

**If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat!**  
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We are in a sermon series called Transitions for Growth. Growing in life, in faith, in maturity is a series of trapeze swings. A trapeze has one bar that represents the place you are – where you're hanging on to the safety of the bar. It also has another bar that represents where you're going – where you hope you will catch the bar without falling. And the space in between the bars is called transition.

You see – taking the next step in your journey requires you to let go of the safety bar you're holding onto. That means that the place of transition can be a place of fear, uncertainty, and disorientation. It's the place where you've let go of the past, but the future has not yet arrived. You are in between – you are in transition.

And the devil usually shows up in times of transition encouraging you to hang onto the past and deceiving you into believing that if you let go you will fall and be crushed. But you must let go and enter the transition zone or you will never grow or move forward in life. You will just stay stuck where you are.

This transition zone is not a place where nothing happens. It's the place where faith is released and growth happens. It is the place where you let go of control and you totally place your faith in God to catch you on the other side of transition.

I don't know if trapeze artists ever totally get over the fear of letting go. But I know for sure they face fear at first. That fear may not go away, but it is overcome by faith in the person catching you. And it's the same for us in times of transition. It may be a fearful, disorienting time, but that is where faith grows.

As I was thinking about this, I prayed about what biblical story I could use in this message and I thought about when Peter walked on water. So my sermon today is entitled *If You Want To Walk On Water, You've Got To Get Out of the Boat*. By the way – let me say that there is a great book by that title written by John Ortberg that really impacted our lives when we started this church. I highly recommend it! Matthew 14:22-33 says:

*Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowd. After He had dismissed them, He went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray.*

*When evening came, He was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.*

*About three o'clock in the morning, Jesus went out to them, walking on the water.*

*When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."*

*"Lord, if it's You," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "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!" Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. "You of little faith," He said, "why did you doubt Me?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."*

There are several things I want you to see in this story today.

### **1. Sometimes obeying Jesus will send you into a storm!**

Jesus never promised us a storm-free life! But He did promise to be with us in the storms of life! You see - sometimes God delivers us *from* tough times – sometimes He takes us *through* tough times.

We cannot allow ourselves to turn against God or think that He is not good when we go through tough times. God is good when He delivers *from* the storm and God is good when He takes us *through* the storm! Think about it:

God did not deliver David from Goliath; He strengthened David to go through the battle.

God did not deliver Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego from the fire: He took them through the fire.

God did not deliver Noah from the flood: He took him through the flood.

There are times God may allow us to go through the flood and the fire. But the truth is God will be with us and the flood will not drown us and the fire will not burn us! We have God's promise on that in Isaiah 43:1-2

*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned.*

Tough times come to everyone, but we need tough faith to believe that God will get us through.

The disciples feared needlessly because they did not trust Jesus' words. If they had just thought for a moment, they would have remembered that He had said, "Go ahead of Me to the other side." He didn't say, "Go out into the middle of the lake and drown."

Jesus was in the same storm but He was not afraid of this storm. Why? He knew His purpose – He knew His death would take place on a cross, not on a boat. So He had peace in the midst of the storm. By the way, Jesus did not still the storm before Peter got out of the boat!

So many people are waiting for perfect conditions before they do anything for God. Those perfect conditions never happen! So many people put off their obedience until some later time. After I finish school. After I get married. After the kids are raised. After I get out of debt. That's because -

## **2. The boat represents your comfort zone.**

Your boat represents whatever you find safety and security in apart from God. It's the trapeze bar you don't want to let go of. Your fears reveal what your boat is!

Your boat can be a career you don't really like but you're afraid to make a change because it's what you've always done.

Your boat can be a destructive relationship you can't quit because you're afraid of being alone.

Your boat can be a secret addiction you want to quit but you're afraid to admit you need help.

Your fear will reveal your boat – but if you want to walk on water – you've got to get out of the boat.

When we were praying about starting this church, I read John Ortberg's book. Through it, God showed me the boat I was afraid of getting out of. I was willing to pastor again, just not start a new church. God started stirring up in me a vision a worshipping spirit-filled church unlike any other in our community – which meant we had to start it. He used my wife and other leaders and prophetic words to convince me to get out of the boat! And here we are today!

## **3. If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat!**

Transitioning from the safety of the boat to walking on water can result in fear. But Jesus wants to reassure us of who He is so we face our fears.

Moses had to face his fears before he faced Pharaoh.

David had to defeat his fears before he defeated Goliath.

Faith always involves risk. Sometimes you just have to go ahead and do it afraid!

Jesus is looking for believers who will follow Him no matter what! Taking risks just for the sake of taking risks is wrong. Taking a risk based on a word from the Lord is actually not a risk at all! The real risk is staying in the boat when Jesus calls you out of the boat!

## **4. Don't get out of the boat until God calls you out.**

There's a difference between faith and presumption. The difference is hearing from God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

You see, Peter was not in charge of the water-walking – Jesus was! As far as we know, Peter never walked on water again. He only did it when Jesus told him to. To do otherwise would be presumptuous.

Presumption is when we don't seek God, but instead make our own decisions about where we live, who we marry, what job we choose, what church we attend, how we spend our money, if we tithe, if we go to church, if we pray, read our Bible, if we accept Jesus as Savior. But we will not succeed or be blessed apart from God. We can go without God...but the result is always defeat.

This is what happened to the Children of Israel in Numbers 14:41–45. They disobeyed God and then tried to fight an enemy without God.

*"We will go up to the place the Lord promised." But Moses said, "Why are you disobeying the Lord's command? This will not succeed! Do not go up, because the Lord is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies.... Because you have turned away from the Lord, He will not be with you and you will fall by the sword." Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the high hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the Lord's covenant moved from the camp. Then the Amalekites and Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and attacked them and beat them.*

In presumption the Children of Israel tried to fight a battle without God's presence and it resulted in defeat at the hands of their enemies.

Presumption is taking something for granted without seeking God. The Bible warns against this in James 4:13-15

*Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."*

Presumption assumes that my will is God's will. We should only get out of the boat at the command of God.

## **5- Once you're out of the boat, keep your focus on Jesus!**

When Peter got out of the boat, he walked on water for a while. But then – he took his eyes off Jesus and he sank.

To walk on water – Keep your eyes on the Savior – not on the storm. When you get your eyes off Jesus – you too will sink! You can't let winds and waves hold you back. To walk on water, you must be willing for your feet to get wet!

When it was time for the Children of Israel to go into the Promised Land, God told

them to send the priests out front carrying the Ark of the Covenant. He told them in Joshua 3:13-17

*“As soon as the priests who carry the ark of the Lord - the Lord of all the earth - set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap.” So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them... Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest.*

Have you ever noticed that sometimes God asks you to move at the worst possible moment? He sometimes wants you to cross rivers during the flood stage!

*Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away... The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel crossed over.*

I want you to notice that the priests had to step into the flooded river BEFORE the waters parted. If I were one of those priests, I would have wondered, “God, why can’t You part the water before I step into the river. That way I won’t have to get my feet wet.”

But God’s answer is, “Sometimes I want you to get your feet wet!” The priests had to step into the river before God parted the water. Peter had to get out of the boat before he walked on water.

Do you have the faith to get your feet wet?  
 Can you step into the river while it’s flooded?  
 Can you believe that when you step out in faith, signs will follow?  
 Or do you want to first see the miracle, then you’ll follow?

Hear the word of the Lord today – miracles follow faith.

“Okay Pastor Joe - miracles follow faith. But the Children of Israel had a word from the Lord. How do you know when God is leading you to step out in faith?”

I’m going to give you two keys to knowing when to move out in faith. One may surprise you. The 2 keys are love and fear.

The first key is love. Almost every time Jesus healed someone or did a miracle, He was first moved with compassion. Here’s an example from Matthew 14:14

*And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.*

Jesus was moved by compassion. That love moved Him to action. True love always acts.

When you are moved with compassion toward someone or a situation, that's God moving in you telling you He wants to move through you. That's the time to let go of the bar – the time to get out of the boat.

That brings us to the second key: FEAR! You may wonder what role fear plays in this. Here it is: Whenever God wants to move us with compassion, Satan wants to stop us. And the tool he uses to stop us is fear.

Faith always involves risk. And in those times, Satan will try to put all kinds of fear on you: “If you step out in faith you will fail.” “People will think you are crazy.” “Who do you think you are anyway?”

Fear can paralyze you. That's why it's one of Satan's biggest tools. He uses fear to keep us from stepping out in faith. Fear of failure – fear of rejection – fear of loss. What I want you to see today is that fear is usually not an indication to turn back, but a sign that you should press forward. 2 Timothy 1:7 says:

*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

But do you know the context of that verse. Here's the verse that comes before it - 2 Timothy 1:6

*I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

The point is that fear tries to move in when we move out in faith. We've got to overcome that fear. How do we do that? 1 John 4:18 says:

*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.*

Our love for God must be stronger than our fear! We must be moved by love, not stopped by fear. When you choose to be moved by compassion, not by fear – you will see the power of God move on your behalf also.

Don't wait for fear to go away, but overcome fear with faith.  
Step into the river and watch the waters part.  
Get out of the boat and walk on water.  
Let go of the bar and God will catch you!

“But Pastor Joe, you don't know how bad my situation is. You don't know how big my problems are.” Maybe not. But here's what I do know: You're looking at the wrong thing! I know that God is bigger than your problem. I know that no matter how bad it gets, God is always good! No storm, no wind, no wave, no devil in hell is a match for our God!

I'm sure Joseph faced fear when he was thrown into a pit then thrown into

prison, but he knew that what the devil meant for evil, God meant for good!  
 You might be in a pit right now, but God can bring good out of it.  
 You might be in a prison right now, but God can bring good out of it.

God has strategically placed you right where you are to meet the needs of people around you. You just need to trust God, step out in faith, and God promised that signs and wonders will follow you! Be moved with compassion! Overcome your fear with perfect love! And miracles can be a part of your everyday life. That's because:

## **6- Walking on water will increase your faith in God**

When Peter walked on water and Jesus calmed the storm – the disciples had an enlarged revelation of who He was. They said – Truly you are the Son of God. And they worshipped Him.

There will be times in all of our lives when storms arise - when the waves crash into our lives and it looks like we will sink. At those times, we choose either fear or faith. One cancels the other out. So, we must exercise faith in the face of fear. If we give in to fear, it will control us.

The reason many of choose fear is because they have a small view of God. For instance –

If you ever say, Even God can't handle this problem– your God is too small. Because in reality – He is all powerful and nothing is too difficult for Him!

If you don't tithe or give because you think you can't afford to – your God is too small! Because in reality – God is our provider and He promised to open the windows of heaven to tithers.

If you live under guilt and condemnation – your God is too small!  
 Because the truth is the God forgives all sin and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!

If you live in fear – your God is too small!  
 Because the truth is that God is love and perfect love casts out all fear!

If you can't let go of the bar you're holding onto – your God is too small because the Bible says that God is our refuge and His everlasting arms are underneath you! When you let go, God will catch you!

If you don't worship God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength – your God is too small. Because the truth is that God is worthy of all praise all the time!

In fact, He's worthy of some praise right now!