



Table Talk with Ps Mike Connell

Walking on Water — Navigating Seasons & Storms in Leadership

Matthew 14:22-33

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Use this workbook individually or with your leadership team. Read each section's key points and application points together, then take time to sit with the discussion questions — write your responses in the spaces provided. Be honest; the goal is not to have perfect answers, but to let God speak into your current season.

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Seasons of Life & Leadership*Foundational principle***Key Points**

- Life moves through seasons (childhood, adolescence, young adult, marriage, parenting, empty nest, etc.) — each with its own God-given goals.
- Unresolved “baggage” from one season carries into the next and limits future fruitfulness.
- Many leaders in their 50s+ are still hindered by issues never faced from decades earlier.
- The key question for every season: *“What is the Father doing, and what is He doing in me?”*
- Jesus modeled this — He didn't try to do everything or meet every expectation; He resisted crowd pressure to stay aligned with the Father's agenda.

Application Points

- Take an honest inventory: what unresolved issues from a past season are you still carrying?
- Don't assume busyness equals alignment — ask specifically what God is doing *in* you, not just *through* you.
- Leaders especially need to address personal baggage before it limits kingdom impact in the current season.

Discussion & Reflection

1. What season of life/ministry are you currently in, and what do you sense are its specific goals?

2. Is there unresolved “baggage” from a previous season that may be limiting you now? How might you begin addressing it?

3. How do you currently discern “what the Father is doing” versus simply doing what's expected of you?

2

The Setup — From Miracle to Storm

*Matthew 14:13-23***Key Points**

- The story sits between two massive moves of God: feeding the 5,000 and the revival at Gennesaret.
- Jesus had layers of followers — crowds, followers, the Twelve, the inner Three, and “the One” (John) — each with different motives.
- The crowd wanted a political king who would defeat Rome externally; they wanted to bypass the cross.
- People still want “the king” without “the cross” — external change without internal transformation.
- Jesus *constrained* the disciples into the boat — He deliberately removed them from the crowd's influence.

Application Points

- Be alert to “consumer Christianity” — people following for what God can do for them, not for transformation.
- Leaders must guard against being swept along by what the crowd wants rather than what God is doing.
- Sometimes God removes us from a season of visible success/momentum and into isolation — this isn't rejection, it's protection and preparation.

Discussion & Reflection

1. In what ways do you see “consumer Christianity” (wanting blessing without transformation) showing up in your own life or church culture?

2. Have you experienced God “constraining” you away from something — pulling you out of momentum or popularity into a quieter, harder place? What happened?

3. How do you personally discern between crowd pressure/expectation and God's actual direction?

3

The Personal Reset*Matthew 14:23***Key Points**

- After the miracle, Jesus dismissed the crowd and went alone to a mountain to pray — a *personal reset*.
- A reset isn't just “more prayer for more ministry” — it's stepping back to refocus, reprioritize, and realign with the Father after a season of achievement.
- Sons/daughters are called to relationship, representation, *and* assignment — not everything people want from you is what God assigned you.
- Jesus said, “I have finished the work You gave me to do” — not everything everyone else wanted Him to do.
- Resets prevent pride, burnout, and mission drift after times of success.

Application Points

- Build regular “reset” rhythms into your life and leadership — especially after seasons of visible fruit or breakthrough.
- Learn to say “I'm not doing that anymore” even when people love what you've been doing — because God may have a new priority.
- Use reset time specifically to ask: *What did God actually assign me, versus what have I taken on because of need or expectation?*

Discussion & Reflection

1. When was your last true “personal reset” — time alone with God to refocus rather than to add to your to-do list?

2. Are there things you continue doing simply because people want you to, that may not be part of your current assignment?

3. After a season of visible success, how do you guard against pride or self-reliance?

4

The Crowd, the Noise & Leading Through Criticism

*Leadership under pressure***Key Points**

- The crowd's mood can flip quickly — “Hosanna” one day, “Crucify” the next. Jesus warned His followers this would happen to them too.
- “Mind your own business” (1 Thess. 4:11) — if it's not your responsibility, you're not positioned to have an informed opinion about it.
- Leadership = greater elevation = greater visibility, but you often *can't explain everything* to those below you — and trying to “make everyone understand” often makes things worse.
- Story example: confronting a popular but unhealthy leader — anger, manipulation (“Jezebel spirit” dynamics), then tears, then resignation. The leader was blamed as “the villain” by those who loved the person being confronted.
- Sometimes you must set a boundary, stay silent on details, and simply ask people to trust your decision.

Application Points

- Expect that doing the right thing as a leader will sometimes make you look like “the villain” to those who don't have the full picture.
- Resist the urge to over-explain or justify every decision to defend your reputation.
- When confronting issues, expect anger/deflection first — stay grounded, keep the focus on the actual issue, and set clear boundaries.

Discussion & Reflection

1. Have you experienced a situation where doing the right thing made you unpopular or misunderstood? How did you handle it?

2. How do you discern when something genuinely is “your business” to have an opinion on versus not?

3. What's your tendency under criticism — to over-explain, withdraw, or stand firm in silence? How might you grow in this?

5 The Storm — Discipleship Training

Matthew 14:24

Key Points

- The disciples experienced a *contrary wind* — not just absence of progress, but active opposition pushing them backward.
- Possible “winds” identified: **demonic opposition** (needs confronting); **disobedience** (“the Jonah wind” — when someone’s off-course choices create a storm for everyone around them); **doubt** (“a wave of the sea, driven and tossed,” James 1:6 — losing focus on the last clear word from God); and **false doctrine** (“winds of teaching” — movements/trends that pull entire churches off course, e.g. the seeker-friendly movement).
- Storms test foundations (Matt. 7:25) — they reveal what’s *really* been built, not what looks good on the surface.
- Storms don’t come to sink you — they come to *expose* what needs to be aligned with the Kingdom.

Application Points

- When you sense “contrary wind,” ask which category it is: spiritual opposition, personal disobedience (yours or someone near you), doubt, or a false teaching/trend you’ve drifted toward.
- Don’t chase every trend or “wind of doctrine” sweeping through the wider church — stay anchored to what God has specifically said to you/your church.
- In a storm, return to the *last clear word* God gave you and anchor there rather than reacting to circumstances.

Discussion & Reflection

1. Looking at your current “storm” (personal or corporate), which “wind” seems most active — opposition, disobedience, doubt, or false teaching?

2. What was the “last word” God gave you/your leadership before this storm started? Are you still anchored to it?

3. Have you ever followed a ministry “trend” that later proved to pull you off course? What did you learn?

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Jesus Walks on the Water — Revelation Through Crisis

Matthew 14:25-27

Key Points

- Jesus came walking on the water at the 4th watch (~3 a.m.) — after a full night of fruitless rowing.
- His presence in the storm reveals His authority over creation, nature, weather, time, and space (they were “immediately” at their destination).
- The disciples' terror flipped instantly into worship once they recognized who was with them in the storm.
- The storm wasn't meant to destroy them — it was meant to bring them to a *fresh revelation of Jesus*.

Application Points

- In your current storm, ask: “What fresh revelation of Jesus is available to me here that I wouldn't get any other way?”
- Don't rush past the storm looking only for relief — look for the *encounter* it's producing.
- Corporate storms (church-wide) follow the same pattern — they're often followed by a fresh outpouring/move of God (Gennesaret).

Discussion & Reflection

1. What might Jesus be revealing about Himself to you specifically through your current difficulty?

2. How does recognizing “Jesus is in this storm with us” change your posture from fear to worship?

3. As a leader, how can you help others move from terror/complaint to worship during a corporate “storm” season?

7

Peter's Step of Faith*Matthew 14:28-32***Key Points**

- Peter asked for a *word*: “Lord, if it's You, command me to come.” Faith comes by hearing a word from God (Romans 10:17).
- Peter stepped *out of the boat* — something no human had ever done apart from God's power.
- He sank only when he shifted his focus from Jesus/the word to the wind and waves (circumstances).
- Even sinking, Jesus immediately caught him — and Peter walked *again* afterward.
- “Boat people” stay safe but never experience what “step-out” people experience — Peter is remembered; the others aren't even named.

Application Points

- Identify the specific “word” God has given you for this season — and let that be your reference point, not the circumstances.
- Don't let a moment of sinking define the whole story — Jesus catches, restores, and you can walk again.
- Consider: are you a “boat person” or being called to step out in this season?

Discussion & Reflection

1. What “word” from God are you currently holding onto — and how strong is your focus on it versus on circumstances?

2. Have you ever “sunk” after stepping out in faith? What happened when you cried out, and what did you learn afterward?

3. Is there a step of faith God may be inviting you to take right now that feels like “getting out of the boat”?

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Arrival, Worship & the Way Forward*Matthew 14:33-34***Key Points**

- They landed at Gennesaret (not their original destination, Bethsaida) — a place of unbelief that became the site of massive revival.
- The disciples' response shifted from terror to declaration: “Truly You are the Son of God” — and worship.
- The right question after a storm isn't “why did this happen?” but: *“Lord, what are You exposing? What do You want to change? How do You want to reveal Yourself to me?”*
- The goal of every storm: surrender and worship, not bitterness, doubt, or unresolved offense.

Application Points

- After a difficult season, intentionally process it with God using the three questions above rather than simply moving on.
- Recognize that your “Gennesaret” (unexpected place of breakthrough) may not be where you originally aimed — be open to redirection.
- Build a culture in your church/team where storms are processed toward worship and renewed mission, not cynicism.

Discussion & Reflection

1. Reflecting on a past storm, can you now identify what God was exposing or wanting to change in you?

2. Has God ever brought you to an unexpected “Gennesaret” — a place of breakthrough you weren't aiming for?

3. As you/your team move through this current season, how can you intentionally posture toward surrender and worship rather than complaint?



Closing Prayer Focus

For Group Use

- Wisdom to navigate difficult/uncertain waters
- Grace to lead people through the storm without losing focus
- Help to build people who are rooted in Christ and solid foundations, not circumstances
- Eyes fixed on Jesus — recognizing His authority over every storm

Personal Prayer / Notes
