



Message **Transcript**

Wave-Walkers vs Boat-Huggers

Jon Gaus

Well, thank you and good morning. Church, this morning we're going to be in Matthew 14, in God's word. The first book of the New Testament, Matthew, we're going to be in chapter 14. Before we get started, though, let's pray because we want this to be not just a natural gathering of people, but we want this to be a supernatural gathering of God's people, where God does supernatural things in our life. Amen.

[inaudible 00:00:24].

Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much, first of all, that Christ is in us and that we are saved and that we are in Christ. Father, I pray that our worship by song this morning was acceptable to you and pleasing to you and glorifying to you. Father, I thank you that you are continuing to grow us as worshipers in spirit and in truth. Father, now we ask that by your Holy Spirit, who is the perfect teacher, that you will feed us your word, and you will stretch our faith, and you will fill us with more faith, and you will clearly show us the next step of faith that you are calling us on. We ask all this in the wonderful, powerful name of Jesus and all God's people said, amen.

Well, I know many of you have been to Chicago and I'm sure that many of you have visited the Willis Tower, which used to be called the Sears Tower. Back in 2009, the Willis Tower wanted to get more tourists up to the 103rd floor, so they built this new tourist attraction called The Ledge. It's a glass box that extends from the 103rd floor, that you can walk out on and look between your feet, 103 floors down, to the busy streets of Chicago. Now, I've been there a couple of times and it's thrilling but what I really like to do is stand back and watch all of the people and watch all of the

tourists, how they approach the glass box called The Ledge, because there's a big sign there telling you it's completely safe and it can hold 10,000 pounds.

I watch some people and they'll walk up to The Ledge and they'll take one look and they'll turn around and they say, "That's not for me." Then we'll see other people walk up and they'll stand there and they'll contemplate for a while and then they turn around and they leave. Then there's other people I have seen walk up to The Ledge and they will kind of test it with their foot, just to make sure that something's there. Then I have seen people who just walk right onto it, stand on it. I've seen people dancing on it. I've seen people jumping up and down on it. When you look at that, it is a perfect illustration for faith.

Do I really believe walking out in what appears to be dangerous, is going to be safe? Do I really believe that sign that says it's going to hold me up and I'm not going to be in danger? Well, this historic account that we're going to look at today in Matthew 14, Jesus gives a whole group of his disciples, the opportunity to step out in faith and to see that he indeed will hold them up. That he indeed will take care of them. That it is always safe when you are with Jesus. He gives this opportunity to a whole group of his disciples and one of them takes him up at his opportunity and it's amazing.

So we're in Matthew 14. Let's set up the historic context of this chapter. Jesus has just miraculously fed 5,000 men plus women and children, with two fish and five loaves of bread. Now, Jesus has done this miracle for at least two reasons. First of all, it's because Jesus has a huge and perfect, compassionate heart for those who are hurting and in need and hungry and cannot help themselves.

The second reason Jesus performs this miracle is to authenticate, yet once again, that he is the real deal. He's the promised Messiah. He is God in the flesh. Well, John 6 tells us that this crowd is quickly becoming a mob because they intend to make Jesus their earthly king by force, if necessary. Well, Jesus knows this is not the Father's plan. Jesus knows this is not the Father's timing and Jesus knows this is not the Father's best for a lost and dying world. So he immediately makes all of the disciples get into a boat and he sends them to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and then he supernaturally dismisses this crowd. Now we're picking up the action in verse 22, chapter 14.

Immediately, he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. After he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on a mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time, was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against it. And In the fourth watch of the night, he came to them, walking on the sea.

Now in the Jewish timetable, the fourth watch of the night is between 3:00 AM and 6:00 AM. I call that the bewitching hours. Have you ever woken up at 3:00 AM? You know how it is. You are super sensitive to everything. When you wake up at 3:00 AM, everything is intensified and it's magnified in your life. I have found in my own life, when I wake up in those bewitching hours, I have two choices. I can either worry or I can worship. Because when I wake up and everything is intensified and magnified, if I

start turning over in my heart, in my mind, all of the problems in my life, I can start really being overcome by worry. Have you ever done that at three o'clock in the morning?

I have found out there's another choice that when you wake up at 3:00 AM in the morning, you can worship and the presence of God in your life can be magnified and intensified because at that time you are so spiritually sensitive. Well, it's that eerie time of the night, verse 26.

But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and they said, "It's a ghost." And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them saying, "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid."

It's interesting that in the original Greek, that phrase, "It is I," is two words. The Greek words ego eimi, which literally translates, I am. Does that sound familiar? Jesus declares take heart. "Do not be afraid. I am." He chose to identify himself to a boatload of terrified disciples, the same way that he identified himself to a terrified Moses in front of the burning bush by declaring, "I am God, the self sufficient one."

This is just another evidence of the deity of Christ. That he is God in the flesh, fully God and fully man. Okay, verse 28. And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you command me to come out on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand, took hold of him, saying to him, "Oh, you of little faith. Why did you

doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased and those in the boat worshiped him saying, "Truly, you are the son of God." Now saints, at times, the concept of faith can seem very nebulous, very ethereal to us. At times, the concept of faith is very hard for us to get our arms wrapped around.

So the holy spirit who loves us perfectly and who wrote the Bible, decided to put this historic account in the Bible so that you and I could see a picture of faith in living color and by looking at Peter's faith and Peter's doubt and Peter's struggle and Peter's experience. We could learn a lot about our own walk of faith. We could learn a lot about growing in faith and we can learn a lot about the next step of faith that God is calling all of us to. Well, this is number one in your outline. One of the first biblical truths we see is God grows our faith based on his track record in our lives. That's how God grows our faith, based on his track record in our lives. Now, when Peter got out of that boat, he wasn't crazy. When Peter got out of that boat, he wasn't a fool hearty. When Peter got out of that boat, he was taking his step of faith based on God's track record in his life.

I mean, think about it. Up to this point in Peter's life. He had seen Jesus miraculously turn water into wine. In his life already, peter had seen Jesus miraculously and instantaneously heal many with diseases and already in Peter's life he had seen Jesus raise the dead. That was Jesus' track record in Peter's life. So Peter is like, "Hey, listen, if that's Jesus, I believe that if I step out of this boat, he has the power to hold me up." That was all based on Jesus' track record in his life. That's how God always works in growing faith. Think back to 1 Samuel 17. Do remember this King Saul

is aghast and amazed that a young shepherd boy, David, says, "I will go out and step into the battlefield and I'll fight the giant Goliath."

King Saul is like, "You're just a youth. He's been a fighting man since his youth." And what does David do? David recounts to King Saul God's track record in his life. And he said, "King Saul, one day I was tending my father sheep and a lion came to steal one of the sheep and God delivered that lion into my hand. Then one day I was my father's sheep and a bear came to steal one of those sheep and God delivered that bear into my hand. So King Saul, when I take a step out onto that battlefield, I believe that God will deliver this uncircumcised Philistine into my hand." That was not a crazy step. That was not a fool hearted step. That was based on God's track record in David's life. This is why throughout the Bible, you and I are commanded to remember the wonderful things that God has done for us. Recall the wonderful things that God has done in our life, rejoice in the wonderful things that God has done in our life.

So as God is calling us to take this next big step of faith, we look back at God's track record in our life and we say, "Okay, first of all, I can't believe that God saved somebody like me." And that builds our faith. And then we say, "God has never broken one of his promises ever in my life." And that grows our faith. That's his track record in our life. We look back at our life and we say, "God has never steered me wrong. God has always provided for me and even when I was faithless, God was faithful and he kept me in the faith," and that's God's track record. He has prepared you and I for our next major step of faith. Church, here's the really great news this morning. When he calls us to the next step of faith, he's not like, "Okay, go ahead and take it."

Jesus is already in the next step of faith and he's calling us to join him. God grows our faith by his track record in our life. Okay, there's more. Look at Kingdom Truth 2. There are three things that you can always find back in the boat; a crowd, the critics and comfort. There are three things that you can always find back in the boat, the crowd, the critics and comfort. It's interesting that there were 12 disciples in that boat and yet only one of them got out in order to get closer to Jesus. The 11, the crowd, stayed behind, back in Numbers 13, there were 12 spies who were sent into the promised land and 10 of them, the crowd, came back and said, "We can't do it. We can't take it. There're giants in that land. They're going to crush us like grasshoppers." Only two of them came back, Joshua and Caleb, two of the original wave walkers.

They came back and they said, "We can take it. God's already given it to us. In fact, God's already in the promised land and he's calling us to join him." Church, let's bring this a little closer to home. Listen to this. According to Lifeway Publishing, 70% of American Christians say they never share their faith with unbelievers. That's the crowd back in the boat. According to Barna Research, 80% of American Christians are not involved in any kind of discipleship. That is the crowd back in the boat and also according to Barna, 93% of older American Christians report they do not feel comfortable having a conversation about the Lord with their grandchildren.

Sadly, you can always find the crowd back in the boat. A second thing you can always find back in the boat, are critics. I mean, can you imagine the conversations

that were going on in that boat when Peter starts stepping out of the boat into that water. It was probably like, "Andrew, talk some sense into your brother. Peter, you're never going to make it. You're going to sink like a rock. Thomas, you think he's going to make it?" Thomas was like, "I doubt it."

There's all always critics back in the boat. Now I have to confess. Early in my ministry calling I was a huge critic. I was a part-time youth pastor at a small church in west Michigan. This church had held a men's event and a lot of unsaved guys came there. One of guys who came was in his twenties and he had been living a wild party life. He was a local construction supervisor. So he came and he heard the gospel for the first time and God just penetrated his heart. He heard his true condition that he was a sinner, that he could not save himself, that he could not clean himself up and if he died in his sins, his sins would drag him to an eternity in hell.

Then he heard about Jesus and the free gift that Jesus bought and paid for, for him, the free gift of total forgiveness of sins, a brand new heart, a brand new life, a brand new future, and an eternity in heaven and he turned from his sins that night and he received Jesus Christ by faith as his Lord and savior. A couple months later, he called me and another staff guy and he said, "I'd like to have an appointment with you because I think God's calling me to a ministry." So we're excited because we needed people to set up chairs. We needed greeters. This would be a great way for him to serve. I mean he is new in the faith, right? So he showed up and he had a two page proposal. He said, "This is exactly what I believe Christ has laid on my heart."

He said, "I have such a heart for all those people that I used to party with in the

bars every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night. I'm worried because they don't know Christ. I don't want them to die in their sins and go to hell, and I'm worried because many of them, when they drive home from the bar are driving drunk. So Christ is calling me to start a new ministry called Last Call Ministries. What I'd like to do is take the church van and go park it in front of the bars every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night, and go in and tell the bar owners, Listen, I'm out there and if anyone's too drunk to drive home, I would love to drive them home. I'm going to play Christian music and I'm going to slip a gospel track into their pocket, and maybe they'll find it in the morning when they get the munchies, who knows."

So he lays it all out and he is so excited. Well, me and this other staff person, we're in the boat and we were critics. We just started popping holes in this vision. We're like, "Okay, Zach, calm down just a little bit. Zach, have you really thought this through? I mean, have you thought about what it would be like to take the church van with the church's name and phone number on it and park it in front of the bar every Thursday and Friday and Saturday night? That wouldn't look good. And Zach, have you thought about the liability issues? What if a drunk person stumbles getting in or out of the van and they crack their head open. They could sue the church for all it's worth," and we just, we're total critics and we sent him away, but he had a calling for Jesus.

So two weeks later he comes back and he said, "I want to fill you in on Last Call Ministries." He said, "I went to the local Ford dealer and I laid out what I wanted to do and he has donated a 15 passenger van for me to take every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night. I've recruited a couple other friends. So now we have a Last Calls

Ministry team," and so they started their ministry. About two months later, I opened up the local newspaper and there's a headline that says, "Last Call Ministry is saving lives." Aren't you glad he didn't listen to the critics in the boat. You'll always find critics back in the boat and that ministry lasted for 10 years and moved to other cities.

Okay, a third thing you can always find back in the boat is comfort. It's true. Back in the boat is our comfort zone. It's warm and it's dry, but you know what else is in the boat? A lot of Christians who are saved yet stagnant, saved yet miserable because you and I were not created for the comfort zone. You and I were created for the joy zone and the joy zone is found out on the water. The joy zone is taking a step of faith when Jesus calls us into a place we've never been before. We're way over ahead to find out that Jesus really will hold us up. That Jesus really will provide for all of our needs wherever he calls us and our family and the holy spirit really will provide all of the wisdom and direction that we need when we step out of the boat. It's the joy zone versus the comfort zone.

Okay. Saints, biblical truth number three. Now say what you will about Peter. Peter was still a work in progress just like you and I. Peter had a lot of issues just like you and I, but there was one thing that Peter really got, right? Look at Truth 3, Peter desired the very best thing, more of the person of Christ. Once Peter was convinced that that really was Jesus out on the water, he didn't care about anything else. He just wanted to [inaudible 00:19:15] closer and closer to Jesus. Listen to this, Bible commentator, John Gill, says expressing his great love and affection for Christ, peter

was willing to get to Jesus through dangers, storms and tempests. Bible scholar Matthew Henry adds Peter walks on water, not to boast about it, but to get to Jesus. The pulpit commentary states that Peter made this request not to put on a show for the other disciples, but out of an impulsive love for Jesus. He couldn't help himself.

Peter here is showing us. What it's all about, what Christianity is all about. More and more and more of the person of Christ. Now that is a great encouragement and it's a great warning to local churches, because many local churches start out and they have a focus on the person of Christ, but then things get busy and they move their focus off the person of Christ under their processes and things get really wrapped up and they move their focus off the person of Christ onto their procedures. Pretty soon they're totally focused on their processes and procedures and the local church just becomes a human powered, natural organization, instead of a spirit filled organism, the body of Christ.

This is very easy to do in the local church. In fact, there was a church in the first century that this happened to. It was the church at Laodicea and Jesus had to write them a letter in Revelation 3 and he basically told them, "You started off well, but you've become self-focused, self-sufficient, self-satisfied. You've crowded me out of my own church and behold, I stand at the door and knock and if anyone in the church would open the door, I'll come in, but if you don't open the door you're are going to die."

Now this is one of the things that excites me most about BRAVE Church, is that our priority at BRAVE Church is prayer. From first Tuesdays through all of our

ministries, our priority is prayer and every time we get together, whether it's six of us or 600 of us at a first Tuesday, every time we get together for prayer, we're refocusing on the person of Jesus Christ. Because that's what Christianity is all about, more and more and more of the person of Christ. Now ministering at BRAVE Global, I have the privilege of partnering with our church plants, domestically and internationally. It's interesting that one of the first things our international plants ask us for is processes and procedures. It's because they want to be good stewards and they need them.

And they're so used to Americans coming over there saying, "Okay, we've got it all figured out. Here's our template of processes, boom. Here's our template of procedures, boom." So at BRAVE Global we're committed, first and foremost, to the person of Christ. That we are going to lead all of our ministries with the person of Christ. And it is such a joy to go overseas to one of our church plants and instead of dealing out the processes and procedures so you can be efficient to stay up and say, "Hey, before we get started, let's spend a few hours sitting at the feet of the master, gazing his to his beauty, focusing on the person of Christ and listening to his heart. That is our priority at BRAVE Church and BRAVE Global and we learn that from Peter.

Okay, biblical truth number four. We witness here. When Peter got back, number four, deep intimacy with Jesus is experienced out on the water. Deep intimacy with Jesus is experienced out on the water. When Peter got back into that boat he had experienced an intimacy with Jesus that none of the other disciples had experienced to that point. Now you and I can experience wonderful intimacy and personal worship and

we should. You and I can experience wonderful intimacy and corporate worship like we did this morning and we, and you and I can experience wonderful intimacy with Jesus when we study his word and we should, but there is a depth of intimacy we experience when Jesus calls us out of our comfort zone, he calls us into an experience that we have never known before. He calls us into a place that we are way over our head. He calls us into a new season that we must be fully dependent upon him.

That if he doesn't provide, we're not going to make it, and that's not just day to day. That's not just hour by hour, that's moment by moment. There is a deep intimacy that is only experienced with Jesus when we get out of the boat and we join him on the waves. Okay. Church, let's look at truth number five. Just like Peter, Christ is calling us to join him where he is moving. Christ is calling us to join him where he is moving. About 20 years ago, a Bible study came out that has blessed hundreds of thousands of believers in churches. It's called Experiencing God by Dr. Henry Blackaby. Are you familiar with that? Dr. Blackaby studied God's word and he came up with seven biblical principles for how God works. The first one is biblical principle number one, God is always at work around us.

That means that God right now is working in the hearts of people in our neighborhood. That means that God is always at work in the people at our workplace. God is always at work in the hearts of people in our family and in our extended family. That's biblical truth number one, God is always at work around us. Now biblical truth number two is God is calling us to join him in ministry. God actually wants to do his

ministry through us, into that person's life. Okay, that sounds good. But how do we join him? How do we do that? If God is always at work around us in people's lives and God is calling you and I to join him in ministry, how do we do that? I want to offer you a very simple pray that you can easily remember. It goes like this, "Lord, I want to get out of the boat. I'm available." That's it. That's it.

If you and I pray that, "Lord, I believe that you're at work all around me. "Lord, I believe you are calling me to join you and work and people's lives. All we have to pray is Lord, I want to get out of the boat. I'm available." Okay? Now it's at this point that I start to have paralysis by analysis. You ever have that? Where I start thinking ahead, like, "Yeah, but what if God brings me a super needy person and I don't know what to say and they don't want to go to church," and I go through all these scenario of why that can't possibly work. Do you ever do that? We have to stop back because the holy spirit says, don't worry about any of that. I'll do all the heavy lifting. I'll do the ministry. I'll do the saving. I'll do the convicting. I'll do the healing. The holy spirit does all of the heavy lifting, but he says, I want to do it through you.

So you and I have to pray, "Lord, I want to get out of the boat. I'm available." And then here's what's going to happen. The Lord is going to bring someone across your path that he loves, who needs to be ministered to and you're going to know who it is. He's going to give you a divine appointment with that person, he's going to lay that person's name on your heart and on your mind and the spirit says, "When I bring that person to you, I will give you the words to say. I will give you the direction step by step. Trust me, just be willing to get out of the boat." Can you imagine what would

happen if every born again believer at BRAVE Church prayed this simple prayer for a few weeks, "Lord, I want to get out of the boat. I'm available."

It would transform every born again believer at BRAVE Church, it would transform BRAVE Church and it would begin to transform the community of Denver. Childlike faith, "Lord, I want to get out of the boat. I'm available." Okay, next we see that there was a lot of fear in that boat and the storm was causing all kinds of trouble. This leads to biblical truth number six. My storms are bigger than me. That's a really good thing to admit to ourselves that I cannot control my circumstances. My storms, my circumstances are bigger than me, but Jesus is bigger than my storms. One thing we should never do is invalidate somebody's storm that they're going through. You and I should never invalidate the trial that someone's going through. Like, "It's not really that bad," because for the person who's in it, that is a big trial. That is a big storm, but Jesus is awesome.

They can't compare to Jesus, but let's not invalidate and try to downplay their storms. Storms are big. Storms are hard. Trials are big. Trials are hard, but Jesus is awesome. My storms are big and some of you are in the middle of a storm right now and to that, you would say, "Amen, my storm is big. But Jesus is bigger. I could even say my storm is huge, but Jesus is awesome. They don't even compare. Now to really flesh this out, I'm going to give you two powerful, biblical prepositions about this truth. The first one is over and the second one is with. Jesus is ruling over all of our storms. Jesus is ruling and he's in complete control of over our troubles and our trials and our tribulations. Jesus is over all of them and he's using them to test our faith, strengthen

our faith, draw us closer to him, shape us more into Christ likeness, make us more dependent on him.

And he promises in Romans 8, that everything is ultimately going to work out for our good in his glory. From our storms, our trials, our troubles and our tribulations because Jesus is ruling over all of our storms and he's completely in control. Well, if we stopped there, we would say, that's great. I'm glad Jesus is on the throne ruling over my storms, but he seems a little distant. This is the second preposition Jesus promises. I am always with you in the storms. Isaiah 43 says when you pass through the turbulent waters, I will be with you. I will never leave you or forsake you. So Jesus is with us just as he was with the disciples, through all of the storms and all of the trials and all of the tribulations. Okay, this final critical teaching point deals with an epidemic in God's people and that's fear.

So church let's take a moment and just be honest about fear. Fear is a constant human problem. That's why the most common command in the Bible over 200 times is fear not, for I am with you. If we're honest, fear is like a demonic spirit, which comes to steal our joy, steal our sleep, steal our peace steal, our future and it can be paralyzing. Fear is like a demonic spirit that wants to come into our life and steal our joy, steal our peace, steal our sleep, steal our future and paralyze us. Now let's look at the last biblical truth.

The difference between fear and faith is focus. We see that right here from Peter's experience. The difference between fear, which is paralyzing and faith, which is

enjoying Jesus. The difference between fear and faith is focus. When Peter was focused on Jesus, he walked over his circumstances, but when Peter took his focus off of Jesus and put him on his circumstances, he was filled with fear and he began sinking into his circumstances and he began to overwhelm him. Then he put his focus back on Jesus, "Lord saved me," and he began to walk over his circumstances. The difference between fear and faith is focus. We have too many Christians who are saved yet filled with fear and filled with anxiety. It's interesting in the sermon on the Mount Jesus made it clear that worry is a sin against God. Because worry says one of two things worry says to God, either you're not all good because what's happening to me couldn't possibly be good.

I'm worried about the outcome or you're not all powerful. You don't have the power to change this. So worry is indicting to the good this into the omnipotence of God, that's why it's a sin. It says to Jesus, you're not omnipresent. You're not already in tomorrow. You don't have a perfect plan for me that's going to work out. That's impossible. Worry and fear and anxiety are a sin against God because they indict his goodness, his omnipotence and his omnipresence. We have too many Christians who are saved yet full of fear, full of anxiety and full of worry. I think a really good way to bring this teaching to a close is to have an opportunity to bring to Jesus' feet, all of our worries, all of our fears, all of anxieties as a sacrifice of praise and then refocus into the beautiful, saving, powerful, loving face of Jesus. I'm going to have the worship team lead us in a song and I'm going to ask you to meditate on the words of that song and then we're going to give you an opportunity to pray.