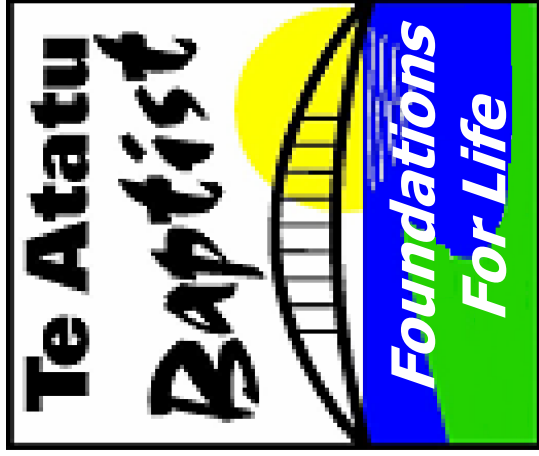


6 Helpful Hints for Walking on Water!

Short Version – 3898 words



January 18th 2004

Roger Spackman

Te Atatu Baptist Church

Credit given to John Ortberg – *If you want to walk on water – you're got to get out of the boat* – Zondervan Publishers – Michigan 2001 – pages 13 to 29.

Matthew 14:23-33 – Living Paraphrase

23,24 Jesus sent the disciples to the other side of the lake in a boat, and went up into the hills to pray. Night fell, and out on the lake the disciples were in trouble. For the wind had risen and they were fighting heavy seas.

25 About four o'clock in the morning Jesus came to them, walking on the water!

26 They screamed in terror, for they thought he was a ghost.

27 But Jesus immediately spoke to them, reassuring them. "Don't be afraid!" he said.

28 Then Peter called to him: "Sir, if it is really you, tell me to come over to you, walking on the water."

29 "All right," the Lord said, "come along!" So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus.

30 But when he looked around at the high waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

31 Instantly Jesus reached out his hand and rescued him. "O man of little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

32 And when they had climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped.

33 The others sat there, awestruck. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

Slide # 7 – identical to slide # 1 – 6 Helpful Hints for walking...

As an introduction to this morning's message – 6 Helpful Hints for Walking in Water -

- I have 3 special achievements from my collection of 'famous' people that I'd like you to consider:

- Albert Einstein didn't speak until he was 4 years of age and didn't read until he was 7. In fact one of his teachers

described him as ‘mentally retarded’ and forever lost in a dream world.

- Thomas Edison failed over 2000 times before producing the first ever electric light bulb.
- By the age of 46 Ludwig van Beethoven was completely deaf – but it was during these years of utter silence that he wrote his very best symphonies.

So what do all these people have in common?

They all believed that despite all the odds – despite the obstacles - that they could reach for the stars – and achieve their dreams.

And I wonder how many testimonies we would have here this morning about a time or experience where we have been called out of our comfort zone -

– when we have stepped out in faith to realize our dreams?

- A change of career – a redundancy that meant stepping out into the unknown future?
- Considering having to move into a retirement village?
- Answering the call to overseas missions or local evangelism?
- Leaving your home country in search of a new life?

Perhaps being asked to do something that makes us really nervous and gives us butterflies in our stomach?

- Sharing your testimony for the first time in front of your homegroup?

- Speaking for the first time in front of a large crowd?

- For some of us – it might be something as common as trying to pay the bills the first month after Christmas.

You see – our challenges or achievements might not be on the same grandiose scale as these famous people we mentioned a minute ago.

But the principles, the faith and the determination to reach out beyond our current grasp -

– these things remain the same!

I remember the first church where I worked as a young man of 17 years of age.

I gave up my job, left my parent’s home and shifted into a church half way house to manage it while also working as a pastoral assistant.

But the scary thing was this – I did it voluntarily and received no income or wages as my reward.

The first day that I left home and moved into the church house, I walked outside the front door and sat on the steps.

I remember talking to the Lord – saying: “Lord – how on earth am I going to survive without any money?”

How will I pay my bills – how will I live?”

And at that moment, this two dollar bill floated across the front lawn on the wind -

- and the Lord spoke to me in an audible voice:

“This is how I will provide for you – like manna from heaven!”

And I never spend this two dollar note, but kept it in my Bible as a testimony -

- a physical reminder as to how God can do the miraculous -

- if we only trust Him and be prepared to step out and walk on water.

Now - walking on water – that’s something you don’t see every day!

You see – it’s impossible – it can’t be done!

If you think it can – then give it a try next time you step into the bath!

You’ll sink straight to the bottom!

It’s not only dangerous – it’s irresponsible and reckless.

And you know what – every word and negative statement that I just said about walking on water –

is exactly the same things that were said to Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison and Ludwig van Beethoven.

In fact, I dare to suggest that they are exactly the same words that went through the mind of Peter -

- and were spoken through the mouths of the other disciples when Jesus called him to walk on water!

You see, there are some keys –

- some nuggets of truth that are found within the story of Jesus and Peter walking on water.

What we will discover – is that it doesn’t matter what God is calling you to attempt.

- It might be walking on water – as it was for Peter.
- It might be beginning a new ministry within the church or community.
- Beginning a new phase of life.

Whatever it is – doesn’t matter – because the principles are the same – no matter what it is that God is calling you to do.

We’re going to discover together 6 nuggets of truth from the story of Walking on Water that are applicable to the situation you find yourself in today –

- in your desire to obey and trust God for the future.

6 helpful hints for walking on water!

1. Water walkers recognize God's presence.

You see, the disciples were all comfortable being inside a boat – they felt secure within its walls.

And all of here this morning are sitting in a boat of some sort –

- we have worked hard at developing an environment of safety and comfort.

But this time – the storm blew and the boat was 'tormented' by the waves.

By 4am in the morning, the disciples weren't worried about getting to the other side –

- they just wanted to stay alive!

I think you know this feeling too.

The bottom of our world has just fallen through.

We've blown it –

- those things that protected us and gave us security have become beaten and rocked by the winds of adversity and hardship.

And the next moment – in the middle of the storm –

- the disciples see an outline of a figure – walking toward them – even walking on water!

'Maybe it's a ghost!' They said.

And they almost missed seeing God in the midst of their trouble.

Often times, in the middle of a storm, you and I are tempted to miss seeing God too –

- no better at recognizing His presence as were the disciples.

Here they were – terrified in the midst of the storm – sitting in a sinking boat.

But wait a minute – wasn't it Jesus who *told* them to get into the boat in the first place?

How come following the will of God can lead to darkness and trouble?

You see, God promised us a safe landing – not a smooth journey.

So now, we have the disciples –

- in the center of God's will for their lives – facing darkness and storms.

And it was at this time, when the night seemed the darkest –

- that Jesus decided to show the disciples who it really was who had control over the whole situation.

And isn't that so true – the darkest hour is just before the dawn.

At the outer limits of their safety and comfort zone –

- Jesus showed up in a more powerful way than if there had been no boat and no storm.

And as God was stretching them beyond anything they had known before –

- He was also calling them to do extraordinary things for Him and His kingdom.

Twelve disciples in a boat – and we don't know how all twelve of them responded to their situation.

But we do know that all 12 of them saw God in their midst.

But only one stepped out in faith and dared to do great things for God!

Peter was about to do the impossible –

- Peter was about to become what each one of us here today are ultimately designed to be –

- he became a water walker!

And the reason he was able to rise up above the storm – is that he recognized God in the midst of it.

Water walkers recognize God's presence in the midst of their storm.

Slide # 9

2. Water walkers discern between faith and foolishness

Peter blurts out to Jesus; *'If it's really you – then command me to come to you on the water!'*

Why does Matthew include this sentence in his gospel?

Why not just show the faith and enthusiasm of Peter and show him jumping out of the boat and walking on water?

Why not just automatically believe in faith for God to meet every need and desire in our hearts and lives?

You see – this is not a story about risk taking or foolish faith.

Primarily – this is a story about obedience – extreme obedience!

This means that we must discern between an authentic call from God or just misdirected faith.

There is a big difference between true faith and blind faith.

Just because God does something one way for one person –

- doesn't mean that we can turn it into a formula and expect God to do it the same every time there is a similar need.

This means that before Peter gets out of the boat, before he risks the lives of those he loves.

That means that before we give our money away or enter into some scheme or ministry that looks and sounds great.

Before we do all these things, we must be like Peter who calls out:

'Lord – is it really you?'

And in the darkness, amidst the storm – I think Jesus must have smiled.

Because at least one person in the boat got the gist of what was happening – of the lesson at hand.

The reason for the storm.

And in response, Peter decided that he wanted to become part of water walking history.

'Lord', he said 'If it is really you – then command me – and I will do it!'

Water walkers discern between faith and foolishness

And they double check with God that it is His will and not their own fancy desire –

- no matter how 'spiritual' it looks at first.

Slide # 10

3. Water walkers get out of the boat!

Now – before we go any further in the story.

I want you to imagine what it must have been like.

Picture in your mind how violent the storm must have been –

- how huge the waves were to make seasoned fishermen afraid for their lives.

Imagine the size of the waves, the strength of the wind, the darkness of the night.

These were the conditions in which Peter dared to get out of the boat.

Now - put yourself in Peter's shoes.

You have a sudden insight into what Jesus is doing –

- the Lord is inviting you to join Him in the impossible.

But at the same time you're scared to death.

At least the boat is safe and secure.

But the water is crashing and bashing.

I don't know about you – but I know which option I am usually tempted to take.

And I've discovered a simple principle as I've followed God for over 2 ½ decades.

If you want to walk on water – you've got to get out of the boat!

We were made for far more than simply avoiding failure!

In the film *The Dead Poets Society* - Professor John Keating – played by Robin Williams turns to the new influx of undergraduates in his class

He takes them to a photo of students of bygone years, and this is what he says:

"Now I'd like you to step forward over here. They're not that different from you, are they? Same haircuts. Full of hormones, just like you. Invincible, just like you feel. The world is their oyster. They believe they're destined for great things, just like many of you. Their eyes are full of hope, just like you. Did they wait until it was too late to make from their lives even one iota of what they were capable? Because, you see gentlemen, these boys are now fertilizing daffodils. But if you listen real close, you can hear them whisper their legacy to you. Go on, lean in. Listen, you hear it? Carpe... hear it? ...Carpe, carpe diem, seize the day boys, make your lives extraordinary."

Within each and every one of us is the desire to reach out and do something great with our lives.

To leave the comfort of mere existence and really begin to live.

So let me ask you one very important question;

What is your boat?

Your boat is whatever represents safety and security outside of God.

Think about the one thing that you would fear leaving behind –

- that you fear losing and being without - and chances are – that is your boat.

We don't need to go much further than that –

- only to say that Jesus might just be standing before you today –

- asking you to surrender that very thing into His loving and caring hands.

Calling you out of the boat – and onto the water of faith.

If you want to walk on water – you've got to get out of the boat!

Slide # 11

4. Water walkers expect problems.

So picture with me – Peter going over to the side of the boat.

Puts his feet over the side – holding on with white knuckles and grim determination.

Then Peter does something truly brave and miraculous – He lets go completely.

He abandons himself completely into the power of Jesus.

And for the first time in history – an ordinary human is walking on water!

Then it happens – as it does with all of us.

Reality sinks in.

Peter's focus shifts from Jesus to the storm.

But nothing has really changed.

The storm is the same, the boat is still the same, even Jesus is still the same.

The only things that changes is the perception of these things within Peter's mind and heart.

We all know what it's like to 'see the storm'.

We begin a new adventure with hope and enthusiasm.

We have the faith that could move mountains.

But then we start tripping over the molehills.

The reality sets in – the darkness breaks through.

Sometimes even depression and resentment start to manifest.

Setbacks.

Opposition.

Unexpected obstacles.

We see the wind.

You know, because of the wind – some people decide never to leave the boat.

Or else they climb straight back into it!

I'll tell you – it's rough outside of the boat – outside of our comfort zone.

Sometimes it gets a little scary too.

At least we know what it's like within the boat.

Do you know one of the greatest fears within society today?

Apart from public speaking which ranks at # 1.

One of the greatest fears today – is not death – but that is high on the list.

It is fear of failure.

Fear of stepping out of the boat.

It's risky standing on shaky ground – walking on water!

It involves faith – and that's spelt R.I.S.K.

Yes – there is danger in getting out of the boat.

But one thing I've discovered in life is this – we're all sitting in a boat –

- ultimately - we're sitting on deck chairs on the titanic.

Sometimes it really is no safer if we stay inside the boat.

Water walkers expect problems but step out of the boat anyway.

Slide # 12

5. Water walkers accept fear as the price of growth.

Now we come to a part of the story that you might not like very much.

The choice to get out of the boat – and accept your fears – making them work for you and not against you.

You've got to get out of the boat a little every day.

Personally I practice walking on water at least two or three times a week!

Accept a challenge – learn how to really live.

Each time Jesus calls you to get out of the boat – you will experience fear.

In fact – even while inside the boat, sometimes Jesus will make it downright uncomfortable inside the boat –

- in an attempt to cause us to want to get over the side and begin walking on water.

Just like the American Giant Eagle who begins to remove the down of soft feathers inside her nest as the chicks begin to mature

6. Water walkers master failure management

This point has the power to set many of us free this morning.

Let me ask you a question.

Did Peter fail at his task?

Most of us will say 'yes'.

But I'll tell you what – Peter may have taken only five or six steps on water –

- but it's a whole lot more than you or I will ever take!

Peter didn't fail – he succeeded!

Failure is not an event – but a judgment we place upon an event.

Let me give you a very real example.

In the Olympic games – if you watch a pole vault competition.

You will see them raise the bar, jump over it, and then raise the bar again –

- until finally they raise the bar so high that the vaulter simply can't jump over it no matter how many attempts.

Is this failure?

If it is – he just got rewarded a gold medal for it!

We need to change our perception of failure and stop beating ourselves or others up when they reach their upper limit.

- exposing the sharpness of the thorns underneath –

- prompting and urging her chicks to step out of the nest and begin to fly.

If it stays too comfortable in the boat too long, we begin to make it a house boat and not a fishing boat!

Fear will never go away if we are growing and expanding our faith and trust in Jesus.

Peter was afraid in the boat, he was afraid on the water and he was afraid many times after this miracle as well.

Many people today are like the other eleven disciples who felt the fear, -

- but it paralyzed them and prevented them from stepping out for God.

I've studied psychology, and one of the most basic automatic responses we have as humans is fear.

It's widely known that there are three responses to a fearful situation - fight, flight or freeze.

But I think there's another response – and that is: to follow.

To find God amidst our storm.

Step out of the boat and follow His lead to safe and secure ground.

There really is no gain without pain!

Water walkers accept fear as the price of growth – and step out on water anyway.

I'd rather attempt great things for God and fail, than attempt nothing and succeed.

It's all a matter of perspective.

Thomas Edison – 2000 attempts before getting it right.

He was asked if he was tempted to give up during so many failures.

'Failures?' he said 'They weren't failures – they were simply practice runs!'

During his entire career - Michael Jordan has shot an estimated 2500 misses for every perfect shot in the net.

Is he a failure?

It's all to do with perspective.

Did Peter fail?

Maybe you think he did – after all – he did take his eyes off Jesus and sink beneath the waves.

But I'll tell you what – if you are tempted to think of him as a failure –

- there were eleven bigger failures sitting in the boat right beside him!

It's so easy for people to criticize us when we are doing our best to serve and obey God –

- but usually the ones who criticize and complain are those ones still sitting in the comfort of the boat.

Peter may have failed – but only he know the glory of being lifted up by the powerful arms of Jesus.

More than the eleven in the boat –

- Peter knew first hand about trusting and obeying – despite being labeled a failure.

It's not a failure to sink beneath the waves.

The worst failure is never getting out of the boat.

Water walkers master failure management

Well – there you have it.

6 helpful hints for walking on water!

I've got a few questions that I'd like you to consider and answer over the coming week:

Questions that you were handed as you walked through the door this morning:

Slide # 14

I just want to highlight one of them as we close:

- Where are you in your relation to Jesus this morning?
 - ❑ Huddled in the boat with a life jacket on?
 - ❑ One leg in – one leg out?
 - ❑ I'm walking on water and loving it!

- I'm out of the boat – but the water looks pretty bad!

Slide # 15

1. Water walkers recognize God's presence.
2. Water walkers discern between faith and foolishness
3. Water walkers get out of the boat!
4. Water walkers expect problems.
5. Water walkers accept fear as the price of growth.
6. Water walkers master failure management