



EXPLORE **THE BIBLE**[®]
Adults

Matthew 14–28

Daily Discipleship Guide

Spring 2026



WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

If you're an adult of a particular generation, you'll probably remember a toy called The Magic 8 Ball™. For those who aren't as familiar, this was a foolproof tool for getting answers to any questions about the future . . . sort of.

In one sense, the 8 Ball guaranteed you an answer to every question. If you asked about your future spouse or whether you were going to pass your history test, the 8 Ball had an answer. The problem was that the Magic 8 Ball carried about as much prophetic authority as a fortune cookie. At best, the answers were vague. At worst, they were irrelevant.

Then again, it was designed for entertainment. No one with a modicum of sense would entrust their future to an oversized pool ball.

Of course, human nature still longs to know what's ahead. Whether we're thinking about this life or the next, we seek clarity. We want to see what's just around the bend.

Jesus understood that. That's why He often talked with His disciples about what would happen in the short term and in the distant future. Throughout the Gospels, including Matthew's Gospel, Jesus reminded His followers that He holds the future. He is God. He loves us more than we can imagine. He remains in control, and His people can trust Him.

Jesus might not give you every answer you've ever wanted, but He has promised to give you peace for today, tomorrow, and eternity. That starts with a personal relationship with Him. If you're seeking answers to the most important questions in life, here's what you need to do . . .

-
- ▶ **ADMIT** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
 - ▶ **BY FAITH RECEIVE** Jesus as God's Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
 - ▶ **CONFESS** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen."
-

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.



SUGGESTED FOR THE WEEK OF

FEATURES

| | |
|--|-----|
| ▶ Memory Verses | 5 |
| ▶ Biblical Background | 6 |
| ▶ Using the Daily Discipleship Guide | 7 |
| ▶ Leader Helps | 120 |

SESSIONS

| | | |
|---------|---|-----|
| MAR. 1 | Session 1: Courage (Matt. 14:22-33) | 8 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 121 | |
| MAR. 8 | Session 2: Real Devotion (Matt. 15:1-11,16-20) | 16 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 124 | |
| MAR. 15 | Session 3: Following Jesus (Matt. 16:13-26) | 24 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 127 | |
| MAR. 22 | Session 4: Glory (Matt. 17:1-13) | 32 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 130 | |
| MAR. 29 | Session 5: Forgiveness (Matt. 18:21-35) | 40 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 133 | |
| APR. 5 | Session 6: Our Task* (Matt. 28:1-10,16-20) | 48 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 136 | |
| APR. 12 | Session 7: Eternal Life (Matt. 19:16-30) | 56 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 139 | |
| APR. 19 | Session 8: Grace (Matt. 20:1-16) | 64 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 142 | |
| APR. 26 | Session 9: Authority (Matt. 21:23-32) | 72 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 145 | |
| MAY 3 | Session 10: Honor (Matt. 22:15-22,34-40) | 80 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 148 | |
| MAY 10 | Session 11: Alert (Matt. 24:36-51) | 88 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 151 | |
| MAY 17 | Session 12: Active Faith (Matt. 25:31-46) | 98 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 154 | |
| MAY 24 | Session 13: Our Atonement (Matt. 26:17-30) | 104 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 157 | |
| MAY 31 | Session 14: Our Savior (Matt. 27:27-31,45-54) | 112 |
| | LEADER HELPS ON PAGE 160 | |

*Evangelistic Emphasis

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MEMORY VERSES



SESSION 1:

Immediately Jesus spoke to them. “Have courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” - Matthew 14:27

SESSION 2:

“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. They worship me in vain, teaching as doctrines human commands.”
- Matthew 15:8-9

SESSION 3:

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” - Matthew 16:24

SESSION 4:

And a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown and were terrified. - Matthew 17:5b-6

SESSION 5:

“Shouldn’t you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?” - Matthew 18:33

SESSION 6:

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” - Matthew 28:19-20

SESSION 7:

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”
- Matthew 19:26

SESSION 8:

“So the last will be first, and the first last.”
- Matthew 20:16

SESSION 9:

For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name.
- Philippians 2:9

SESSION 10:

He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command.” - Matthew 22:37-38

SESSION 11:

This is why you are also to be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. - Matthew 24:44

SESSION 12:

“And the King will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”
- Matthew 25:40

SESSION 13:

For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
- Matthew 26:28

SESSION 14:

But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit. Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, and the rocks were split.
- Matthew 27:50-51



“When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, because he was teaching them like one who had authority, and not like their scribes” (Matt. 7:28-29). Sprinkled throughout Matthew’s Gospel are nine references to the authority of Jesus. Matthew’s emphasis on Jesus’s authority, or power, served his purpose of proving that Jesus was God’s long-awaited Messiah.

To back up that claim, the Gospel is filled with numerous prophecies showing how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament concerning the coming Messiah. In addition, Matthew interspersed the teachings of Jesus with numerous miracles attesting to Jesus’s divine nature. His intent was to show through the narration of teachings and miracles that Jesus was indeed God’s Messiah and that response to Him brought either blessing or judgment.

While there is no direct reference to the writer of this Gospel as the disciple named Matthew, early church tradition and references from several church leaders in the early second century point to Matthew the apostle as the writer.

At first appearance, the Gospel might be thought of as a chronological summary of the life and ministry of Jesus. It is more than that. The book is a carefully constructed collection of the key teachings of Jesus. While it begins with the genealogy and birth of Jesus, and closes with His death by crucifixion

and resurrection, the central part of the book contains five sections of the collected teachings of Jesus. These five sections are found in chapters 5–7; 10; 13; 18; and 24–25. Each section closes with a formulaic statement, “when Jesus had finished” these teachings (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). Between each of these sections of teachings, Matthew narrated the actions of Jesus in healing, casting out demons, raising the dead, and feeding thousands with only a small amount of food.

A second organizing principle in the Gospel was the separate ministries of Jesus in Galilee (Matt. 4:12–14:12) and in Judea (17:22–28:20). In the interval between these two sections was a brief journey into the region of Tyre and Sidon. The climactic section of the book is the final week of Jesus in Jerusalem, culminating in His arrest, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

In the pages of this Gospel, Matthew the tax-collector-turned-disciple, presents to us a snapshot of the life and teachings of Jesus. This certainly is not a complete biography nor an exhaustive collection of Jesus’s teachings. Instead, it is a reliable glimpse into the period of time when God came to earth in flesh and bone to bring about salvation for all who place their trust in Him.

USING THE DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE



A person's spiritual growth hinges on daily Bible engagement. *Daily* implies a discipline much like exercising, brushing teeth, or eating a certain number of calories EVERY day. Our spiritual training should be no different since we need spiritual nourishment every day. The focus is the *Bible*, God's Word. There is nothing wrong with knowing the thoughts of great philosophers, leaders, or theologians, as long as God's Word is the final word on the matter. Engagement carries the idea of participation and involvement. *Engagement* is active, requiring us to read, study, and reflect.

Your *Daily Discipleship Guide* is full of tools to help you engage with God's Word. But like any tool, you have to use it to get the benefit.

- Use this resource when studying with a group. The first four pages of each session help the group examine a Bible passage and move us toward acting on the truths discovered as a group and an individual.
- Use the **Talk It Out** page to hold yourself and others accountable by meeting in a smaller group of same-sex individuals (an accountability group). Share with the smaller group what God has been teaching you through the group time and your personal daily Bible study while working to memorize a Bible verse.
- Use the **Daily Exploration** pages to go deeper into God's Word, building on your group's study experience. Engage in daily Bible study, record your thoughts, reflect on the questions, and take action.
- Use the resource every week even when you are unable to attend the group's Bible study. Missing a group Bible study does not excuse you from being engaged daily with God through His Word.

Want this resource on your phone or tablet for when you are on the go? Purchase an eBook at goExploreTheBible.com or at Lifeway.com/digitalstudies.

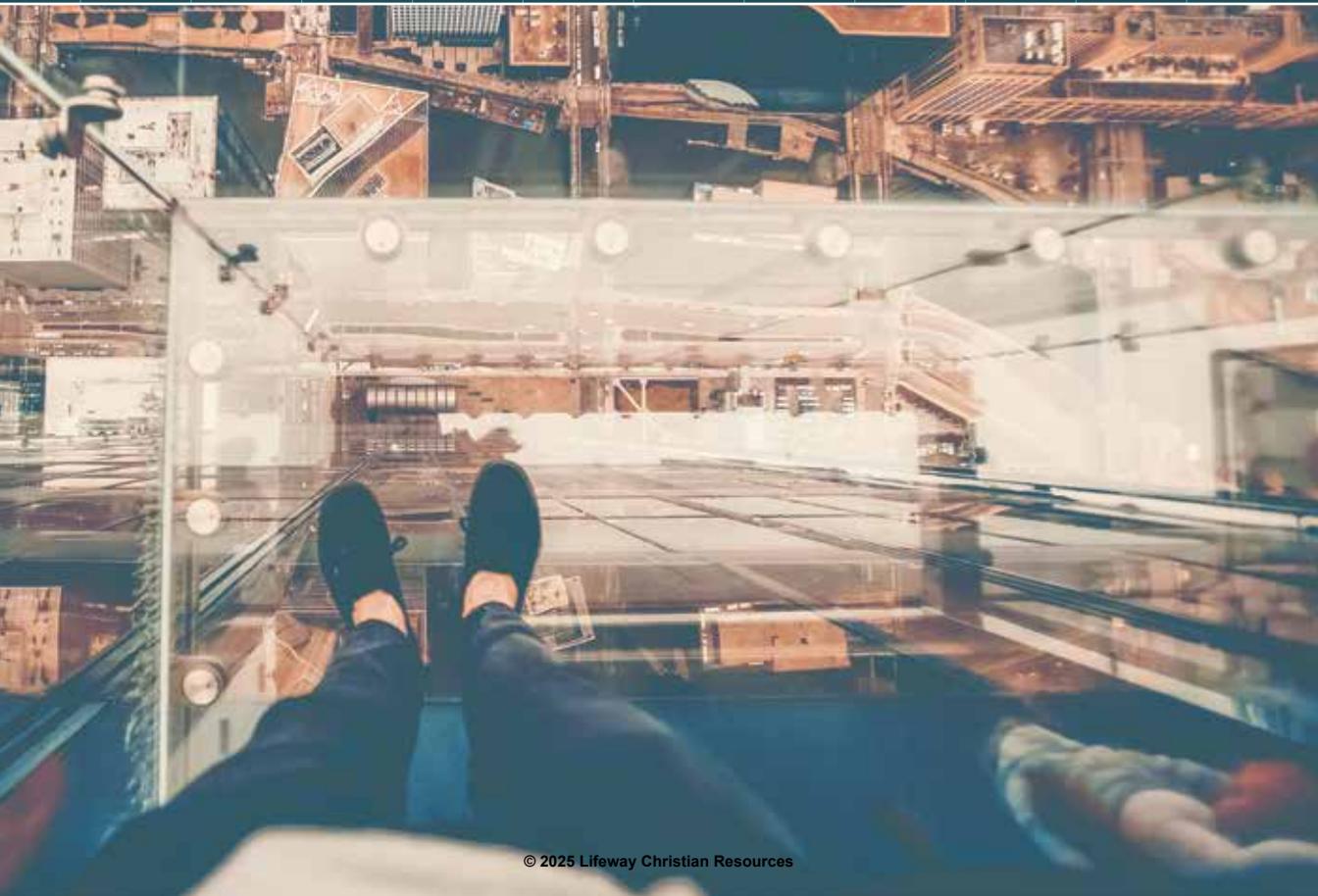


SESSION 1

Courage

MATTHEW 14:22-33

JESUS IS GREATER THAN ANYTHING WE FEAR.



Fear is a powerful foe that hinders us from progressing in life. Listen to people around you and you will hear any number of fears mentioned. Many people are terrified at the idea of public speaking. Others have fears of heights, failure, the dark, crowds, spiders, and snakes. Personal fears include injury and illness. Our fears impact our thinking, relating, and acting. Fear influences all aspects of life. Dealing with fear correctly is essential for a well-balanced life.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE YOUR BIGGEST FEARS?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Much of the opposition Jesus faced arose out of fear. The religious leaders opposed Him, in part, because they feared the wrath of Rome if there was a new “king” on the scene. They also feared they would lose power as leaders of the people.

At the close of Matthew 13, the people in Jesus’s hometown of Nazareth were overwhelmed by something they couldn’t explain—how Jesus had obtained such authority and learning. The theme of fear continued into chapter 14 with the account of Herod Antipas, a man motivated by fear.

Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great. He was a Roman appointed ruler over the provinces of Galilee and Perea. Jews hated him because he was not Jewish. His father, Herod the Great, was Idumean and his mother was a Samaritan. Antipas was denounced by John the Baptist because of his marriage to Herodias. Herodias had been the wife of Philip, half-brother to Antipas. She was also the niece of Antipas. Salome, Herodias’s daughter, tricked him into having John the Baptist beheaded.

Antipas was too motivated by fear of the opinion of others to go back on his promise to kill John.

Matthew 14:1-2 calls attention to Herod’s fear that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead. Herod was certain John had come back for revenge.

Following John’s death, Jesus withdrew to be alone with the disciples to sort through His response to such tragedy. This desire to be alone was interrupted by the crowds that followed. Jesus showed compassion by healing the sick late into the afternoon. The result was a hungry crowd of five thousand men, not including the women and children. Jesus miraculously fed all of them. This miracle fueled the crowd to attempt to forcibly enthrone Jesus as king (see John 6:15). Again Jesus removed Himself from the crowd by sending the disciples by boat across the lake while He sought solitude for prayer. At this point, a second miracle occurred that included overcoming the forces of nature.



22 Immediately **A** he made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. **23** After dismissing the crowds, he went up on the mountain **by himself to pray.** **B** Well into the night, he was there alone. **24** Meanwhile, the boat was already **some distance** **C** from land, battered by the waves, because the wind was against them. **25** Jesus came toward them walking on the sea **very early** **D** in the morning. **26** When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified. “It’s a **ghost!**” **E** they said, and they cried out in fear. **27** Immediately Jesus spoke to them. “Have courage! **It is I.**” **F** Don’t be afraid.” **28** “Lord, **if** **G** it’s you,” Peter answered him, “command me to come to you on the water.” **29** He said, “Come.” And climbing out of the boat, Peter started walking on the water and came toward Jesus. **30** But when he saw **the strength of the wind,** **H** he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me!” **31** Immediately Jesus reached out his hand, caught hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” **32** When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. **33** Then those in the boat **worshiped him** **I** and said, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

A. After He fed the multitude, they wanted to crown Jesus king (John 6:15). So, He quickly dismissed His disciples and the crowd (Matt. 14:23).

B. Matthew emphasized that Jesus retreated to be alone with God—a common practice for Him (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:15-16; 6:12-13).

C. Literally, “many stadia.” A stadion measured about 600 feet. John 6:19 says the disciples had already rowed three or four miles, leaving them at least a mile from the far shore.

D. “Fourth watch” (KJV); Romans divided the day into four watches. The fourth watch was 3–6 a.m.

E. A spirit or possibly an angel. Since the disciples had no reference for walking on water, their conclusion would make sense in their culture.

F. Related to “I am,” God’s covenant name to Israel (Ex. 3:14). Jesus was revealing Himself as God.

G. In Greek, the conditional “if” can mean “since.” This conveys a measure of faith on Peter’s part.

H. Peter lost focus, taking his eyes off Jesus and putting them on his circumstances.

I. Worship represents the only proper response to seeing Jesus’s power and presence.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Jesus's Presence

(Matt. 14:22-27)

We can trust Jesus to walk with us in the storms of life.

- **When has Jesus's presence been especially meaningful to you?**

2. Jesus's Invitation

(Matt. 14:28-30)

When Jesus issues an invitation, we can step out with confidence knowing that He is with us.

- **What step of faith are you prayerfully considering right now?**

3. Jesus's Response

(Matt. 14:31-33)

Jesus's power should lead us to worship Him.

- **How do you tend to respond to Jesus's power when you experience it?**

Apply the Text

- **As a group, discuss various fears people face. How might the presence and power of Jesus allay those fears? Spend time in prayer giving those fears to Jesus and asking for His authoritative power to prevail over those fears.**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God.
(See John 1:1; Philippians 2:5-8.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Examine and reflect on similarities between two passages.

Look for similarities between the event in Matthew 14:22-33 and Matthew 8:23-27. Then look for differences between the two events. Explain why you can be certain these were two different events.

DID YOU KNOW?

An ancient fishing boat, called "the Jesus Boat" by archaeologists, was discovered in 1986 on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. It is dated from the first century AD and is the size and construction of boats used by fisherman like Peter and John, measuring 27 feet long, 7.5 feet wide, and 4.5 feet deep.



Explore the Bible Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter's Bible passages.



DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Matthew 14:22-23

Compare Matthew 14:22-23 to John 6:14-15.

The phrase “immediately he made the disciples get into the boat” sets the tone for the urgency of this moment. That urgency was brought on, according to John 6:14-15, by the fact that the crowd who had been miraculously fed was scheming how they might force Jesus to be their king and military deliverer. Quite possibly, the disciples were caught up in this fervor. Matthew used an unusually forceful verb to describe the action of Jesus as He *made* the disciples leave the scene. Jesus realized the urgency of removing them from the influence of the crowd. Therefore, He made the disciples proceed by boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. The language of verse 22 reflects a reluctance on the part of the disciples to leave Jesus. Nevertheless, at His directive, they obediently set out. Jesus dismissed the crowd, ignoring their attempt to make Him king.

After dismissing the crowd, Jesus “went . . . by himself to pray.” This had been His intention before the crowd interrupted Him with requests for healing (Matt. 14:13). Jesus sought solitude after hearing the news of the death of John. Remember, while Jesus was fully God, He was also fully man and experienced the same wide range of emotions we do. Prayer was a regular part of Jesus’s life, but this was an occasion of a special need for prayer. Despite His need for rest, Jesus prayed long into the night.

When was the last time you prayed long into the night?



Day 2: Matthew 14:24-27

Highlight verse 27.

The disciples had reached a distance from land. As they rowed, “the wind was against them” and pushed them further from their destination. The Sea of Galilee was notorious for intense squalls that swept down from the mountains surrounding the lake. The severity of the storm is seen further in the words “battered by the waves,” which could be translated as the waves “tormented” the disciples.

Jesus came to them “very early in the morning.” The Greek translation sets the time as the “fourth watch,” or sometime between three and six in the morning. This meant that the disciples had probably been rowing in the storm for at least six to nine hours by the time Jesus arrived. Jesus came to the disciples for two reasons: to join them and to help them. Initially, though, His coming created a fearful panic. The panic came in the way in which He came to them: “walking on the sea.” When the disciples saw Him, they “cried out in fear.” They thought this was a ghost or a disembodied spirit. Jesus “immediately” called out to them, “Have courage, it is I.” Literally, Jesus declared, “I am,” using the divine name for God (Ex. 3:14). There was no need to “be afraid.” The disciples may not have recognized Jesus as He walked toward them among the mist and the waves, but the moment He spoke, they recognized their Master’s voice.

Which is more important—the object of faith or the amount of faith? Which did Jesus emphasize in verse 27?



Day 3: Matthew 14:28-30

Consider why Peter wanted to walk on water.

Peter called out to Jesus, “Lord, if it’s you.” The word *if* does not express uncertainty. Rather, the Greek grammar points to the meaning being “since it’s you.” We typically focus on Peter’s lack of faith in this instance (vv. 30-31). But what about the others? Peter, at least, was willing to take the risk to be like his Master and be with his Master. He knew there was safety with Jesus; without Him there was only danger.

Peter realized that he would have been unable to walk to Jesus without the permission and command of Jesus. At Peter’s request, Jesus commanded Peter to come. Jesus rewarded Peter’s devotion by inviting him to do the impossible. This was a genuine expression of Jesus’s love in response to Peter’s intense loyalty and devotion.

Peter’s faith started out strong. Initially, the water supported Peter as he walked toward Jesus. Peter soon realized the situation outside the boat was radically different than inside the boat. Quickly, he became distracted by the wind, and his faith and confidence wavered. As his doubts began to sink him, Peter cried out, “Lord, save me!” These words, “save me,” were the same words used by the disciples in the previous storm recorded in Matthew 8:25. The word *save* means to “rescue from death” or “keep alive.”

What step of faith do you need to take right now?



Day 4: Matthew 14:31-32

Reflect on Jesus’s question, “Why did you doubt?”

As soon as Peter began to sink and cried out to Jesus, Jesus “immediately” pulled him from the water. Next came a rebuke from Jesus, “why did you doubt?” The word *doubt* pictures a person being pulled in two directions. Peter had been caught between his intense loyalty and desire to be where Jesus was and do what Jesus did, and the terror of the storm and the waves. The fear of the situation won the tug-of-war and down went Peter. Jesus chastised him for having “little faith.” This was the same rebuke Jesus gave to all the disciples during the first storm narrated in Matthew 8:26. The implication of Jesus was that if Peter had not doubted, he would have continued to walk on the water.

Calm occurred the moment Peter and Jesus got into the boat. The presence of Jesus in the boat most likely calmed the storm in the hearts of the disciples as well. Not only did the wind stop, but suddenly the boat was at the shore, a goal the disciples had labored for most of the night to accomplish.

Keep in mind that these nature miracles of Jesus were not for show, but always to meet the need of the moment. In this case, it was the rescue of the disciples. This was a tangible response to a desperate situation.

In your walk with the Lord, where do you struggle with doubt? Why?



Day 5: Matthew 14:33

Focus on what this passage reveals about Jesus.

Verse 33 is the climax of this passage. The target of the whole incident was the declaration by the disciples of the deity of Jesus. The disciples “worshiped” Jesus and declared, “Truly you are the Son of God.” This chapter is the halfway point of the book of Matthew. This is the first time the disciples have declared that Jesus is the Son of God.

We are confronted, however, by the disciples’ slowness to comprehend the significance of Jesus. They experienced the calming of nature once before, they saw His miraculous healings and demon-deliverance, they participated as He miraculously fed a huge crowd of people. Yet here they are again astonished at His power and authority to overcome their fears and allay their situation. But they were more than simply amazed. They declared Jesus was worthy of worship because He was and is the Son of God. Their worship of Jesus was the remedy for their fears. They would waver again in their understanding of Jesus and His purpose on earth; yet this was a high point of these disciples following their Lord!

What was the climax of this whole incident—what Jesus did or who Jesus is? Why does that matter?

What does this passage reveal about the remedy for fear?

APPLY THE TEXT

Consider what it means to fear the Lord rather than fearing the storms and difficulties of life. How can you build “fear of the Lord” into the daily routine of your life? Take time to memorize Matthew 14:27 and use that verse in prayer when you are confronted with fear.

JOURNAL

