

Unshakeable: Personal Ministry

Small Group Discussion*

Opening question (try to get everyone involved in discussion):

- Have you ever felt drawn to an opportunity or a need, and yet felt overwhelmed by the magnitude of the need or your inadequacy to meet it?

Introduction

- Review: We are in a sermon series called “Unshakeable.” We’re examining how we can have the kind of growing faith in God that enables us to weather storms with steadfastness. We described this kind of faith as “confidence in God—confidence that God is personal, that he is good, that he cares about you, and that you can trust his promises.”
- Andy Stanley talks about “five faith catalysts,” or experiences that God typically uses to grow people’s confidence in him. The catalyst that we’re discussing this week is Personal Ministry.

Read Matthew 14:13-33

- Do you see any indicators in this passage that the two miracles are connected—in the sense that they are part of the same “faith lesson” that Jesus is trying to teach the disciples?
- The disciples used the size of the crowd and their lack of food as excuses to not do what Jesus asked (v. 15). What excuses have you used when prompted to serve? ^[1]_[SEP]
- As you consider the disciples’ excuses, what were they forgetting to factor into the equation? ^[1]_[SEP]
- In Jesus’ multiplication of the food, he shows his divinity. With what Old Testament stories might the Jewish disciples and crowd have associated this miracle, which would point to Jesus’ divine nature?
- The disciples gave Jesus what they had to work with, he blessed it, and then gave it back to them to distribute to the people. In other words, the disciples did what they knew how to do, by passing out the broken pieces of bread and fish. And God blessed their efforts and allowed them to accomplish far more than they could have in their own strength. What is the lesson for us, in your own words? ^[1]_[SEP]
- On Sunday we learned that **your confidence in Jesus grows when you do what you can do and watch him to do what only he can do.**
 - Have you ever seen this play out in your experience? How did that experience shape your confidence in God?
- *Think about this tension:* on Sunday, we saw that the disciples were right where Jesus wanted them when they acknowledged that they didn’t have the resources in themselves to meet the need at hand. We also emphasized the fact that we have to recognize our inadequacy (apart from God’s power) to do what God wants. We did not talk, however, about how God often calls us to use our strengths, abilities, and talents in service to him. Discuss the relationship between recognizing our God-given strengths and still relying on his power at work in us.

*This sermon series has been based on the “Five Faith Catalysts” in *Deep and Wide*, by Andy Stanley. Portions of this study guide have also been adapted from small group materials published by North Point Ministries.

- Andy Stanley says that in the disciples' faith development, "the feeding miracle was level 101, and the experience in the boat was level 201." How is the scene in vv. 22-33 a continuation and intensifying of the faith lesson in vv. 13-21?
- What in this second story might lead you to believe that Peter was starting to grasp the lesson?
- In what way can Peter's words in v. 28 serve as a model prayer for us?
- What indication do you see (v. 33) that the disciples were finally grasping the lesson?
- Are there areas of personal ministry where you have started relying less on God's power and more on your knowledge and experience?
- Pastor Josh said that every challenge we face in our ministry is an opportunity to be reminded of the gospel; and this gospel reminder ultimately increases our confidence in God. Discuss how this works—how are challenges a reminder of the gospel? How do they increase our confidence in God (as personal, good, for us, etc.)?
- Is there some area where you currently sense God nudging you to step out of your comfort zone in response to a need or opportunity? What is standing in the way of you diving in?
- In what ways do you feel under-equipped for that need or opportunity? Another way to think of it is this: how do you need Jesus to show his supernatural power in meeting that opportunity?

Sharing and prayer:

- Share about any needs that you have, and pray for one another. In addition, commit yourselves to God's purposes for you as you take on your personal ministries.