

# Bible Studies for Life: January 1

*Courage in Place of Fear • Matthew 14:22-33*

*By Becky Brown*



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I like to say it this way:

Jesus, Happy YOU Near!!

Last Sunday, we celebrated the birth of Jesus in the little town of Bethlehem. We were singing “the hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight.” The dawning of each new year brings its own set of great expectations accompanied with great trepidations. Whatever comes, we are grateful that we never walk alone. As he climbed into the boat, emptied the fish scales out of his sandals and dried off his feet, Peter was able to give personal testimony to such a truth. Faith and courage combined with focus on The WaterTop Walker Himself will cross out fear...every time.

Matthew’s gospel account has just walked Jesus through a visit to his hometown of Nazareth in Galilee. He was literally sent packing after they “invited” Him to take a dive off the nearby

cliffs. The message of His words in their synagogue from Isaiah 61 had offended them.

Next, we find Jesus walking through grief with the news of the beheading of John the Baptizer. Jesus withdrew to spend some time alone dealing with such a deep, wounding loss of The ForeRunner. The prophetic words of John the Baptizer were etched in His soul: "Jesus must increase and I must decrease."

Then, His moment of silence was interrupted by the arrival of the multitudes that followed Him everywhere He went. Their needs, spiritual as well as physical, consumed Jesus. He would end the day feeding them by multiplying five loaves and two fish. Intent on having some time alone with His Father to grieve and pray, Jesus sent the disciples across the Sea of Galilee by boat and then dismissed the people to their homes.

Finally, just as Snoopy (that famous Peanuts canine author) would key into the typewriter on top of his Charlie Brown dog house, "...it was a dark and stormy night..." Jesus would linger alone in that location until 3AM. There were four "watches" of the night from sunset to sunrise: 6PM-9PM, 9PM-midnight, midnight-3AM, 3AM-6AM. The storm of grief inside the heart of The Savior was mirrored by a storm on the Sea of Galilee.

At the time of the fourth watch of the night, the disciples were caught in the vortex of the storm with wind-driven waves battering their boat. Jesus stepped out on top of the water He had measured with His hands at creation and went walking toward His beloved twelve. The "lake" of Galilee is 12 miles long north to south and 8 miles across west to east at its widest point. Weather can spin up quickly from the mountains that surround the lake.

When they saw a figure coming near their boat, they thought it was a ghost ("phantasma" in Greek). Jesus quickly assured

them of His presence with, "Find your courage, lose your fears, I am here." Peter basically replied, "Well, since we know it is you, command me to come to You on the water!" With that same word He had used to call them into ministry, Jesus simply said, "Come." Peter climbed out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus.

The powerful wind grabbed Peter's attention. He began to sink. He took his eyes and his focus off of Jesus. His fear began to squash his courage and faith. Then he uttered the three favorite words Jesus loves to hear, "Lord, save me!" Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of Peter. These were men of tiny faith and big doubt. Jesus said so. I never want Him to have to say that about me!

As they got into the boat, the wind stopped. When the wind stops blowing, the waves stop rolling. The boat sat still. The worn out rowers collapsed. They had witnessed the marvelous multiplication of the bread and fish. Now they began to absorb the gravity of the great, long division of their small faith compared to the massive grace of Jesus.

People love to slam Simon Peter. Peter watched Jesus be bound and arrested in Gethsemane. But He did slice off a servant's ear! Peter denied Jesus. But he did show up at the trial and the tomb! Peter sank in the water. But he did get out of the boat. Eleven guys stayed in that boat. Faith and Focus put Fear to Flight.

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