

LESSON 4

JESUS WALKS ON WATER

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Is the Son of God

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 14

GOD'S BIG STORY: Jesus walks on water across the Sea of Galilee toward His disciples and calls Peter to join Him, showing that He really is the Son of God!

WORD OF WONDER: How great God is! We'll never completely understand him. —Job 36:26a

- Welcome Question: What kind of surface would you like to walk on most?
- Curiosity Questions
- Word of Wonder: Job 36:26a
- God's Big Story
- Discussion Questions
- LARGE GROUP
- Responding in Worship: Water Praise Painting
- Game: Walk on Water



INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

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It was irrational. The disciples had no mental framework for what they were seeing. Yet there He was—Jesus, walking atop the wind-tossed waters. It's no wonder they assumed the figure before them was a ghost. It's no wonder they were terrified.

Read Matthew 14:22–36 slowly. What do you notice about Jesus? When do you think the disciples became fearful? Would you have become fearful when you spotted someone walking on the water, or would you have also felt fear—the kind that mingles with awe and leaves you without words—as Jesus stepped into the boat and the wind died down?

Until this point, the disciples had no mental framework for understanding the fullness of who Jesus is. So, when they watched Him walk calmly on the waves, they were terrified. And the only rational conclusion they could draw was that this Jesus truly must be the Son of God.

Spend a few minutes quietly reflecting on Jesus. Imagine His face looking at you as He steps into the boat. What is it about Jesus that leaves you in awe? What is it about Jesus that makes you say with His disciples, “Truly you are the Son of God” (Matthew 14:33 NIV)?

—**Sharron Jackson**

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DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

In this passage, the disciples refer to Jesus as the “Son of God” for the first time. In Exodus 4:22, God refers to Israel as “my firstborn son” (NIV), but this title used for Jesus is more formal, designating His deity.

WHAT?

Once again, Jesus shows His power over a storm, this time by walking calmly on top of the water rather than speaking to tame the waters. For the disciples, this establishes their understanding of Jesus as the Son of God, who has power over the sea.

WHERE?

Jesus sent the disciples ahead on the boat, going to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. They were headed in the direction of Capernaum and Bethsaida and far from shore when the waves began pounding the boat. Jesus walked on the lake to meet them there.

WHEN?

Jesus walked on water immediately after He fed the 5,000, and just previous to that, His friend and relative John the Baptist was killed at the command of Herod Antipas. These events took place about midway through Jesus’ three-year ministry.

CONNECTING TO GOD’S BIG STORY:

While it’s common to focus on Peter’s actions, the most amazing thing about this story is Jesus’ walking on water. The disciples had witnessed Jesus heal people, cast out demons, and feed 5,000 people. But it was seeing Him walk on water that prompted them to conclude, “You really are the Son of God!” (Matthew 14:33).

LESSON 4 **EARLY ELEMENTARY**

Small Group

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

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Pre-Service Connection (15–20 min)

RESOURCES: whiteboard, poster paper, or butcher paper, writing utensils, board games or games Games & Activities Guide

Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have activities ready to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them! Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

As kids arrive ...

Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

Use the Welcome Question and the following "I'm Curious"

questions to engage kids. Say "I'm curious.." before each question and give

kids an chance to think before answering each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

Consider having a whiteboard or poster for kids to write or draw answers to any of the questions:

- What do you think would have been the most amazing of Jesus' miracles to see in person?
- If you saw Jesus face to face, how would you know it's Him?



Small Group Begins

After the Opening Activity or game, Large Group Leader will begin small group time by reading the Welcome Question aloud and inviting everyone to open their Bibles and begin.

Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bible, inflated balloon (1 per 4–5 kids)

WORD OF WONDER

How great God is! We'll never completely understand Him.

—Job 36:26a

Our Word of Wonder for the Now That's a Miracle! series is Job 36:26a. Let's practice saying the Word of Wonder together.

We're going to pretend to be the waves and water. Move your arms around like waves. Allow the kids to respond. We have to keep the balloon up so it doesn't sink to the bottom of the sea (the floor). Don't let the balloon sink by touching the floor! Let's all work together to bop it and keep it up while we say our verse aloud together.

Encourage the kids to bop the balloon in the air using their hands or feet. If your group is large, you can split the kids into teams, each with their own balloon.

Did you know that when we say something over and over, it helps us remember it? We've been practicing this Word of Wonder for the last several weeks. Let's see if you can remember it all today!

We'll all try to keep the balloon from hitting the floor by hitting it up into the air using our hands and feet. Here's the special part: Each time someone hits the balloon, say the next word of our Word of Wonder! Are you ready? Let's see how many times we can say it! Invite the kids to bop the balloon and say the verse. Do it several times.

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

- **HOW GREAT**—Put one arm straight up for each word.
- **GOD IS!**—Point up.
- **WE'LL NEVER**—Cross arms back and forth in front of you.
- **COMPLETELY**—Bring both arms down from above you to your sides.
- **UNDERSTAND**—Point to your head with both hands.
- **HIM.**—Point up.
- **JOB 36:26a**—Hold your hands together as if opening a book.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- This verse was written by a man named Job. God showed His great power during hard times in Job's life, and Job knew that he could trust God. What are some things we can trust God for?
- Our verse says that God is great! How did Jesus show that He is great in God's big story today? (walking on water, calling Peter to walk on water, saving Peter, healing sick people)

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bible, piece of blue tissue paper (1/kid)

RESOURCES: Bible Story Picture (1/SG)

Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

I open my Bible, and what do I see? *(Hold your hands together, then open your palms, as if opening a book.)*

God's big story, waiting for me! *(Point to yourself.)*

Let's hear part of God's big story, which comes from the book of Matthew in the Bible. That's the first book of the New Testament. In today's Bible story, Jesus' friends are traveling in a boat across a big lake. While they are on the water, a strong storm starts blowing the boat around. Jesus comes to them in a surprising way that shows how powerful He is. Let's get ready to hear how Jesus helped His friends when they were afraid.

[Read the God's Big Story Script below from Matthew 14:22–33.](#)

Before you begin, give each child a piece of blue tissue paper.

Jesus sent His friends ahead in a boat while He stayed behind to pray to God. Everyone, hold your blue fabric and gently wave it like calm water. As the boat went across the lake, strong winds began to blow and big waves crashed all around. We are going to pretend this piece of paper is water.

Shake your water bigger and bigger like stormy waves. The disciples felt scared because the wind was so strong and the boat was rocking. Early in the morning, Jesus came toward them, walking right on the water. Everyone stand up and pretend to take slow steps on the waves.

The disciples were frightened and thought they were seeing a ghost. Jesus spoke and said, "Do not be afraid. It is Me."

Peter said, "Jesus, if it is really You, tell me to come to You on the water."

Jesus said, "Come." Peter stepped out of the boat and walked toward Jesus. Take a few careful steps forward.

But when Peter looked at the wind and waves, he became afraid and began to sink. Crouch down low like you are sinking.

Peter cried out, "Jesus, help me!" Right away, Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. Reach your hand up high.

When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the wind stopped. Hold your water still. The disciples were amazed and knew Jesus is truly powerful and worthy of trust.

Discussion Questions

SUPPLIES: large blue blanket or blue disposable tablecloth, toy boat

Have the kids sit in a circle around a large blue blanket or blue disposable tablecloth cover. Set a boat on one edge of the blanket or tablecloth.

In our story today, Jesus and Peter walked on water. We're going to stand in a circle and walk around the edges of the water. When I say, "Freeze," you'll stop, and whoever is closest to the boat will walk across the pretend water and answer a question.

Let the kids walk around the outside edges of the blue pretend water. Say, "Freeze" periodically. Whoever is closest to the toy boat during each round can walk across the water and answer a question.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **What did Jesus do after sending the crowd away?** *(go to be alone and pray)*
- **How did Jesus get to His disciples when they were on the water in a boat?** *(walked on water)*
- **How did the disciples feel when they first saw Jesus?** *(afraid)*
- **What happened to Peter when he stepped out of the boat?** *(First, he was able to walk on water; then he sank.)*
- **What did Jesus do for Peter?** *(saved him)*
- **Have you been afraid? What made you feel better?**
- **How can you remember to focus on Jesus instead of the things you're worried about?**
- **What do all of Jesus' miracles show us about Jesus?**

Make It Inclusive: Assist kids who have mobility challenges and help them participate in activities as much as possible. A kid who cannot walk around the circle can be your helper, saying "Freeze" or asking questions.

When you're afraid or worried, you can ask God to help you. He'll be with you and help you just like Jesus helped Peter. We can always remember He is the Son of God! Let's talk to God now in prayer!

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and thank God for how amazing He is. God hears all our prayers!

Head to Large Group!

Return and finish the rest of this guide before parents arrive.

Responding in Worship: Water Praise Painting

SUPPLIES: cardstock (1 sheet per kid), paintbrushes (1 per kid), watercolor paint palettes, small cups of water, cotton swabs (at least 1 per kid; optional)

Today we learned about something amazing Jesus did. Jesus walked on water! That is something only God can do. Jesus did many miracles. He fed hungry people, healed sick people, and walked on water. Each miracle shows us that Jesus is powerful and that He is the Son of God.

Today we're going to use water and paint to help us think about how amazing Jesus is. Water reminds us of today's story and how Jesus walked on the water without sinking. As you paint, you can think about something you want to thank or praise Jesus for.

Everyone, dip your paintbrush into the water first. Now choose a color and start painting. You can paint something from today's story, like water, waves, or Jesus. You can also paint something Jesus has done, like helping people, loving others, or doing miracles. There is no wrong way to paint.

While you paint, I want you to wonder quietly... I wonder how Jesus felt walking on the water. I wonder why Jesus' miracles help us trust Him. I wonder what makes Jesus so amazing to you.

When you finish your painting, we're going to take a moment to praise God together. On your paper, you can add one more picture or mark that shows something you love about Jesus. It could be a heart, a smile, a cross, or even more colors.

Now let's pray together. When I pause, you can say 'Thank You, Jesus' out loud or quietly in your heart.

Short prayer example:

Jesus, You are powerful. (pause)

Thank You for loving us. (pause)

Thank You for doing amazing miracles. (pause)

Thank You for being the Son of God. Amen."

Game: Walk on Water

SUPPLIES: blue disposable tablecloth or blanket (Use more than one if needed for a larger group.)

Place a blue tablecloth or blanket on the floor to represent the Sea of Galilee. More than one tablecloth can be used for a larger group.

This blue water is our pretend Sea of Galilee! In our story today, Jesus walked on the water, and Peter tried to walk on the water too. Let's use our bodies to help us remember what happened.

Round 1: Walking with Jesus

Everyone stand on one side of the water. When I say 'Eyes on Jesus,' we're going to carefully walk across the water. Walk slow and steady, like you are trusting Jesus.

Let all the kids take turns walking across.

Round 2: Wind and Waves!

Uh oh! The wind is blowing and the waves are getting big! Wiggle your arms like waves.

Now let's try crossing the water again, but this time the wind is blowing.

Halfway across, say:

Oh no! Peter looked at the waves and started to sink!

Choose one child to gently sit down and pretend to sink.

Peter says, 'Jesus, help me!'"

Everyone reaches a hand out and says together, "Jesus, help me!"

Jesus helps Peter right away!

Round 3: Try It Different Ways

Now let's cross the water in some fun ways. Each time, remember that Jesus is powerful!

Call out different movements, one at a time:

- **"Can you tiptoe across the water?"**
- **"Can you frog jump across the water?"**
- **"Can you crawl carefully across the water?"**
- **"Can you march across the water like a brave disciple?"**

Let kids suggest a movement if appropriate.

Great job! Today's game helps us remember that Jesus is powerful and that we can trust Him, even when things feel scary. Just like Peter, we can ask Jesus for help!

Make It Inclusive: If any of the kids have physical limitations, make sure they are included in some way. Encourage them to add sound effects for the wind and waves or give them space to move across the water in a way that they choose. Everyone can cheer them on!