

# DIGGING DEEPER

## A 5-Day Devotional

*Faith and Perseverance Through Life's Storms*

**Matthew 14:22-33**

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### How to Use This Devotional

This devotional is designed to help you take Sunday's message with you into your week. Each day focuses on a specific moment in Matthew 14 and draws out what it means for the storms you are actually living through right now. Read it in the morning, in the evening, or whenever you have a few quiet minutes. Use the reflection questions to think, or talk with someone you trust. End with the prayer, or use your own words.

The goal is simple: keep going deeper into the text, and keep going deeper in your trust in Jesus.

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### Day 1 When Obedience Leads Into the Storm

*"Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake while he sent the people home." **Matthew 14:22-23***

The disciples did not wander into the storm. Jesus put them there. The word Matthew uses is striking: Jesus insisted, compelled, and demanded that they get in the boat. They obeyed directly, yet they still ended up in the middle of the sea at night, in a fierce wind.

That matters a great deal. Because when the storm comes after a step of faith, our first instinct is to wonder what we did wrong. Did I miss God? Did I make the right call? If I had just stayed on the shore, would I be okay?

But the disciples had no room for that question. Jesus was the one who told them to go. Which means the storm was not evidence that they had gotten off track. It was evidence that they were exactly where Jesus put them.

This week's message opened with that reality, and it is worth sitting with on Day 1. Faith is not a storm-avoidance strategy. Sometimes the clearest obedience is what takes you into the hardest season. The disciples who stayed behind, if any had refused, would have missed both the storm and the miracle.

#### REFLECT

1. Think about a current difficulty in your life. Is it possible this storm came after a step of obedience rather than because of a misstep?
2. How does it change your perspective on hardship to know that Jesus sometimes puts us in the boat himself?
3. What questions do you tend to ask God when hard things happen? How does this passage reframe those questions?

#### PRAY

*Lord, help me trust that you know what you are doing even when the path you put me on leads through hard places. When I am tempted to look for what I did wrong, remind me that you are the one who called me forward. You are not absent from this storm. You put me here, and you are not done. Amen.*

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## Day 2 The Blame Game Goes Nowhere

*"His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned. This happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.'" **Matthew 14:24 / John 9:1-3***

Hours into the storm, rowing against wind and waves, exhausted and afraid, at some point one of the disciples had to be thinking it. This is Jesus' fault. He is the one who put us here. He watched us get in the boat. He knew what was coming.

We do the same thing. When life gets hard, we go looking for someone to hold responsible. Sometimes we blame God. Sometimes we blame ourselves. Sometimes we blame the circumstances or the people around us. We just need somewhere to put it.

In John 9, the disciples do this in front of a man who was born blind. Before they even speak to the man, they are already trying to assign fault. Was it his sin or his parents'? Jesus redirects them completely. The point is not who caused this. The point is what God is about to do in it.

Sitting in the storm trying to determine whose fault it is keeps us staring at the problem instead of watching for God. The disciples who were busy blaming each other in the boat would have missed the moment Jesus came walking across the water.

### REFLECT

1. When you are in a difficult season, who or what do you most naturally blame? What does that reveal about where you are placing your trust?
2. Jesus told his disciples the man's blindness existed 'so that the works of God might be displayed.' Can you think of a past difficulty where you later saw God working through it?
3. What would it look like practically to stop asking 'whose fault is this' and start asking 'what is God doing here'?

### PRAY

*God, I confess that when things go wrong, my first move is often to find someone to blame, including you. Forgive me for the times I have spent more energy assigning fault than watching for your hand. Teach me to look for what you are doing in the middle of what I am going through. Amen.*

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## Day 3 The Invitation to Go Deeper

*"Then Peter called to him, 'Lord, if it is really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water.' 'Yes, come,' Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus." **Matthew 14:28-29***

The storm is not calm. The wind is still blowing. The waves are still high. Jesus has not fixed anything yet. And Peter says: call me out to you.

This is the detail worth sitting with. Peter does not ask Jesus to make the storm stop first. He does not negotiate for better conditions before he steps out. He asks to come to Jesus in the middle of it. And Jesus says come.

The message raised a hard question from this moment: do we allow our season to determine our faithfulness? When things get difficult, do we step back from church, from serving, from generosity, not because wisdom calls for it, but because the storm feels like a reason to pull back?

Peter shows us another way. A storm is not an excuse to shrink back in faith. It is an invitation to go deeper. The disciples who stayed in the boat did not walk on water that night. They watched from safety. Peter, who stepped out into the impossible, experienced something none of them ever would from inside the boat.

### REFLECT

1. In your own stormy seasons, which of these have you pulled back from first: community, serving, or generosity? What drove that decision?
2. What is the difference between stepping back from something because wisdom calls for it and stepping back because shame or fear is driving you?
3. What would it look like for you to say 'call me deeper' to Jesus in your current season rather than asking him to calm things down first?

### PRAY

*Jesus, it is so much easier to stay in the boat. The storm feels like a good reason to play it safe, to do less, to hold back. But you are not calling me to the boat. You are calling me to you. Give me the courage to step out. Give me the faith to keep my eyes on you and not on what is surrounding me. Amen.*

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## Day 4 Where You Fix Your Eyes

*"But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. 'Save me, Lord!' he shouted. Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. 'You have so little faith,' Jesus said. 'Why did you doubt me?'" **Matthew 14:30-31***

Peter was walking on water. He was doing the thing. He had stepped out, he had trusted, he was moving toward Jesus, and then he looked at the waves.

Notice what the text does not say. It does not say the storm got worse. It does not say the waves grew larger or the wind picked up. The circumstances did not change. Peter's focus did. He took his eyes off Jesus and put them on the storm. That was the moment he started to sink.

Here is the detail from the message that is easy to miss: Jesus did not calm the storm before asking Peter why he doubted. He picked Peter up out of the water, right there in the middle of the wind and the waves, and asked: why did you doubt me? The storm was still raging when Jesus spoke those words.

That sequence is the point. Jesus was not waiting for the storm to pass before restoring Peter's faith. He was restoring Peter's faith in the middle of it. Which means if your faith requires the storm to stop before you trust again, that is not faith in Jesus. That is faith in your circumstances.

### REFLECT

1. What are the 'waves' in your life right now, the things your eyes keep going back to instead of staying fixed on Jesus?
2. The sequence matters: Jesus asks 'why did you doubt me?' while they are still in the storm. What does it mean for your faith that Jesus meets you in the middle and not just after?
3. Is there an area of your life where you have been waiting for the storm to calm before you start trusting again? What would it look like to trust now, in the middle of it?

### PRAY

*Lord, I know where my eyes keep going. I know the waves I keep staring at. Help me fix my gaze on you instead, not because the storm is gone, but because you are here in the middle of it. You have not abandoned me. You are right here. Let that be enough to keep me from sinking. Amen.*

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## Day 5 The Storm Does Not Get the Last Word

*"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow." James 1:2-4 / Matthew 14:32-33*

When the storm was over, the disciples worshiped. That is how Matthew ends the story. They had been terrified. They had rowed for hours. One of them had sunk. And when Jesus climbed back into the boat and the wind stopped, what came out of them was worship. You really are the Son of God.

Palm trees do not look like they are going to survive a hurricane. They bend so far in the wind it seems impossible that they will come back. But they do. And the storm that looked like it was going to take the tree out actually positions it to grow faster in the months that follow. The roots go deeper. The trunk grows stronger.

That is the picture James is pointing to when he says to count trials as an opportunity for joy. Not because the trials feel joyful. They do not. But because what they are producing, that endurance and depth of faith, is something that cannot be built in calm water.

You are not the same person you were before the storm. If you have kept your eyes on Jesus, kept showing up, kept trusting, the storm has been doing something in you. The messy middle is not wasted time. It is formation time. And on the other side of it, there will be worship.

### REFLECT

1. Looking back at a past hard season, what did it produce in you that could not have come any other way?
2. James says to consider trials 'an opportunity for great joy.' That is not the same as saying they feel joyful. What is the difference, and why does that distinction matter?
3. As you close this devotional week, what is one thing you want to hold onto from Matthew 14 as you navigate your current season?

### PRAY

*God, I do not always feel like the storm is producing anything good. Some days it just feels like loss. But your Word says you are at work in it, deepening my roots, strengthening my faith, preparing me for what is on the other side. I choose to trust that today, even when I cannot see it. You are faithful. The storm does not get the last word. You do. Amen.*

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