. Remember, you are without Jesus as you face this violent storm.

Suddenly out of the darkness, you see a mysterious figure emerge that seems unbothered by the wind and the waves. It's coming toward you! Read [14:25–26](#). If you were one of the disciples, what thoughts might have been racing through your mind?



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Responding to Jesus during the Storm—Matthew 14:27–32

Jesus came to the disciples during “the fourth watch of the night” (Matthew 14:25 NASB), which would have been somewhere between three and six o’clock in the morning. The disciples had rowed and rowed all night long. *They were exhausted!*

What reason did Jesus give the disciples not to be afraid, according to [14:27](#)? How did Peter respond to Jesus’ command and claim ([14:28–29](#))?

According to [14:30–31](#), what caused Peter to start to sink?

How easy it is to forget the great things God has done when you’re involved in the storms of today? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Worshiping the Son of God after the Storms—Matthew 14:33

Review the flow of action in *Matthew 14:22–33*. How did the disciples' attitude change over the course of these events?

When Jesus miraculously walked on the water, the disciples realized He really was the Son of God. What timeless lessons about faith can we learn from this incredible miracle?



Interpretation: Fear and Faltering Faith

In the interpretation phase, we go beyond what the text says in order to understand what it *means*. Jews in the ancient world often feared the sea because they believed evil spirits dwelled there. How does this help us understand the disciples' initial response to Jesus? Considering the context, what is the significance of Jesus walking *on top* of the water?



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When Jesus told His disciples not to fear, He literally said, “I am.” Matthew’s Jewish readers would have recognized this as a reference to the divine name God revealed to His people Israel (*Exodus 3:13–14*). What additional meaning can we glean from Jesus’ statement based on this background? For help, see page 315 in Pastor Chuck’s commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15*.

Jesus never drowns. He always walks on that storm. And He's never at a loss for words. He knows when to say, "I am," and "come." And He never shames us. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

What does Peter’s encounter with Jesus on the water teach us about faith? Consult pages 315–316 of Pastor Chuck’s commentary *Insights on Matthew 1–15*.

In a moment of fear, Jesus comforted His friends. In a moment of doubt, Jesus caught Peter as he fell. In a moment when the disciples experienced the unimaginable, they worshiped Jesus as the Son of God. These powerful images of Christ’s power and presence in the storm have encouraged believers for generations.



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Correlation: Perfect Love Despite Imperfect Trust

The disciples had a previous miraculous encounter with Jesus on the sea (*Matthew 8:23–27*). How does the disciples' understanding of Jesus' identity change from *Matthew 8:26–27* to *14:31–33*?

Read *Hebrews 11:1*. According to this verse, how should we define faith? How do we see the disciples learning this kind of faith in our story?

Read *Romans 8:35–39*. Why do those who follow Jesus have no reason to fear?

We can experience both encouragement and challenge through these powerful truths. Let's now look at some applications of these truths!



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Application: Weathering the Storms with Jesus

Pastor Chuck provides us with four ways we can apply this passage to our lives.

1. *There are dark nights when we feel all alone, but we're not.* Jesus Himself said, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).
2. *There are huge storms that seem to last too long, but they won't.* God acts in mysterious ways. Even when storms rage around us, He still has control.
3. *There are flashes of faith we believe will last, but they don't.* Sometimes we feel ready to hop over the side of the boat and walk with Jesus on the water, but . . .
4. *There are dreadful moments where we think we'll sink and drown, but we don't.* When our faith inevitably falters, Jesus will always catch us before we drown.

Remembering God's past faithfulness to us can remind us of His goodness and can help us grow closer to Him. Write about a time when Jesus caught you as you felt the rising waters start to drown you.

Think back on the trial you mentioned in the beginning of our study: a dark night, a huge storm, or a dreadful moment that you now face. Even if you can't make complete sense of your present struggle, write down how it compares to what the disciples experienced in their storm.



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What might you do today to live above your circumstances and keep your eyes of faith fixed on Jesus?

As the disciples boarded their boat that evening, they had no idea what awaited them on the sea. Watching Jesus walk on water was unimaginable for them, but the real miracle was seeing how He would catch them despite their great fears and wavering faith. And Jesus is still here to help us weather even the harshest of life's storms. *Imagine that!*



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You are a light in the darkest nights, a refuge in the hugest storms, and a comfort for my greatest fears. I confess that I have had small faith and a small imagination—that I have not believed You could rescue me from the most dreadful moments of my life. Thank You for rescuing me. Help me trust in the power of Jesus, the Son of God. In His name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 94.
3. The Greek word for "battered" (Matthew 14:24 NASB) is *basanizō*, which means to "torment, harass."

