

The Struggle Between

My Faith
And
My Focus

Part IV

Week One.... A Firm Foundation Comes From a Fixed Focus

Principle #1

Whatever Gets Your Attention Gets You

Principle #2

*If You Keep Looking At What They Have;
You'll Start To Question What God Gave You*

Principle #3

When we can't explain what we see, we begin to doubt what we believe.

Principle #4

Don't Allow What Is Temporary To Cause You To Stop Trusting

Week Two....

Principle #1

Observation Of The Problem Will Cause You To Overlook The Evidence

Principle #2

Their Focus Kept Them From Participating In What God Had Planned

Principle #3

Their Focus Had An Impact On Their Identity

Principle #4

Their Focus Produced a Pattern That Passed to the Next Generation

DON'T ALLOW THIS PATTERN TO BE REPEATED

Last Week

Absence Can Affect What We Believe

The Pain We Experience Can Paralyze Our Faith

Mature Faith Is Built On Trust Rather Than Verified Evidence

Key Passage

Matthew 14:24-31 (NLT)

24 Meanwhile, *the disciples were in trouble* far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and *they were fighting heavy waves*.

25 About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, *walking on the water*.

26 When the disciples saw him *walking on the water*, *they were terrified*. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!"

27 But Jesus spoke to them at once. "*Don't be afraid*," he said. "*Take courage. I am here!*"

28 Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, *walking on the water*."

29 "Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and *walked on the water* toward Jesus.

30 But when he *saw* the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

31 Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

Introduction

There is *a constant battle* between your *Faith* and your *Focus*
There is a Constant Battle Between *What You See* and *What You Believe*

Faith is built on *what God said*... *Fear* is built on *what you see happening*.

Faith requires *INTENTIONAL FOCUS*.

If you don't *deliberately/intentionally fix your focus on Jesus*,
Your Attention will naturally *drift to your problems*.

The Challenge: You can hear a word from God... *and still be surrounded by something that contradicts it*.

God says "I'm with you"...but you *see yourself* walking alone.

God says "I'll provide"...but *you see* bills piling up.

God says "you will make it"...but everything around you *looks like* you're about to go under.

Faith is not *just believing what God said*...

It is *maintaining your focus on what He said* in the middle of *WHAT YOU SEE*.

That's why the enemy doesn't always try to *destroy your faith*—he tries to *divide your focus*.

Because if he can *shift what you're looking at*...he can slowly *weaken what you believe in*.

Introduction

This is why **storms are so significant**.
Storms are about **EXPOSURE**.

They reveal Whether your **FAITH IS STABLE...** or **SITUATIONAL**

Because it's easy to say **"I trust God"** when the waters are calm...but storms ask **a different question:**
Can you stay focused on God when everything around you is fighting for your attention?

When God Allows or Arranges Storms, It Causes **Tension** Within The Believer

So, **storms serve a purpose...** They are designed to:
Test your faith by testing your focus
Challenge your confidence by changing your conditions

Because the real issue is not: **"DO YOU HAVE FAITH?"**
The real issue is: **"What has your focus when your faith is being tested?"**

And that's exactly what we see in **Matthew 14:24–30** ~ Peter has **ENOUGH FAITH** to step out of the boat...
but the storm **REVEALS** whether he has **enough focus to stay on the water**.

Faith Is Activated By The Word

Matthew 14:24-26 (NLT)

24 Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves.
25 About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, **walking on the water**.

26 When the disciples saw him **walking on the water**, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!"
27 But **JESUS SPOKE** to them at once. **"Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!"**

They Are In The Storm By Following The Word

Matthew 14:22 (NLT)

22 Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake...

The Disciples Are **Fighting**, **Frustrated**, and **Fearful** ~ They are **OVERWHELMED** by what they are facing.

Conditions Can Consume Your Attention

Notice—before Jesus speaks, **their FOCUS** is completely on the storm.
When your **FOCUS** is consumed by the storm, you can **misinterpret the presence of God**.

Psalms 46:10 ~ "Be still, and **KNOW** that I am God!"

Matthew 8:26-27 (NLT)

26 Jesus responded, "Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!" Then he got up and **rebuked the wind and waves**, and suddenly all was calm. 27 The disciples were amazed. **"WHO IS THIS MAN?"** they asked.

Faith Is Activated By The Word

Matthew 14:24-26 (NLT)

26 When the disciples saw him *walking on the water*, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!"

27 But **JESUS SPOKE** to them at once. **"Don't be afraid,"** he said. **"Take courage. I am here!"**

They didn't *recognize His form*...but they *responded to His voice*.

Jesus says: *"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."*

And suddenly, *everything shifts For Peter*—not because the storm stopped...*but because a word was spoken.*

Faith is not activated by what you see God do...it is activated by what you hear God say.

They were still... In the same storm... In the same boat... Surrounded by the same waves

BUT NOW PETER HAS A WORD.

Romans 10:17 ~ *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*

One Word from God Can Calm your fear without calming the storm

One Word From God Can Strengthen your faith without changing your circumstances

One Word From God Can Shift your focus without removing the pressure

EVERYONE HEARD THE WORD.... BUT PETER RESPONDED DIFFERENTLY

The Word Is Clear...Even In Chaotic Conditions

Matthew 14:27 (NLT)

27 But **JESUS SPOKE** to them at once. **“Don’t be afraid,”** he said. **“Take courage. I am here!”**

Jesus spoke into the storm, not after the storm

God can give you a **CLEAR WORD** in the middle of *unclear circumstances*.

Notice....God does not need *calm conditions* to *communicate a clear message*.

And if you’re not careful: **YOU’LL AMPLIFY THE STORM**... And **MINIMIZE THE WORD**

WHY???

When everything around you *is unstable*, the Word gives you **something solid to stand on**.

LET’S EXAMINE THE WORD

“Take Courage” ~ The Word Provides **Confidence**

“It Is I” ~ The Word Provides **Clarity**

“Do Not Be Afraid” ~ The Word Provides **A Challenge**

Can You **Focus** On The Word In The Midst Of *Difficult Circumstances*

Faith Works When The Focus Is Right

Matthew 14:28-29 (NLT)

28 *Then* Peter called to him, “*Lord, if it’s really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water.*”

29 “*Yes, come,*” Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and *walked on the water toward Jesus.*

*His Focus Is Fixed On Jesus—And His Faith Functions Properly
If Your Faith Is Not Functioning ~ Check Your Focus*

The Word Gives Access To The Impossible ~ “COME”

Whatever You Desire To Accomplish ~ FOCUS ON GOD’S WORD

Peter is now doing something that contradicts everything around him.

People Are In Awe Of What You Are Accomplishing

Joshua 1:8 (NLT)

8 Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.

Psalms 1:2-3 (NIV)

2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.

Whatever he does prospers.

Fear Enters When Faith Is Interrupted

Matthew 14:30 (NLT)

30 BUT when he **SAW** the strong wind and the waves, **he was terrified** and **began to sink**.
“Save me, Lord!” he shouted.

Peter had **Enough faith** to step out... But not **enough focus** to stay steady
You can have **Enough Faith** to start...but still need **discipline** to stay steady.

Notice the sequence:

Sight shift ~ **Fear sets in** ~ **Faith starts sinking**

Fear is not **random**—it is **reactive** ~ Faith Is Not **Passive** ~ It Is **Proactive**

FEAR SHOWS UP WHEN:

Faith is no longer dominant ~ **Focus** is no longer disciplined

Isaiah 41:10 ~ **So do not fear**, for **I am with you**; **do not be dismayed**, for **I am your God**.

Joshua 1:9 ~ Have I not commanded you? **Be strong and courageous**. **Do not be terrified**;
do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God **will be with you wherever you go**."

John 14:27 ~ **Peace I leave with you**; **my peace I give you**. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Fear Enters When Faith Is Interrupted

Matthew 14:30 (NLT)

30 BUT when *he saw the strong wind and the waves*, *he was terrified and began to sink*.
“Save me, Lord!” he shouted.

You cannot *sustain faith* while *studying the storm*.

His failure started with what *captured his attention*.

Fear fights faith by trying to *interrupt your concentration* on Christ.

The Challenge

Isaiah 26:3 (ESV)

3 You keep him in perfect peace whose *mind is stayed on you*, because he trusts in you.

What has your attention in this season—the voice of Jesus... or the violence of the storm?

Closing Prayer ~ Lord Fix My Focus

2 Kings 6:13-17 (NLT)

*13 “Go and find out where he is,” the king commanded, “so I can send troops to seize him.”
And the report came back: “Elisha is at Dothan.” 14 So one night the king of Aram
sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city.*

*15 When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside,
there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. “Oh, sir, **WHAT WILL WE DO NOW?**”
the young man cried to Elisha.*

*16 “Don’t be afraid!” Elisha told him. “**For there are more on our side than on theirs!**”
17 THEN ELISHA PRAYED, “O LORD, OPEN HIS EYES AND LET HIM SEE!”*

*The Lord opened the young man’s eyes, and when he looked up,
he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.*

***Faith** Functions Properly When Your **Focus** Is Right
Fear Paralyzes Your **Faith** When You **Focus** Exclusively On The Problem*

Remember This....

Faith Is Activated By The Word

The Word Is Clear...Even In Chaotic Conditions

Faith Works When The Focus Is Right

Fear Enters When Faith Is Interrupted