

# Comparing Gospel Accounts

## Materials

- ☐ Copies of the Matthew's Account and John's Account worksheets (following pages)
- ☐ One copy of the answer key for your use (page 4)
- ☐ Pencils/pens

## Instructions

*Divide students into pairs or groups. Print copies of the two student worksheets and give both worksheets to each pair or group. Direct students to follow the instructions on their worksheets to read the passage and fill in the blanks. You may have students complete both worksheets together or separately within their groups or complete them together as a class by reading the passages aloud and filling in the blanks as you go. When the worksheets are complete, continue with the discussion below.*

## Suggested Discussion

The account we read in both Gospels is about Jesus walking on the water out to the boat, which his disciples were using to get across the sea.

There are a lot of things that are alike in these two accounts, enough that we know it is the same event on the same stormy night. But they have differences, too.

- ? What is the first thing you notice when you compare what Matthew and John wrote? *Allow discussion. Matthew's account is longer while John's is shorter.*
- ? So, who gave us more information about the stormy night? *Matthew.*  
  
Yes. Matthew tells us a lot more. Matthew tells us that Jesus told them to get in the boat, that Jesus sent the crowds away, that Jesus went up on the mountain to pray, and even what time it was when Jesus walked on the water.
- ? Who recorded Peter's attempt to walk on the water? *Matthew.*

Matthew recorded Peter's attempt to walk on the water—how he started to sink and how Jesus saved him. Matthew wrote that the wind stopped when Jesus and Peter got in the boat. John didn't mention any of that!

John tells us much less than Matthew. But he does include some things Matthew did not. He tells us that the disciples were headed to Capernaum and that the disciples had been rowing for three or four miles when they saw Jesus. John mentioned that Jesus was not with them, but unlike Matthew, he doesn't tell us that Jesus went up to the mountain to pray. And John said nothing about Peter walking on the water and almost drowning!

These two Gospels, Matthew and John, were written by two different men. Each man reported what he thought was important about the stormy night when Jesus walked on the water. It makes sense that what they wrote would not be exactly the same. But when we put the accounts together we get a better understanding of EVERYTHING that happened. There is nothing in these accounts that contradicts the other; they are just from two different perspectives.

People want to say that the differences in the Gospels prove that the Bible is not true. But actually those differences give us confidence that it IS true. Let me explain. Those differences show that different people wrote the Bible at different times. And because of that, it makes sense that many of the events don't appear exactly the same in the Bible. If people had wanted to write the Bible to fool people with made-up stories, they would have been careful to get all the details exactly the same. Instead, they reported actual eyewitness accounts, with differences like we'd expect to find. But at the same time, the events are similar enough so that we can be sure they are the same event and they are true!

# Matthew's Account

*What happened? Read the entire passage then complete the statements using the references for help.*

## Matthew 14:22–33 (ESV)

22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.

23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,

24 but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea.

26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear.

27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

28 And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."

31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

1. Jesus' disciples got into the \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 14:22).
2. Jesus dismissed the \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 14:22).
3. Jesus went up on the \_\_\_\_\_ to pray (Matthew 14:23).
4. The boat was a long way from \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 14:24).
5. The boat was \_\_\_\_\_ by the waves (Matthew 14:24).
6. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ on the water to the boat (Matthew 14:25).
7. The disciples thought Jesus was a \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 14:26).
8. They were \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 14:26).
9. Jesus said, "Do not be \_\_\_\_\_" (Matthew 14:27).
10. Peter walked on the water to \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 14:29).
11. When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the \_\_\_\_\_ stopped (Matthew 14:32).
12. The disciples worshipped Jesus as the Son of \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 14:33).

# John's Account

*What happened? Read the entire passage then complete the statements using the references for help.*

## John 6:16–21 (ESV)

16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.

19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened.

20 But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."

21 Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

1. The disciples got into the \_\_\_\_\_ (John 6:17).
2. The disciples were headed toward \_\_\_\_\_ (John 6:17).
3. Jesus was \_\_\_\_\_ with them (John 6:17).
4. The sea became \_\_\_\_\_ (John 6:18).
5. The disciples rowed three or four \_\_\_\_\_ (John 6:19).
6. They saw \_\_\_\_\_ walking on the water (John 6:19).
7. They were \_\_\_\_\_ (John 6:19).
8. Jesus said, "Do not be \_\_\_\_\_ (John 6:20).
9. Jesus got into the \_\_\_\_\_ (John 6:21).
10. The boat reached the \_\_\_\_\_ (John 6:21).

# Account Answer Key

## Matthew 14:22–33

1. Jesus' disciples got into the boat (Matthew 14:22).
2. Jesus dismissed the crowds (Matthew 14:22).
3. Jesus went up on the mountain to pray (Matthew 14:23).
4. The boat was a long way from land (Matthew 14:24).
5. The boat was beaten by the waves (Matthew 14:24).
6. Jesus walked on the water to the boat (Matthew 14:25).
7. The disciples thought Jesus was a ghost (Matthew 14:26).
8. They were terrified (Matthew 14:26).
9. Jesus said, "Do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27).
10. Peter walked on the water to Jesus (Matthew 14:29).
11. When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the wind stopped (Matthew 14:32).
12. The disciples worshipped Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 14:33).

## John 6:16–21

1. The disciples got into the boat (John 6:17).
2. The disciples were headed toward Capernaum (John 6:17).
3. Jesus was not with them (John 6:17).
4. The sea became rough (John 6:18).
5. The disciples rowed three or four miles (John 6:19).
6. They saw Jesus walking on the water (John 6:19).
7. They were frightened (John 6:19).
8. Jesus said, "Do not be afraid (John 6:20).
9. Jesus got into the boat (John 16:21).
10. The boat reached the land (John 16:21).