

SESSION 3

FAITH NOT FEAR: WALKING IN TRUST

INTRODUCTION

In our third session, Dr. Gray looks at four passages recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. In each of these incidents Jesus upbraids and challenges Peter, and the Apostles, with the words, “O men of little faith!” pushing them to grow in faith and deeper trust of him and of their heavenly Father.

In the first instance, during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminds his followers (and us) that God, who is our Father, knows our needs and will provide for them; all we need to do is trust him. In the second, Peter and the Apostles are at sea when a storm arises that threatens to sink their boat. When they panic, Jesus rebukes not only the wind and the waves, but also their lack of faith. The third incident is the famous “walking on the water” scene where Peter starts out confidently walking toward Jesus, only to doubt and sink, causing Jesus to once again note Peter’s lack of faith. Finally, when the disciples start to worry about what they are going to eat when they forget to bring bread, Jesus must once more challenge his disciples, rebuking them for so quickly forgetting his teaching.

In each case, the message is clear. When we take our eyes off Jesus, we will falter and fail. It is only with a bold, childlike trust in the Lord that we will prove faithful to Jesus and his teachings and know the great blessings that the Father has in store for us.



CONNECT

First review the last session with your group. Can anyone recite the Memory Verse without assistance? Otherwise, look it up (Isaiah 43:18-19a) and recite it as a group (page 25). Then bring up any highlights the group may have regarding the COMMIT section from last session.

1. Name one thing that struck you from the last session on “Capernaum: Village of Coming Consolation” or the daily reflections.

Allow two or three people to share a key point of interest from last week. If no one leaps at the opportunity, remind them about the importance of the meaning of the name Capernaum or of the key events that took place in the village. This is to help people refocus as we move forward with our study of Peter.

2. Think of someone you absolutely trust. What qualities does that person have to prompt your trust?

Some of the qualities that encourage trust are honesty, length of time that you have known the person, trustworthiness in the past, etc. The disciples fail some tests where they should have trusted Jesus. In the midst of the test they focused more on dire circumstances around them, and not on Jesus and his trustworthiness.

3. Think of a recent time you have been tested, either on a topic, or skill, or even through a trial. How did you do with the test? Were you successful? Did you fall beneath your expectations? Did you fail? What can you learn from tests you have marginally passed or even failed?

Let participants share their personal examples. Some tests might include an exam for a class, or a trial such as patience at home with a particular family member. Often we tend to overlook our own weaknesses and faults; tests and trials sometimes give us an opportunity for truer assessment, and thus allow us to grow in knowledge, ability, and character.



Play the video segment, which will last for approximately 45 minutes. The Study Guide provides participants with a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.



DISCUSS

Following are suggested answers to the DISCUSS questions.

1. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly refers to God as “your” Father (only once referring to God as “my” Father (i.e., his Father). Why is this distinction important? Do you think of God as your Father? Why or why not?

By using the word “your,” Jesus emphasizes that each of us can come to know Jesus’ Father as our own Father (“your Father” in Jesus’ words). Knowing God personally as “my Father” gives me the confidence and the courage to approach him with my needs. A child who has a loving relationship with his or her father naturally turns to that father with a request or when in need, because the relationship gives the child a confidence and trust in the father’s love. The same is true of God. If he is “my Father,” I can dare to approach him with childlike confidence, knowing that he will hear and answer.

Answers will vary with personal responses, but most participants will probably say they see God as Father. If that is the case, you might want to probe a little deeper and ask for examples of the ways they see themselves as God’s children or experience God the Father’s love. This may elicit a slightly different response and examples.

If some participants find it difficult to experience God as their Father due to a difficult relationship with their natural father, you might share that the love of their heavenly Father can provide healing for the hurt/absence of a natural father. A relationship with our heavenly Father lets us experience the fatherly love that our natural father’s love/relationship, sometimes with much error, can only hint at.

2. Dr. Gray discussed that the greatest obstacle to generosity is fear. If I have faith about the future, believing that my needs will be taken care of by my loving heavenly Father, I am free to be generous to others. Is there a correlation between faith in God’s future provision and your fears? What helps you in times when you are tempted to worry about the future?

Answers will vary depending on the participants, but, in general, you can expect participants to express the idea that when we are worried about the future, we tend to become fearful and self-centered. When we are confident that the future will have good things in it, when we have faith in God’s providence, we are much more open to sharing and looking to the needs of those around us. Fear breeds selfishness, whereas faith brings about openness.

You may want to point out that often it is those who have the least—like the widow and her mite—who are the most generous with their possessions, precisely because of their faith.

3. Reflecting on Rembrandt's painting of "*The Storm on the Sea of Galilee*," which position is closest to the one you take when faced with storms in your life? Do you think of Jesus in those storms? If so, how do you picture him? Asleep? Indifferent? Caring? Able to help? Jesus invites us to peace and calm. How do you accept his invitation when the storm rages?

Answers will vary. Likely participants have found themselves in many different roles depending on the storm/trial. Some ideas on moving closer to Jesus might include constancy in prayer during storms/trial; surrounding ourselves with Christian friends; keeping God's Word often on our lips and in our memory; knowing that often when we stop trying to solve everything ourselves, we make an opening for God to act.

4. What is the significance of Jesus saying, "It is I" (Matthew 14:27) when he approaches his disciples in the boat? While our English translation may read "It is I," the original Greek is *ego eimi*. This is the same Greek phrase used in the book of Exodus when God reveals himself to Moses in the burning bush, saying, "I AM" (Exodus 3:14). As devout Jews, the Apostles would be very familiar with this important Old Testament passage and would very likely recall it with Jesus' words. Thus, Jesus is not simply saying, "It is I" as in, "Hey guys, it's just Jesus coming to join the excitement." Rather he is saying, "I AM"—I am God himself, the Creator of the universe, and I have complete control over the wind and the waves.

5. When Jesus said, "Come," Peter boldly leapt out of the boat. Is there a time when you responded with boldness to God's call? Is there an area of your life where God is calling you to act with boldness now? What holds you back? Caution? Fear?

You may want to have an example from your own life ready to share. Some things that keep or hold us back from acting boldly on God's call is our concern for what others will think of us, or our concern for what the next step is after we do this first step that God is calling us to do. It is part of learning to trust God completely, to deepen our faith, that we are willing to be obedient regardless of what others think and to trust the future to God.

6. Dr. Gray begins and ends this teaching by showing the pattern of repetition in the four Scripture stories (see teaching outline for the repetition detail). Dr. Gray noted that repetition in biblical narratives is a call to deeper reflection and meditation, inviting us to ask: Why are these events ordered in this way? What is the relationship between them? What is the meaning behind them? Can you recall any other repetitions in Scripture? What were they and what might you learn from them?

Participants can share personal thoughts on how recognizing repetition might affect their reading of Scripture. Understanding the importance of repetition might cause some to pay closer attention so as to catch these repetitions. It might cause some to ask the questions Dr. Gray noted (i.e., Why? For what reason?) Some might apply this to hearing God in their own lives, recognizing that if topics are repeated in prayer, God may be directing them to reflect on how this applies to their life.

Some additional examples of repetition in Scripture:

- a. A charcoal fire is mentioned only twice in Scripture, once when Peter denies Jesus three times (John 18:18) and then once when Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me more than these?" (John 21:9-19)
- b. With each new day of Creation, God says, "It is good," and with the creation of man and woman, God says, "It is very good."
- c. The first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis, begins with "In the beginning"; St. John also begins his Gospel with "In the beginning."



COMMIT

Following are suggested answers to questions in the daily COMMIT reflections.

COMMIT DAY 1 – THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Participants will learn about the location of the Sermon on the Mount and the context in which Jesus first said, "Oh, ye of little faith."

Look up Exodus 19:20. What parallels do you find there with Mathew 5?

In Matthew 5, Jesus and his disciples go up the mountain.

Look up Exodus 20:1-17. What is received on the mountain?

In Exodus 20, God speaks the words of the Old Covenant Law, particularly the Ten Commandments in 20:1-17, which are given to the people through Moses.

Look up the following verses:

	Who Speaks?	What Is Spoken?
Deuteronomy 4:44-45; 5:1	Moses	God's Law – testimonies, statues, ordinances
Deuteronomy 8:3	Moses (speaking for God)	Moses is reminding God's people that they live by everything that comes from the mouth of the LORD
Matthew 4:4	Jesus	Jesus quotes Moses' statement from Deuteronomy 8:3

What is the significance of St. Matthew's phrase, "[Jesus] opened his mouth"?

At the time of the Exodus, God speaks the Old Covenant Law to his people through Moses. Later in Deuteronomy, Moses reminds the people of God's Law and that it isn't by food alone that they live, but rather by God's Word, in particular the word of God's Law which Moses has just spoken to them.

During his temptation in the desert, Jesus quotes these words of Moses to the devil (Matthew 4:4, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3). Matthew repeats the words of Deuteronomy 8:3 in chapter 4 of his gospel, and notes that Jesus "went up on the mountain" and "opened his mouth," all just ahead of Jesus' giving the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew is preparing us to see Jesus as a "new Moses," who in his Sermon on the Mount is giving a "new Law," the law of the New Covenant, that he will inaugurate with his death and resurrection. If we come to believe in Jesus Christ and are baptized, we receive new life and are given the grace to live according to God's Law.

Interestingly, the phrase "opened his mouth" is also used in the Acts of the Apostles (see, for example, Acts 8:35 and Acts 10:34-35), when the Apostles Philip and Peter, respectively, preach the gospel message of Jesus Christ, and in both cases the hearers believe and are baptized and receive new life in Christ.

Look up the "Our Father" in Matthew 6:9-13 and compare it with Luke 11:2-4. What are the differences and similarities between these two versions of the prayer? How do they compare with the words we say today in Mass?

Matthew 6:9-13	Luke 11:2-4	Comparison Notes
Pray then like this:	And he said to them, "When you pray, say:	<i>Jesus is giving detailed instruction to the Apostles. In Luke, Jesus gives this instruction in response to the Apostles request that he teach them how to pray.</i>
Our Father who art in heaven	Father,	<i>In both, God is addressed as Father, reminding us of our adoption into God's family; Matthew adds the Father's dwelling place "in heaven"</i>
Hallowed be thy name.	hallowed be thy name.	<i>same</i>
Thy kingdom come.	Thy kingdom come.	<i>same</i>
Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.		<i>Matthew includes this additional petition</i>
Give us this day our daily bread;	Give us each day our daily bread;	<i>same</i>
And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors;	and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one who indebted to us;	<i>same</i>
And lead us not into temptation,	and lead us not into temptation.	<i>Matthew includes this additional petition</i>
But deliver us from evil.		<i>Matthew includes this additional petition</i>

As the Catechism notes in paragraph no. 2759, "St. Luke presents a brief text of five petitions, while St. Matthew gives a more developed version of seven petitions. The liturgical tradition of the Church has retained St. Matthew's text."

When we break it down, we see that this prayer is a series of petitions. But before a single petition is requested, what does Jesus have us say?

The word(s) that we are instructed to say first are "Our Father" in Matthew's version and "Father" in Luke's version.

Look up the following verses. What does St. Paul tell us about calling out to the Father? Why do you think Jesus teaches us to begin in this way?

Romans 8:15-16 – *"...you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!', it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God."*

Galatians 4:6 – *"And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"*

In baptism we become adopted sons and daughters of God, and we enter into the family of God.

We can call God by the intimate name of "Abba! Father!" (Abba is the Hebrew for "daddy," retained in the gospel text showing the intimacy of the relationship.) St. Paul emphasizes that it is out of the heart of a child that we cry out to God as Father.

What examples does Jesus ask us to consider in his exhortation that we not be anxious? Look up the following verses:

Below are the verses, with key message emphasized:

Matthew 6:26 – *"Look at the **birds of the air**: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"*

Matthew 6:28-30 – *"Consider the **lilies of the field**, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the **grass of the field**, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?"*

Matthew 6:32 – *"For the **Gentiles** seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all."*

Jesus has us consider how our heavenly Father cares for even the simplest animals, flowers, and grasses. He also contrasts what he is calling his disciples to live out, which is very different from how the Gentiles live.

Look up the following verse. What does Jesus tell us to do to avoid anxiety and fear?

Matthew 6:33 – *"But **seek first** his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well." (emphasis added)*

Jesus exhorts us to "seek first" after God. The verb of this verse is worth reflecting on. Jesus isn't calling us to a passive discipleship, but an active life of pursuing the Lord and his will with all our heart and strength.



COMMIT DAY 2 – THE GIFT OF FAITH

Participants will consider if living in biblical times would have made it easier to believe than living today 2,000 years after Jesus. They will reflect on Jesus' words to Thomas that those who believe without having first seen will be blessed.

Let's look at Matthew 8 for some insights. Jesus has finished teaching the Sermon on the Mount and makes his way back to Capernaum. According to St. Matthew, what happens along the way?

Look up the following verses:

Matthew 8:1-4 – *Jesus heals a leper*

Matthew 8:5-13 – *Jesus heals the centurion's servant*

Matthew 8:14-15 – *Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law*

Matthew 8:16-17 – *Jesus heals many more who were sick and possessed by demons*

Before the Sermon on the Mount, what does Matthew 4:24 tell us?

Matthew 4:24 – *"They brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them."*



COMMIT DAY 3 – THE STORMS OF LIFE

Participants are walked through a Lectio and Meditatio on Matthew 14:23-34, and then they answer questions to help them reflect on this passage of Scripture.

The setting of the story is carefully described. Take note of the following:

- What times are mentioned? *Evening (14:23); Fourth watch of the night (14:25)*
- How far is the boat into the sea? *Many furlongs distant (14:24)*
- How are the waves affecting the boat? *Beaten by the waves (14:24)*
- How is the wind affecting the boat? *The wind was against them (14:24)*
- What is the prevalent emotion? *Terror, fear (14:26)*
- How many times is fear mentioned? *4 times (terror and fear in 14:26; fear in 14:27; afraid in 14:30)*

When in the night does Jesus come to the Apostles in the boat?

In the "fourth watch of the night" (14:25); this is the watch from 3a.m. until 6p.m.

Take note of how Jesus responds when the Apostles, and then later Peter, cry out. What does he say?

What does he do? What happens to the storm?

	When does Jesus answer?	What does Jesus say/do?
Apostles	<i>Immediately</i>	<i>Jesus speaks to them</i>
Peter	<i>Immediately</i>	<i>Jesus takes Peter's hand, stops him from sinking, and then speaks to him</i>

In Isaiah 55:8-9, what does the prophet say about our ways and God's ways? Is there a storm in your life in which God is speaking to you, but you can't hear him because of your expectations?

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Even though the storm has been raging for some time, Jesus waits until the “fourth watch of the night” to come to the Apostles. Why do you think Jesus waited? Why do you think Jesus immediately calms the storm in Matthew 8, but in Matthew 14 allows the storm to continue for a while? In Romans 5:3-5, what fruit does Paul tell us comes from suffering?

“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.” —Romans 5:3-5

When things are going well, it’s easy to trust God. But when things aren’t going as well, due to frustrations, sufferings, trials, etc., that is when our faith is tested and we see just how deep a reservoir we have to draw on. As the fourth watch of the night begins, it can be some of the darkest hours of the night. In this dark time, Jesus answers, but does so with his presence, teaching that even while the storms of life rage, Jesus will be with us. And as we go through the storms and trials, we can grow in Christian character and virtue.

Peter is walking on water, but then something changes. According to Matthew 14:30, what changes? The faith that allowed Peter to step out of the boat is replaced by what? Jesus admonishes Peter for his lack of faith. According to Jesus in Matthew 14:31, what does Peter’s fear lead to?

Matthew 14:30 – *“But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, ‘Lord, save me.’”*

What changes? Peter takes his eye off Jesus and focuses on the storm. Peter’s faith is replaced by fear: “he was afraid”

Matthew 14:31 – *“O man of little faith, why did you doubt?”*

When we take our eyes off Jesus and only see things on the natural level, without the eyes of faith, we can easily be filled with fear, and that fear can lead to doubt. Faith overcomes fear.

Note the two different reactions by the Apostles in Matthew 8:27 and later in Matthew 14:33 to the miracles of Jesus on the Sea of Galilee. Compare and contrast the words used to describe their reactions.

Verse	Compare/Contrast
Matthew 8:27 And the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?”	<i>Although they recognized Jesus as someone who could perform great miracles, they didn’t see him as the Son of God.</i>
Matthew 14:33 And those in the boat worshiped him saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”	<i>They recognized Jesus immediately as the Son of God and worshipped him.</i>



COMMIT DAY 4 – FAITH AND REMEMBERING

Participants will reflect upon the Apostles' anxiety over what they will eat, and on how important is the exhortation to "remember."

What are the Apostles focused on?

Matthew 16:5 – *"When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread."*

Matthew 16:7 – *"And they discussed it among themselves, saying, 'We brought no bread.'"*

The Apostles are focused on what they are going to eat, not on Jesus' warnings.

With what question does Jesus challenge the Apostles at this point in Matthew 16:9? Note the verbs that are used in the questions:

*"Do you not yet **perceive**?"*

*"Do you not **remember**...?"*

In their focus on having *forgotten* the bread, the Apostles have forgotten Jesus' teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. Recall one of Jesus' teachings:

Matthew 6:25 – *"Do not be anxious about your life, **what you shall eat or what you shall drink**, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food?" (emphasis added)*

If those closest to Jesus can forget his teaching on anxiety about what they will eat, right after they've witnessed Jesus feeding thousands of people, what other teachings might they forget? Given his warning about the Pharisees and Sadducees, it seems Jesus might be concerned about the Apostles forgetting this teaching also:

Matthew 6:1 – *"Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."*

Matthew 6:5 – *"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward."*

The idea of "remembering" goes back to the Exodus. When God gives his people the first law, the law of the Old Covenant, they are exhorted numerous times to "remember" and not to forget God's statutes and ordinances and his mighty deeds. See some examples:

Below are the verses, with key message emphasized:

Deuteronomy 8:2 – *"And you shall **remember** all the way which the LORD your God has led you..."*

Deuteronomy 8:11 – *"Take heed **lest you forget** the LORD your God, by not keeping his commandments and his ordinances and his statutes, which I command you this day." (emphasis added)*

Psalms 77:11 – *"I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD; yea, I will **remember** thy wonders of old."*

Psalms 105:5 – *"**Remember** the wonderful works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered."*

The idea of "remembering" is also at the heart of liturgy. Look up the following verse:

Luke 22:19 – *"And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you. Do this in **remembrance** of me.'" (emphasis added)*

There are two parts to the Mass. What do we do in each part?

Liturgy of the Word: Remember God's Word, but reading from the Scriptures.

Liturgy of the Eucharist: Remember Jesus' death and resurrection, re-presented sacramentally in the Eucharist.



COMMIT DAY 5 – TRUTH AND BEAUTY

Participants will reflect on Rembrandt's "The Storm on the Sea of Galilee."

St. Matthew in his passage of this scene starts with the condition of the sea. How does he describe the storm and its effect on the boat in Matthew 8:24?

Matthew 8:24 – *"There arose a **great storm** on the sea, so that the boat was **being swamped by the waves.**" (emphasis added)*

How does Rembrandt depict these conditions?

Rembrandt depicts the sea and sky in dark colors. The boat is tossed up by large waves, which break over the edge of the boat. Strong wind fills the sails.

The boat's frightened passengers display numerous responses to the desperate situation. Look closely at the painting. How are the various disciples responding to the storm?

Five men are battling the storm, using all their strength to work the sails and rigging. A couple men seem to be somewhat cowered over with their cloaks wrapped around them, so fearful of the dire situation that they are unsure of what to do next. One man leans over the boat, apparently sick from the violent movement. One man holds the rudder with limp arms while he looks at Jesus; he doesn't appear to put any effort into responding to the situation in which he finds himself. Two men are beseeching Jesus for help—"Save, Lord"—one of them reaches out his hand to awaken Jesus from his sleep. One man holds a rigging rope and looks out at the viewer.

Take a moment to ponder Rembrandt's question. Is there a storm in your life right now?

How are you responding to it?

Personal responses from participants.

The boat's dangerous pitch draws our eye to the sturdy mast and yard from which the sails hang. Besides being the supports for the sails, what image is Rembrandt portraying?

The mast and yard are in the shape of a cross.

Look up John 3:14-17. According to St. John, what does Jesus Christ bring us by his Cross?

John 3:14-17 – *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.' For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."*

In the Old Testament, Numbers 21:4-9 recounts an episode where Moses raises an image of a serpent on a pole so that any of God's people who were bitten by the fiery serpents could look on the image and live. This event prefigures Jesus, who at his crucifixion is lifted up on the Cross. John tells us that all who look on Jesus and believe will have eternal life. Jesus has won eternal life for us offering himself on the Cross.

In the midst of the storms of life, we must look to the face of Christ, to the face of the One who will see us through the difficulty, like those who cling to the foot of the Cross and look up. Read the following verses and note all the references to the face of God/Jesus:

2 Corinthians 4:6 – “For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

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