

### 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 Activity
- God's Big Story
- Discussion Questions for Elementary Kids and Preteens
- Small Group Prayer Time
- LARGE GROUP
- Elementary Responding in Worship: Floating Hearts
- Preteen Responding in Worship: Imaginative Prayer



### INVITATION

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

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**WORD OF WONDER:** Job 36:26a

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**

Ministry Volunteer and Curriculum Developer

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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 **ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN**

### Small Group

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

### LESSON AT A GLANCE

**WONDER TRUTH:** Jesus Is the Son of God

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**WORD OF WONDER:** Job 36:26a

### 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 Activity

### WORD OF WONDER

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

—Job 36:26a (NIRV)

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, scissors (prep only), tape, stopwatch (optional, 1 per small group)

**RESOURCES:** [Walk on the Word Sheet NIRV](#) (1 per small group), [Elementary Word of Wonder Video](#) (optional)

Ahead of time, print the Walk on the Word Sheet NIRV for each small group. Cut the strips apart. Before the activity, spread the Walk on the Word strips on the floor in order, hopscotch style, with enough space between each strip for kids to hop to it. Secure the strips to the floor with tape. (Prepare a verse set for each small group.)

**Today in God's big story, we learned that Jesus walked on water! He really is the Son of God who does amazing miracles! Let's declare how amazing God is by saying our Word of Wonder together.** Open your Bible to Job 36:26a. Invite kids to read Job 36:26a several times together.

**Let's take turns hopping on each section of the Word of Wonder in the order of the verse. Say the word as you land on it. We can see how quickly everyone can get through the verse.** If you have a stopwatch, consider timing how long it takes for everyone to get through the verse. Then challenge kids to see if they can do it faster in a second round! To make the activity more challenging for preteens, leave more space between each section of the verse and challenge kids to do certain movements to get from strip to strip, such as jump backward, frog-hop on all fours, or jump with their eyes closed.



**Make It Inclusive:** For kids who may find hopping too difficult, invite them to jump with two feet or to walk from sheet to sheet, taking large steps between each.

## God's Big Story

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles (1 per kid)

Tell kids that today's part of God's big story comes straight from God's Word, the Bible. Remind kids that the stories about Jesus recorded in the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—really happened, no matter how surprising they seem! Help kids find Matthew 14.

**In this passage, Jesus sends His disciples ahead in a boat while He spends time praying alone. As they cross the lake, a storm causes fear and uncertainty, and Jesus meets them in a completely unexpected way. Peter's response shows both great faith and very real doubt. As we read, think about what happens when Peter focuses on Jesus versus when he focuses on the storm. What does this story teach us about trusting Jesus when things feel overwhelming?**

[Read Matthew 14:22–36 and pause at key words to let kids say the next word aloud.](#)

## Elementary Questions

- **What did Jesus do after He sent the crowd away?** (He went up a mountain to a quiet place and prayed.)
- **How did Jesus get to His disciples when they were on the lake in a boat?** (He walked on the water!)
- **What happened when Peter stepped out of the boat? What happened when Peter noticed the wind and got scared?** (Peter walked on water. He started to sink when he noticed the wind and got scared.)
- **When have you been scared? When you look back at it now, where was Jesus when you were scared?** (Note: Assure kids that when we follow Jesus, He is always with us through the Holy Spirit.)
- **What do all of Jesus' miracles show us?** (Possible answers: Jesus is powerful, Jesus is loving, Jesus is God's Son.)
- **Jesus is God's Son, and He is powerful! Think about a hard or scary situation in your life. How can knowing that God's Son, Jesus, is with you change how you think and act in that situation?**

Every one of us feels scared sometimes. As followers of Jesus, we can remember that the same Jesus who walks on water loves us and is with us! Jesus is the Son of God, and He is ready to help us with whatever we're going through. Let's talk with Him in prayer now!

## Preteen Questions

- **What did Jesus do after He sent the crowd away?** (He went up a mountain to a quiet place and prayed.)
- **How did Jesus get to His disciples when they were on the lake in a boat? How did His disciples respond when they saw Jesus walking on the lake?** (Jesus walked on the water! The disciples were frightened and thought He was a ghost, so they cried out.)
- **What did Peter ask Jesus to do? What happened next?** (Peter asked Jesus to call him onto the lake. Jesus told Peter to "Come," and Peter stepped out of the boat and began walking toward Jesus. Then Peter noticed the wind, got scared, and began to sink. Jesus grabbed Peter's hand and saved him.)
- **When have you been scared? Is it ever hard to remember that Jesus is with you and is more powerful than your situation? Why do you think that is?** (Note: Some kids may share aloud, but others may want to simply think about their answers silently.)
- **Jesus is God's Son, and He is powerful! How can knowing that affect the way you live?**

Every one of us feels scared sometimes. As followers of Jesus, we can remember that the same Jesus who walks on water loves us and is with us! Jesus is the Son of God, and He is ready to help us with whatever we're going through. Let's talk with Him in prayer now!

## Small Group Prayer Time

Invite kids to share any prayer requests and praises they have. Ask for two volunteers to pray aloud for each person in the group. Then invite everyone who would like to praise Jesus aloud to take turns declaring, "Jesus is the Son of God, and He loves me!"

## Head to Large Group!

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

### Elementary Responding in Worship: Floating Hearts

**SUPPLIES:** cups (1 per 4–6 kids), water, glass plates or pans with edges (1 per 4–6 kids), dry-erase markers, paper towels

**RESOURCES:** [Now That's a Miracle! Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, fill cups with water (one per 4-6 kids).

Cue music from the [Now That's a Miracle! Elementary Spotify playlist](#) to play quietly in the background throughout the activity.

**Jesus spent a lot of time with His friends, the disciples, while He was on earth. And He did a lot of miracles—amazing signs that God is at work! Still, it took a while for the disciples to truly understand that Jesus is the Son of God.**

**In today's part of God's big story, Jesus did an awesome thing on the water. How did Jesus show His power in this story?** Invite kids to respond.

**Yes! Jesus walked on the water! Can any of you walk on water?** Allow kids to respond. **No matter how hard we try, we can never do this. This act of walking on water is another reminder of just how powerful Jesus is. He has this power because He is the Son of God. What does this mean to you? How can knowing this help you?** Invite kids to thoughtfully respond.

**Jesus has amazing power and can do anything! Let's do an activity to remind us that Jesus is always with us and can do the impossible—like walking on water!**

Help kids form small groups of 4–6 (or keep everyone together if your group is already small). Give each group a glass plate/pan, a dry-erase marker, a cup of water, and paper towels for cleanup. Walk the groups through these steps:

1. Invite each kid to draw a heart on the center of their group's glass plate or pan with the marker. It's best if the shape is drawn in one motion (without lifting the marker and without coloring in the shape). (Be ready to help kids who struggle with drawing or holding a marker.)
2. Ask a leader or older kid to slowly and carefully pour water from the cup onto the plate/pan to cover each of the drawings.
3. Encourage kids to wait and see what happens to the drawings. If nothing happens, gently shake the plate/pan. The hearts should rise to the top of the water and float on top of the water.



**What do you see on top of the water?** Allow kids to respond.

Jesus is powerful, and He is the Son of God! But there's even more to the story than that. Jesus loves you, and Jesus loves me. The hearts in the pan can remind us of that! And just as Jesus, the Son of God, loved Peter and was with him in a very scary situation, He loves you and is always with you.



## Preteen Responding in Worship: Imaginative Prayer

**SUPPLIES:** note cards (1 per kid), writing utensils (1 per kid)

Jesus spent a lot of time with His friends, the disciples, while He was on earth. And He did a lot of miracles—amazing signs that God is at work! Still, it took a while for the disciples to truly understand that Jesus is the Son of God.

How many of you like to imagine or picture things in your mind? Allow kids to respond. One of the ways that we can pray and ask God for understanding is through the practice of imaginative prayer. How many of you have ever heard of it? Allow kids to respond. **Imaginative Prayer** is imagining ourselves in the story as a form of prayer. So, here's what we're going to do. We're going to hear a part of God's big story again, but this time, we're going to imagine ourselves in the story.

Let's get comfortable and close our eyes. Pause for kids to get comfortable. **Come, Holy Spirit. We open our imaginations to You.**

Nighttime was now approaching quickly so Jesus sent His disciples in a boat across a big lake called the Sea of Galilee. Then He sent the crowd away and climbed up a mountainside to a quiet, private place. Jesus was finally alone, and He prayed into the night.

Imagine that you're on the boat. The boat is now far away from the shore. It's dark, and Jesus is not with you. What do you notice around you? Pause for five seconds.

You feel the wind on your face, and the waves are crashing against the boat. What are you feeling right now? Pause for five seconds.

You've been on the boat for a while now. The sun is about to start rising. You see something—someone—in the distance. It's a person—walking on the water! Who do you see? Pause for five seconds.

The other disciples are saying that it must be a ghost. You hear their panicked cries. Now how do you feel? What do you notice on the disciples' faces? Pause for five seconds.

The person is getting closer. You hear Him speak: "Be brave! It is I. Don't be afraid" (Matthew 14:27). How are you feeling? Relieved? Frightened? Excited? Pause for five seconds. How is He doing this? What are you thinking now? Pause for 10 seconds.

Then you hear Peter's voice. He is questioning if this is Jesus. Are you wondering the same thing? Pause for five seconds.

**Jesus calls out to Peter to come. What expression do you see on Peter's face? Do you want to join him?** Pause for five seconds.

**Peter steps out of the boat. There is a strong wind, and you feel the boat jerk. Then you hear Peter's cry: "Lord! Save me!" (Matthew 14:30). You see Jesus grab Peter's hand and pull him out of the water. They get into the boat, and the wind immediately stops. Who is this man?** Pause for five seconds.

**You look around and see the look of amazement on the other disciples' faces. What expression is on your face?** Pause for five seconds. **Then you see the disciples worshiping Jesus and saying, "You really are the Son of God!" (Matthew 14:33). What are you doing? How are you worshiping Jesus?** Pause for five seconds.

**Now open your eyes. What was that like for you?** Allow kids to respond. Give each kid a note card and a writing utensil. Invite them to write what they experienced through this prayer. **How did you experience Jesus as the Son of God in this story?** Allow time for kids to respond through writing or drawing.

**Jesus, the Son of God, loves you and is always with you. May you continue to imagine being with Jesus, knowing that He is powerful.**