

# Stormy Water Faith

BY IRENE PAK

For use with Lesson Five of the  
2015–2016 PW/*Horizons* Bible study,  
*Come to the Waters* by Judy Record Fletcher



## Scripture: Matthew 14:22–33

I love a good quote about faith. For example, one of my favorite faith quotes comes from Martin Luther King, Jr.: “Faith is taking the first step, even when you don’t see the whole staircase.” If you search the internet for “quotes about faith,” endless memes and results will pop up. Many are about letting your faith be bigger than your fears, and trusting God at all times.

As a teaching elder, I preach and talk a lot about faith—having it, wanting it, seeking it and cultivating it. It’s a wonderful concept to ponder and discuss, an inspiring way to engage the world. But when life brings about situations in our lives where we actually have to *have* it?

I will be the first to confess that I do everything in my power to see what controls I can put on the situation, before I have to believe or have faith that things will be well . . . or even just be! In fact, if I were one of the 12 who followed Jesus, I’m fairly sure he would have looked directly at me several times and said, “You of little faith . . . .”

It feels like it should be an insult, but I do not see it that way. Truth stings sometimes, and I think that’s what happens in the passage from the gospel of Matthew about the storm.

Whenever I read this story of Jesus walking on water and Peter stepping out toward him on stormy seas, Peter inspires me. Can we give the man (and his faith) some credit?! He gets out of a boat—completely trusting Jesus’ invitation to come toward him on stormy waters—and walks toward him. Peter walks on water!

It’s only when Peter realizes he is doing something incredible, something beyond his wildest dreams, that he freaks out and begins to sink. And I think that is what frustrates Jesus. Trusting Jesus completely, one of his disciples takes a step of faith, does something incredible and then doubts his own abilities in the midst of doing it. I think that’s why Jesus says, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Take a moment to recall whether you’ve had a similar experience. Have you ever in your enthusiasm or passion for service, justice or calling jumped out of your own boat of safety and started walking in trust with the One who called you to do the work? You walked on water. Suddenly, something happened—a howling wind, a bolt of lightning, a negative voice, a slip-up—and your passion or confidence waned. Then you started to doubt yourself, your calling and your abilities. You found yourself sinking.

**What thirsts have shaped your life and faith? What bold actions did your ancestors and/or ancestors in faith take when they faced thirst?**

It all felt worse than it actually was because Christ was still there with you, even though you felt as if you were sinking. He is with you now and always will be. And whether we get out of the boat and walk on water, or watch bewildered from inside the boat, we serve a God in Christ who saves us and who reaches out to us when we call. And, at some point in our lives, we all get to witness Jesus walking on water.

Can we have the faith to walk toward him? And keep walking? I think maybe having faith means believing that our passion will return even after we have sunk a little, that we will get out of the boat again someday, that we will again walk on water even when storms

rage around us. In "Blessing that Bears the Wind, the Wave" poet and artist Jan L. Richardson writes about how she learns anew what faith is:

That we will risk  
the drenching  
by which we  
are drawn  
toward the voice  
that calls us,  
the love  
that catches us,  
the faith  
that carries us  
beyond the wind,  
the wave.\*

**Where are you now? Are you in the boat? Asking Jesus if you can come toward him? Walking on water? Sinking?**

Wherever you are, may you discover the love that catches you . . . and if still needed, a good quote on faith.

Irene Pak is associate pastor at Stone Church of Willow Glen in San José, California.

**Note**

\* Jan Richardson, "Walk Across That Water," <http://paintedprayerbook.com/2014/08/05/walk-across-that-water>. © Jan Richardson, janrichardson.com.