

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

February 18, 2024 "Leap of Faith: The bold Leap. And then your Faith Wavers"

I Intro.

Okay, we're into 2024 now, and we've got a lot going on. We don't want you to miss out on anything. So, make sure you stay connected to keep informed. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Recap.

We're doing this "*Leap of Faith*" series because sometimes we get into places in our daily lives where it's time to step out of our comfort and security. It doesn't have to be a big life changing step. But often there is this tiny nagging voice inside of us telling us it's time for a change, something different. We call it 'holy discontent'. It's not an unhappiness with life or with something specific. Most of the time it's simply answering the question; **"Does what I'm doing matter?" "Am I making a difference?"** So, this series is not to push us in a particular direction, or do a specific thing. It's asking if we need to take that one step, that "*leap of faith*", into something that's been in the back of our mind for a while. Just whispering to us to take a risk. We want to help you if you find yourself in this place. And give you some assurance that it's okay. You can trust God. So, a couple more questions.

What can help you step out of comfort into unknown new places?

What has to change, move inside of you to be able to do this?

III Sunday.

For our third Sunday of the "*leap of faith*" series we tackled the troublesome issue of being distracted. Especially as it applies to living in our pursuit of living in obedience to and fellowship of Jesus. We just can't seem to help getting off track. And studies show that our attention span is getting shorter. We create our own distractions. And it's more difficult than ever to stay focused and on task. So;

Not, do you, but how do you find yourself getting distracted?

What role do you play in getting distracted?

What have you found that helps you stay undistracted?

The scripture this Sunday, is a familiar story...Peter walking on water. But there are some hidden truths in this story that can give us some ways to handle distractions in our own "*leaps of faith*". Read **Matthew 14:24-33**, and we'll break down different elements of this story.

What jumped out to you from this account?

What caused Peter to become distracted?

What things did you see that helped Peter when he got distracted?

Let's walk through this story and talk about the specifics.

1. Peter's leap was asking; "Can I come to you?" What the heck was Peter thinking? I'm sure it felt right in the moment, and it may have been the next step in Peter's spiritual growth. Peter wasn't going to become 'the water walker'. But this is the nature of a "leap of faith". It fits our Kierkegaard understanding of what a "leap of faith" is. You can't explain it, it defies logic or reason. It's not rational. But in order to grow, Peter felt the need to step out from a comfortable place into a scary place to test his faith. This may seem irrational to everyone else...but not to Peter...and even more so...not to Jesus. Peter's "leap of faith" was an asked and confirmed act. "Jesus...I want to come to you. And this is really scary and risky." And Jesus said; "Go ahead."

Sometimes our "leaps of faith" aren't to get us somewhere new or different. They're to grow something in us...new and different. And IF you ask...and it's confirmed (another whole process) then step out.

2. Saw the strong wind and waves. Here come the distractions. It never says Peter took his eyes off of Jesus, turned away, anything like that. Peter was just distracted by what he could see and sense around him. Which only reinforces what we said the first week. Peter was distracted by the battle we all fight. **What I notice, what is visible. What I can see around me will take precedence, have more influence than what I believe.** This will have as much of an effect on us living towards where our "leap of faith" is supposed to take us than anything else. We're still going to church, praying, reading scripture, giving, volunteering, doing the things we know we're supposed to be doing. Our eyes are still on Jesus. But we're noticing the wind and waves. And they're distracting, choking out the work of our leap. Like the thorns that choke out good growth in the parable of the soils. Peter believed, had faith, actually stepped out in this belief, it influenced his actions. But he let the draw of what he could see, was visible, push out what he believed. Know this. When you step out, you will always battle the temptation to have your "leap of faith" verified, confirmed, by something you can see. Our problem may not be not having a sign. Our problem is that we think we need a sign.

3. Peter in his lack of faith in his leap still cried out to Jesus. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

This one is simple. **What else do I need to say?** Your "leaps of faith" SHOULD always be punctuated with an occasional, and by that I mean, regular, cries out to God. When your faith is wavering, you're discouraged, have doubts, are unsure if you even made, or are still making, the wiser, better choices. Sometimes you just need to pray this prayer. **"Save me, Lord!" Anne Lamott says the three most important prayers are; Help, Thanks, Wow.**

4. Jesus' harsh sounding response. Let's camp out a bit on Jesus' response. I have almost always had this presented to me as harsh and condemning. For some reason we love a harsh, punitive, Jesus. And I'm not completely sure why. "What's wrong with you, as much as we've been together, why don't you trust me yet?" But I want us to give a more gracious and generous way to see the words of Jesus. This has been generally interpreted as "little" or "small" faith. So, the question looks like Peter didn't have enough faith. His faith was too small. But Jesus said this just a few chapters later in reference to healing a boy. **Matthew 17:20 (NLT) "You don't have enough faith," Jesus told them. "I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible."**

Jesus seemed to say it doesn't take much faith to do amazing things. Seems to me Peter had a little more than 'mustard seed faith' if he was willing to get out of a boat, in the middle of a storm, to walk towards Jesus. If he only had a little, small, faith he wouldn't have stepped out. The problem is Peter had faith until he didn't. Until he let the visible waves and wind chip away at the little faith he did have. So, another, and I believe better, is not "little" or "small" but "short in duration". It's; "You had faith, good faith, enough to step out, but it faded down the stretch." "Keep practicing, keep stepping out in faith, and your faith will grow." Which makes a lot more sense, and fits better with the other teachings of Jesus. So, this isn't having enough faith to take the leap. It's being able to maintain your faith.

5. "Leaps of faith" grow more faith. Talked the first week that the heart of believing, of faith, having 'of sureness' to take a "leap of faith" is your set of values, convictions, beliefs. These cultivated well can grow the faith you need to step out of comfortable places into new and unknown places. Those values, convictions, beliefs grow through a personal relationship with God. And what reinforces those beliefs, values, convictions that you need to grow trust, come from previous smaller times when you've stepped out and found God trustworthy.

Parenting hack. Growing maturity and good decision making in your kids is letting them make small decisions with small consequences when they're young. So when they do choose poorly, the consequences will be less permanent and they'll grow the ability to make bigger and bigger wise choices. The classic example is forcing them to wear a coat when it's cold. Let them not wear one, and then you can have a conversation about why they need to wear one.. Those early, easier steps, will always grow us to take bigger "leaps of faith".

IV Challenge.

Distractions in our "leap of faith" are often what keep us from staying faithful to Jesus. Jesus had to teach Peter this same lesson again, a few chapters later also in Matthew when Peter was saying he wouldn't let the enemies of Jesus do anything to him. And Jesus' response was "Get behind me satan". The response of Jesus gives us our answer and perspective to distractions that may inhibit our "leap of faith". And in our "leaps of faith" this is the response we need. There's a really good chance your "leap of faith" is going to require you to pay attention and stay focused. Over a long period of time. To not let things that aren't as important, that don't matter, that are not connected or related to the "leap of faith" you've taken. And to continually grow the ability to stay focused and committed to your leap. Learning to hang in there and not be distracted really does work. And helps you to fully live in whatever "leap of faith" you took.

So, what practices could you put into place to help you stay more focused on your "leap of faith"?