

How Jesus Can Help You Push Past Your Fears

Recently, I was reading the story found in Matthew's Gospel where the disciples leave Jesus to go ahead of Him across the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:22-33). The disciples head out across the dark lake while Jesus retreats for some time alone in prayer with His Father. Later that night, when the boat was a considerable distance from the shore and struggling because the waves had kicked up, Jesus headed out to meet them, walking on the water. When the disciples saw a figure coming across the water, their imaginations went wild, and they freaked out thinking Jesus was a ghost! Jesus immediately said to them, "Take courage! It is I" (Matt. 14:27b, NIV).

At this moment Peter a bit unsure said, "Lord, if it's you... tell me to come to you on the water" (Matt. 14:28). Jesus immediately invites him, saying, "Come" (Matt. 14:29). You know the rest of the story.

As I've been reading this story and mulling it over in my mind, it dawned on me: *At times, Jesus provokes our fears.* In this particular story, it seems as though He's baiting the disciples' fears! Why? I believe it is because He wanted to give them the opportunity to move past their fears and come to a greater understanding that He was the Son of God!

In your life and mine, we are plagued with lots of fears. Our imaginations at times get the best of us. We fear financial setbacks, insignificance, loss of control, sickness and a host of other things. Here's the thing: *Jesus wants to heal our fears.* Often the best way to do that is for Him to provoke our fears so that we have to face the truth about our fears and the truth about who Jesus is in those fearful situations.

Knowing this, here are three questions you can ask yourself

the next time you feel anxious or afraid:

What is the truth about my fear in this situation? Talking to yourself is actually a great practice because it can help you manage your emotions. Next time you feel afraid, go to your fear. Don't run from your fear—denial has never helped anyone! Instead, ask yourself, "What's the worst that can happen?" Then don't stop there, but go on to ask, "Is my imagination getting the best of me?" The disciples in the boat let their imaginations run wild thinking, "It's a ghost!" Don't make the same mistake. Often our perceptions of reality are quite different from what reality actually is. For example, suppose at work you are not given the promotion you feel you deserve. As a result, you begin to imagine, "I'm just irrelevant in this company. No one needs me anymore. Blah, blah, blah." The truth might be that God is protecting you from something you can't see. The truth might be that God is about to open an exciting door for you that you wouldn't be able to take if the promotion came through. So instead of imagining the worst, remind yourself that God has your best interests in mind.

What's the truth about God in this fear? The truth about God is that nothing can separate us from His love. Even if some of our worst fears happen, God's love does not change. He is still for us and with us. Meditate on Romans 8:35-36 (MEV) "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

Is there a step of faith I need to take? Often, fear is what holds us back from stepping into all that God is calling us to do. The way to move past fear is to accept Jesus' invitation to come and take the step out of safety to join Him in the adventure to which He's calling. If Peter hadn't taken the risk to get out of the boat, he would never have walked on water. {eoa}

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