

## WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

# Jesus the Life Saver

### Focal Passage: *Matthew 14:22-33*

#### Objective:

The group member will discover the life-saving power of Christ and be encouraged to place his/her life into his care.

The group you are working with may be a mixture of Christians or non-Christians. The objective of this session is to direct their life-their focus on Christ. You should know how to present the plan of salvation individually or to the group as the Holy Spirit directs you. A guide for presenting the gospel can be found in the addendum. Christ is the only One who can guide each of us through the troubled waters of our lives!

#### Lesson Summary:

This is Matthew's account of Peter and Jesus walking on water. Peter, like us, has gotten "in over his head", beyond his ability to handle the situation, and in his moment of desperation is crying, "Jesus! Save me!" We've all been in the same "hot water" as Peter, crying out for God to save us. But note the ending to this story: there was a change in Peter; and not only in Peter but in all the disciples.

#### Lesson Context:

Jesus has just fed the 5000 and has gone into the hills alone to pray. He returns to the shore and finds the boat adrift, buffeted by the wind and waves.

#### Lesson Outline:

- I. Without an ongoing relationship with God we are at the mercy waves in our lives.
- II. Jesus approached the disciples - Christ takes the first step
- III. Peter took a step of faith... we must take a step of faith
- IV. Peter's error was to take his eyes off of Christ
- V. When our faith falters we need only call out to Christ
- VI. Peter was changed
- VII. Because of Peter's step of faith, the other disciples were also changed
- VIII. Wave closing activity

#### Materials:

- Intro: Blindfolds for all the group members
- Activity IB - Waves cut from blue paper

**Before the Lesson:** cut waves from blue paper

#### Hints for teaching

Some additional material for illustrations on steps of faith:

- The Centurion (Mt. 8:5-13)-
  - humble faith (v8),
  - faith in Christ's Word (v9)
- The ruler and the afflicted woman (Mt. 9:18-26)
  - faith that Christ could raise the dead (v18)
  - faith in Christ heals (v22)
- The Blind Man (Mt. 9:27-31)
  - faith in Christ's abilities (v28)
  - according to the faith of the blind men they were healed (v29)
  - faith that feels it must spread the word of Christ (v31)
- The Canaanite woman (Mt. 15:21-28) -
  - faith is persistent
- Epileptic boy (Mt. 17:14-21)
  - It only takes a little faith.*

#### Introductory Group Activity

As a fitting introduction to this study, during group time have a "leper Walk." Groups of 8-15 youth are asked to put on blindfolds. Inform the group that they have been stranded on an island of a native tribe of lepers. The tribe has agreed to lead them across sacred ground to a rescue ship provided they will blindfold themselves.

Lightly tap a members of each group on the head. Tell them to remove their blindfolds and come with you and you will show them the way through the sacred ground. Explain to the remainder of the group that you will return shortly and while you are gone they should arrange themselves for sightless travel. (The best idea is to form a long chain.) Point out the route to the guides you have chosen. Prior to this you should establish a challenging and enjoyable route including movement through tight places, crawling over and under something, next to water (which you can splash threateningly), passing over and down an embankment, etc.

Explain to the leaders and eventually the group that leaders are not allowed to say anything that the group can understand, but they can make noises (i.e. snapping, clapping, clucking, etc.). They don't speak the language and of course since they have leprosy they can't be touched either. The group may talk among itself, but not to the leader. Allow each group, with the leader, to discuss a communication strategy. Leaders and sponsors should strategically place themselves as spotters along the trail to protect groups from risky areas. Then announce... "The next semi-human sounds you will hear will be from your tribal guides. It's your task to follow them to safety. However, they have assured us that should anyone take a peek they will be murdered in order to protect the tribes secrets."

After groups have finished the route take them back through it without blindfolds as they will be highly curious as to where they went. Debrief and discuss how they felt taking the steps of faith, of trust in a leader whom they did not understand. During your Bible study you can refer back to this activity.

Peter must have felt similar in his step of faith!

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**Introduction:** As youth walk into the meeting room, have them write the problems, and troubles, youth face in today's world on a large blue piece of construction paper cut in the shape of a wave.

- I. **WITHOUT AN ONGOING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD WE ARE ALL ADRIFT, WE ARE ALL AT THE MERCY OF THE WAVES IN OUR LIVES.**

Christ was in a vital relationship with God, communicating in prayer, seeking God's direction. The disciples were adrift, under the control of the wind and waves.

- A. **WHEN TIMES GET TOUGH, WE USUALLY GO BACK TO WHAT WE KNOW BEST.**

Peter went fishing. When Christ took off for a break, Peter, who lacked direction in his life at this point, went back to what he knew best: fishing!

What do you go back to when you think that God isn't listening to your prayers, or it seems that God is taking a nap in the boat?

- B. **JESUS WAS DOING WHAT HIS FATHER WANTED HIM TO DO: RELAX IN HIM.**

How do I do at relaxing in God?

**Group Discussion:** Discuss the waves, troubles, that youth have indicated are prevalent today. How do these waves send us adrift? In what ways are we under their control, their mercy?

**HOW WOULD YOU CURRENTLY DESCRIBE THE WAVES IN YOUR LIFE?**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> SMOOTH AS GLASS       | <input type="checkbox"/> BIG SWELLS    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CALM WATERS           | <input type="checkbox"/> BIG WAVES     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RIPPLES               | <input type="checkbox"/> TIDAL WAVES   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SMALL WAVES           | <input type="checkbox"/> SINKING FAST  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SLIGHTLY CHOPPY WATER | <input type="checkbox"/> GURGLE-GURGLE |

**Activity 1B:** Have each student write down the things that are causing waves in their life on one side of waves made from the small wave template on blue paper. Save the wave for a the final activity.

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- A. **WHEN TIMES GET TOUGH, WE USUALLY \_\_\_\_\_**

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## II. JESUS APPROACHED THE DISCIPLES.

Christ did not call out to the disciples to come to shore. He went to them. In the same way, when Christ sees our lives adrift, He makes the first move, walks out to meet us. As Christ approached, the disciples thought he was a ghost. They did not yet understand his power and purpose. Christ takes the first steps that we might see him and know him for who he REALLY is!

### **Discussion:**

In what ways does Christ take the first steps to meet us today?

### **An illustration:**

There was a great flood, and one man, trapped by the waters feared for his life. Being a man of faith, he prayed. The waters began to rise yet he still continued his steadfast prayer. A neighbor paddling by in a raft offered to take him to safety. "No thanks", he replied, in obvious faith, "My God will save me." He continued diligent in his prayers and soon needed to move to the roof of his house. His faith never faltered. His prayers were once again interrupted, this time by the boat of rescue workers. Again he replied, "No thanks, My God will save me" Time passed. His head barely above the water he continued to pray. A helicopter came, and seeing his plight, lowered a cable. Again he refused, instead choosing to wait for God to save him. As he muttered his last prayer, his life was claimed by the flood waters. Upon entering heaven he asked God, "My faith in you never wavered. Why didn't you answer my prayers." Yet God replied, "I sent a neighbor, a boat, and a helicopter. What more could you ask?" Only through an intimate relationship with him can we see Christ's work and his rescue from the troubled waters! Christ is not a ghost but alive and active in our lives today.

## III. PETER TOOK A STEP OF FAITH.

Often Peter gets criticized for his lack of faith. Yet of the disciples, Peter was the only one to have enough faith to step out of the boat and move to Christ. For every person that steps out of the boat in response to the call of Jesus there will be eleven still in the boat to tell him why it can't be done.

### **Discussion:**

Why do you think Peter stepped out of the boat?

What do you think the other disciples thought when Peter stepped out of the boat?

Are there negative people in your life? Peter stepped out of the boat with the support and encouragement of Christ alone!

What are some situations in which we must step out of the safety of the boat and put our trust in Christ?

### **An Illustration:**

A sign above a General Motors plant says "Research, supposedly has proven scientifically that it is impossible for the bumblebee to fly. Based on the factors of body size, density, shape, weight, wingspan, and speed of the wings, it is aeronautically impossible for this creature to get off the ground." It seems someone forgot to notify the bumblebee. We need enough self-forgetfulness, enough abandonment, enough faith to do the same. We need more Christian bumblebees to step in faith.

## II. JESUS \_\_\_\_\_ THE DISCIPLES.



## III. PETER TOOK \_\_\_\_\_.



#### IV. PETER'S ERROR, THOUGH HE WAS OFF TO A GOOD START, WAS TO TAKE HIS EYES OFF OF CHRIST.

Christ tells Peter in verse 31 that he has "little faith." Peter took his eyes off Christ in order to look at the waves. He took his eyes off the solution and focused on the problems again. When he saw the problems his faith faltered and he began to sink. He had faith to begin the journey, but not enough to complete it.

##### **Discussion:**

What happened when Peter took his eyes off Jesus? Why?  
What happens when we take our eyes off Jesus? Why?  
As Christians, do we judge others based on how we perceive the right or wrong of what they are doing?  
How do you think the other disciples reacted when Peter began to sink?  
What does this tell us about the importance of faith?

As you talk to your class about the faith relationship we have with God, you may want to share stories of your own faithfulness or faithlessness. Turn the youth's attention toward verses of scripture like: Acts 15:8-9; Matthew 17:20; Mark 11:22; II Corinthians 5:7, and most importantly Romans 3:22. In Romans 3:22, we get to the bottom line, the same line that Peter came to out on the water: "faith comes from having a relationship with Jesus Christ."

#### **Romans 3:22**

**Namely, the righteousness of God which some by believing with personal trust and confident reliance on Jesus Christ (the Messiah). [And it is meant] for all who believe. For there is no distinction.**

##### **An Illustration:**

At 7 P.M. on Oct. 20, 1968 only a few thousand spectators remained in the Mexico City Olympic stadium. The Marathon race had been won over an hour earlier. As the last of the spectators began to leave, they halted as they heard sirens and whistles at the marathon gates. There, wearing the colors of Tanzania, Stephen Akhwari entered the stadium. He was the last man to finish the marathon. His leg was bloody and bandaged, he had severely injured his knee in a fall, and yet he was painfully hobbling around the 400 meter track. The spectators who remained arose and applauded him as if he were the winner of the race. Akhwari painfully finished the race and quietly walked off the field, not even looking back at the cheering crowd. When he was asked why he did not quit, since his task was so painful and he had no chance of winning a medal he replied, "My country did not send me 7000 miles away to start the race. They sent me 7000 miles to finish it."

#### IV. PETER'S ERROR, THOUGH HE WAS OFF TO A GOOD START, WAS \_\_\_\_\_



#### **Romans 3:22**

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V. WHEN OUR FAITH FALTERS, WE HAVE ONLY TO CALL OUT TO CHRIST AND HE WILL LIFT US ABOVE THE WAVES, ABOVE THE TROUBLED WATERS WE FACE.

Christ again reaches out to us.

**Discussion:**

What was Jesus' response when Peter was sinking and Peter looked to Him for help?

Do you think that Peter feared failure?

When do you fear failure?

Fear of failure is often a barrier to stepping out in faith. How does

Christ's response to Peter when he sinks apply to us when we fail?

VI. PETER WAS CHANGED!

We are touched, and in that instant we are also changed. You cannot stay the same when you have been touched by Jesus. You are not only lifted above your troubled waters, but you begin an intimate "I am in touch with the hand of Christ" kind of relationship.

VII. BECAUSE OF PETER'S STEP OF FAITH, THE OTHER DISCIPLES WERE ALSO CHANGED.

Not only was the sea calmed, but the disciples were calmed. Because of Peter's step of faith, and more importantly, Christ's touch on his life, the faith of the disciples was also strengthened. Verse 33 says that "those in the boat knelt and worshipped him." Those fellows got into a LIFE CHANGING relationship with Jesus. Worship is the everyday, functional relationship we have in our interaction with Christ in our hearts with Him and the world around us. When they began to worship Jesus —THEIR LIVES CHANGED!!

**Jesus didn't just save their lives, including Peter's to show off and prove his power— He saved their lives that he might have a relationship with them! And that relationship was life-changing!**

FAITH IN CHRIST, OUR EYES ON HIM, CAN TAKE US THROUGH THE ROUGHEST WAVES, CAN RAISE US FROM THE DEEPEST DEPTHS, AND TAKE US ANYWHERE WE NEED TO GO! TAKE A STEP OF FAITH! ALLOW CHRIST TO TOUCH YOUR LIFE! ALLOW CHRIST TO LIFT YOU ABOVE THE WAVES AND BE YOUR LIFE SAVER!

What are some areas of your life in which God is asking you to step out in faith?

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**Jesus didn't just save their lives, including Peter's to show off and prove his power— He saved their lives that he might \_\_\_\_\_ And that \_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_ !**

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What are some areas of your life in which God is asking you to step out in faith?

Maybe you need to take that initial step of faith, trusting him for your salvation. Maybe there is an area of your life where you are afraid of failure, and afraid to step out of the boat? Maybe there is an area where you have lost your focus on Christ and focused on the troubles, the waves? Maybe you have, like the disciples, drifted and been carried away by the waves? Maybe you've taken that initial step of faith but you need to continue your journey toward Christ? Christ wants to again bridge the gap! What will you do to meet him?

**Closing activity:**

Have students use the opposite side of their wave to write a commitment of how they give their waves to God to allow Him to calm their storm.

Or...

If there is a body of water nearby, you might use it as a quiet place where each student can release their waves unto God. (Be sure to discretely clean up the litter later!)

or...

Have students tuck their waves into their Bibles. Encourage them to read it later and see how God worked out the storms they had given to Him.

**Conclusion:**

God can be relied upon to calm our storms. For Peter it was immediate when Jesus touched his hand—after he had walked through a very rough sea. For the other disciples on the boat tossed by waves and seeing Jesus in the distant sea, relief must have seemed an eternity away. Sometimes God calms our storms almost immediately like Peter and sometimes He builds our faith to ride out the storm in the boat. There are times it seems like an eternity before God calms our storms. But God is still there keeping us in His sight and in His care.

In God's timing the needs of Peter and the other eleven disciples were met in the appropriate time and way...and NONE were lost!!