

### MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ trust Jesus to do the impossible.

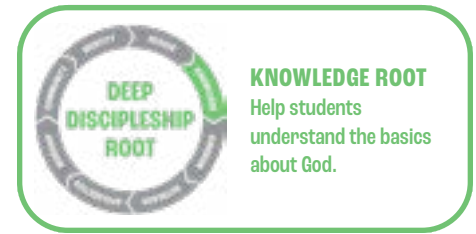
### SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 14:22-33

### BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

This scene takes place immediately after Jesus fed the 5,000. According to John's insights, we see that the massive crowd, who had just been miraculously fed, had the desire to force Jesus to be king (John 6:15). Maybe the way the food appeared reminded the masses about manna from heaven and Moses' words about a promised prophet (Deut. 18:15). The problem was the kind of king the people wanted. It wasn't the kind of king Jesus is. To keep the disciples from getting swayed by the masses, Jesus ushered them into a boat and sent them across the lake...into a storm.

Check out the **Teacher Prep Video** for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/799991851>



**FACILITATOR NOTE:** We're giving you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.

## OPENING

### PRAYER

1-2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

*OPTIONAL: Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.*

### OPENING QUESTIONS

3-5 minutes

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- What is a story a friend told you that you had serious doubts about but turned out to be true?



## EXPLORE

### EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3-5 minutes

Today we are looking at a passage of Scripture where the disciples were stuck on a lake in a storm they had fought against for hours. Even though several of the men were professional fishermen, there was a real fear they might not make it through. Then Jesus walked up to them, and because *disciples of Christ trust Jesus to do the impossible*, Peter got out of the boat in the middle of a storm and walked to Jesus on the water.

### Read Matthew 14:22–28 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **When was a time you rushed into something and made a mistake?**  
Answers will vary.
- **Why do you think it can be tough to wait on the Lord?**  
Answers will vary, but patience is a virtue that is getting harder to grow as our world is becoming more and more “instant.” But waiting on the Lord is good for the soul (Ps. 130:5–8, Lam. 3:25–26).
- **How do you know when God has given you the okay to do something?**  
How we discern God’s leading may be a little different for each of us, but it must align with his Word to be from God.



*Say something like:* Waiting is tough for most of us, but waiting on the Lord to say, “Okay, now’s the time” before we do something will protect us from making many painful mistakes.

### Read Matthew 14:29–31 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **What is something your faith has led you to do that once felt impossible?**  
Answers will vary but could be things like: talk about my faith, lead a Bible study, go on mission trips, attend church, break bad habits/addictions, etc.
- **What “storms” have you faced that moved you closer to God?**  
Answers will vary, but help your students understand that difficult circumstances are often opportunities to grow closer to the Lord. This is why James said to consider trials pure joy (Jam. 1:2–4). It is often in hard times that God reveals himself to us in new ways.
- **What can we learn about Jesus from how he responded to Peter’s doubt?**  
He is faithful to us even when we struggle with our faith. He went to Peter’s aid immediately and will come to us when we cry out to him. In his tender love, he still challenges us to not doubt but fully trust him.



*Say something like:* As he sank, Peter called out to Jesus. Most people go through moments of doubt. When they come, let them drive us to call out to Jesus. Let our doubts cause us to search for truth—study the Bible, pray, and talk to other believers.

**FACILITATOR NOTE:** If you have extra time, go through the next set of questions. If not, skip to the **Connection** section.

### Read Matthew 14:32–33 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **How do you think others can be affected when you faithfully obey God?**  
Seeing someone take steps of faith lets us know that it’s possible to do so. It is encouraging to see someone grow in their relationship with the Lord, and it can inspire us to do the same.
- **How can doubts cause us to grow closer to God?**  
Times when our faith feels unsure can motivate us to take steps to be sure about our beliefs. We can ask ourselves, “What do I really believe?” and study the Bible for ourselves to discover the truth for ourselves.



*Say something like:* Being open and honest with our doubts can help lead us to the truth of God. But it can also encourage others to do the same thing. Realizing *I’m not the only one* when it comes to doubts or any struggle can be a powerful eye-opener.



## CONNECT & APPLY

### CONNECTION

5-7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story of when you had doubts. Talk about how you handled those doubts and what/who helped you through them.



It can be easy to think that doubts only come to those with weak faith in Christ. *If only I was a stronger Christ-follower, I wouldn't have any doubts.* But that might not be true. Plenty of strong believers had moments of struggle with their faith. C.S. Lewis was a brilliant writer and thinker in the Christian faith. But some difficulties in his personal life caused him to have doubts at times. Her incredible work in India made Mother Teresa the picture of what selfless love looks like. But some of her letters revealed she had moments of doubt as she wrote, "the place of God in my soul is blank." Even though Martin Luther famously started the Protestant reformation, he had dark moments of doubt, too. He once wrote that "Christ was wholly lost" to him for a time.<sup>1</sup> Doubts tend to creep their way into most people. But God is bigger than our doubts. Just as the Lord led these great Christ-followers through their struggles with doubt, he can guide us through, too.

- How can knowing you aren't the only one who faces doubt help when doubts come?

Answers will vary, but knowing other people have moments where they struggle with their faith can make us less likely to hide or feel shame when we struggle. We feel more freedom to be honest and seek help from other believers.

### MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

Disciples of Christ trust Jesus to do the impossible.

Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

### APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

What will you do when doubts come your way? Make a plan now so you are ready when you or one of your friends have doubts about your faith.



**Be specific:**

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



**FACILITATOR NOTE:** Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.



### CLOSING

#### PRAYER

2-3 minutes

Take time to let your students pray for each other's applications in the upcoming weeks.  
*Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.*

#### MEMORY VERSE

*Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.*

MEMORY VERSE:

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

Matthew 14:27 (ESV)

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Jesse Carey, "Seven Prominent Christian Thinkers Who Wrestled With Doubt," *RELEVANT* (RELEVANT Media Group, Inc., June 9, 2021), <https://relevantmagazine.com/faith/seven-prominent-christian-thinkers-who-wrestled-doubt/>.

