

Session 2: Lord, Save Me

Matthew 14:22-33 | 75 to 90 minutes | Young Adult Inductive Study

PART ONE: LEADER PREPARATION GUIDE

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: The group discovers that faith is not the absence of fear or wind but the direction of our attention and our cry; that we cannot save ourselves from the deep; and that Jesus' hand reaches the sinking man before His question does.

Catholic Touchstone: Salvation is rescue. "Lord, save me" (Matthew 14:30) is a complete prayer in three words: it confesses our incapacity, names the Savior as Lord, and asks. It is the Gospel in miniature, the whole message in seed form, and Jesus answers it immediately.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Context first. This scene follows directly on the feeding of the five thousand, and St. John adds a detail Matthew assumes: the crowd wanted to seize Jesus and make him king (John 6:15). Jesus responds by dismissing the crowd, compelling the disciples into the boat (Matthew says He "made" them get in), and climbing the mountain alone to pray. Notice what that means: the disciples row into the storm in an act of obedience. The hard night is not a punishment and not an accident outside the plan; it happens inside the will of Christ, who, St. Mark tells us, saw them "making headway painfully" from the mountain (Mark 6:48). He comes to them in the fourth watch, between three and six in the morning, after they have rowed most of the night. He lets them row long, and He comes at the darkest hour, walking on the very thing they fear.

Second, the sea-walking itself is a wordless claim. In the Old Testament it is God alone "who trampled the waves of the sea" (Job 9:8), whose "way was through the sea" though His "footprints were unseen" (Psalm 77:19). For hearers steeped in the Psalms, the scene carries a claim: the One coming across the water is doing what their Scriptures say only the God of Israel does, though the disciples themselves grasp it only slowly, crying out at first, "It is a ghost!" And His word of comfort sharpens it: "Take heart, it is I; have no fear" (Matthew 14:27). The Greek behind "it is I" is *egō eimi*, I AM. In the Greek Old Testament, God's name at the burning bush opens with this phrase, *egō eimi ho ōn*, "I AM the One who is" (Exodus 3:14), and the bare *egō eimi* is God's own self-declaration in Isaiah (e.g., Isaiah 43:10 LXX). At the literal level the phrase can simply mean "it's me," and it is honest to say so; but Matthew has stacked the scene (divine sea-walking, the divine "fear not," and the disciples' closing worship) in a way that invites the deeper hearing.

Third, watch Peter's request carefully, because it is easy to misread as recklessness: "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water" (Matthew 14:28). Peter does not jump. He asks for a command first, and only walks when he has one. This is the lesson of Session 1 already taking root: "at your word I will let down the nets" has become "command me, and I will come." Faith acts on the word of Jesus, not on impulse. Eleven men stayed in the boat; one asked for a word and got out.

Fourth, the sinking. "But when he saw the wind, he was afraid" (Matthew 14:30). Read that clause slowly with your group: the wind had been blowing the entire time. Nothing in the circumstances changed. What changed was the direction of Peter's attention. While he looked at Christ, the impossible held; when he looked at the danger (and, perhaps, at himself doing the impossible), he went down. Then the three words, and then the detail the whole session turns on: "Jesus *immediately* reached out his hand and caught him" (Matthew 14:31). The rescue comes first. The question, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?", comes after, asked at arm's grip, inside the rescue. Jesus does not lecture a drowning man. And "little faith" is not "no faith": the cry itself was faith, and it was enough.

Finally, the ending plants next session. The men in the boat worship: "Truly you are the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). Hold that in your pocket; in two weeks Jesus will ask them to say who He is when there is no storm, no miracle, and no rescue fresh in their minds.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Psalms 69:1-3, 13-15 and Jonah 2:2-6 (the live discovery texts; do not preview them). Throughout Scripture, deep waters are the standing image of death, sin, and overwhelm: "Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck" (Psalm 69:1); Jonah cries "out of the belly of Sheol" as the waters close over him. And the standing answer is a God who draws His people out: "he drew me out of many waters" (Psalm 18:16). Peter's three words on the sea are the whole tradition of the Psalms compressed into a single cry.

The divine sea-walker. Job 9:8 and Psalm 77:19, God alone tramples the waves; His path is through the sea. Supply these in the answer to Question 2 if the group does not surface them.

The name from the bush. Exodus 3:14, "I AM WHO I AM," behind the *egō eimi* of Matthew 14:27. Handled in the first Dig Deeper box with appropriate hedging.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine / *Sermon 76 (on Matthew 14)*

Preaching on this Gospel, St. Augustine sees in Peter on the waves a figure of the Church and of every Christian soul: strong when he looks to Christ, tottering the moment he presumes on himself. For Augustine the whole scene is a portrait of grace and weakness in one man: Peter walking is what we are by Christ's power; Peter sinking is what we are by our own; and Peter crying out is the only wisdom left to us, because the Lord who permitted the wavering is the same Lord who stretches out His hand. He lets us feel our weakness so that we will not forget whose strength was carrying us.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom | *Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Homily 50*

St. Chrysostom notices the Lord's training method in this scene: He does not calm the storm from the mountain, and even when He comes, He does not immediately end the disciples' fear, because He is teaching them endurance and weaning them from the need for instant relief. Of Peter, Chrysostom observes that his love outran his strength: warm in devotion, he asked to come, but the weakness of nature overtook him in the wind. And the Lord's response is a physician's: He lets Peter feel the danger just long enough to learn his own measure, then seizes him, and corrects him only after he is safe.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thérèse of Lisieux | *Letter 197 to Sr. Marie of the Sacred Heart (17 September 1896) and Story of a Soul (Manuscript C)*

Fifteen centuries later, a young Carmelite Doctor of the Church taught a spirituality that this scene pictures perfectly. St. Thérèse taught that it is confidence, and confidence alone, that leads us to Love: not the size of our strength but the boldness of our trust in His. She saw herself as a little soul with empty hands, too small to climb the stairs of perfection, and so she let herself be lifted. Read through her eyes, Peter sinking with his hand stretched toward Christ is the Little Way in a single image: sanctity is not walking on water by our own balance; it is being caught.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

- **CCC 448:** In the Gospels, people who approach Jesus call him “Lord”; the title expresses respect and trust from those who seek help and healing, and on the lips of the disciples after the Resurrection it becomes adoration. Peter’s “Lord, save me” stands in that line: petition already leaning toward worship.
- **CCC 164:** Faith is often lived in darkness; the world we experience can seem far from what faith assures us, and trials can shake it. Peter between the boat and Jesus, wind in his ears, is the picture of CCC 164.
- **CCC 273:** Only faith can embrace the mysterious ways of God’s almighty power, which is made perfect in weakness. Peter learns God’s strength precisely at the point where his own gives out.

THE WAY OF SALVATION (STUDY STRAND, LEADER ONLY)

MOVEMENT 2 OF THE KERYGMA: OUR INCAPACITY AND THE CRY OF FAITH

Last week: God acts first. This week: **we cannot save ourselves, and the cry for rescue is itself an act of faith that is enough for Him to save.** Deep water is Scripture’s picture of the human condition; nobody swims out of it. The didactic texts that state what this scene shows: Psalm 3:8 (“Deliverance belongs to the LORD”); Joel 2:32 with Romans 10:13 (“every one who calls upon the

name of the Lord will be saved”). File this away and tell no one: in Session 10 the group will hear Peter, at Pentecost, preach Joel 2:32 to the crowds (Acts 2:21). The man who cried “Lord, save me” will spend the rest of his life telling people that everyone who cries it will be saved. Guardrail as before (CCC 2002): the cry is grace-enabled, and it is still truly Peter’s cry; grace does not bypass his freedom, it rescues through it. Do not teach this strand aloud; let the story carry it.

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY, NEVER REVEAL)

- **The pattern in miniature.** Bold beginning, wavering attention, collapse, cry, rescue, gentle correction. Fix this rhythm in your mind; Peter will live it again on a much larger stage later in the study, and the group should be allowed to recognize it themselves when it comes. Say nothing.
- **The word before the step.** “Command me” echoes “at your word” from Session 1. The thread of acting on Jesus’ word against the visible evidence is now two sessions long.
- **The boat confession.** “Truly you are the Son of God” (14:33) is spoken by the group after a rescue. Session 3 will ask what Peter says when Jesus asks in cold blood, far from any storm. This week’s ending is next week’s setup.
- **Sealed guess.** No action this week except a reminder at dismissal: keep the Take-Home 1 sheet safe, guess folded. Do not discuss its contents.

SESSION GOALS

1. The group articulates that the wind never changed; Peter’s attention did. Faith is the direction of our gaze and our cry, not the absence of fear.
2. The group discovers the deep-waters imagery of Psalm 69 and Jonah 2 and names “Lord, save me” as the Gospel in miniature.
3. The group recognizes the order of rescue and rebuke: the hand comes before the question, and correction happens inside salvation, never instead of it.
4. Each participant identifies one area of life where they have been trying to save themselves.
5. Participants are reminded to keep their sealed My Guess sheet safe; distribute Take-Home 2.

TIME NOTE

Core session runs about 75 minutes. If your group runs long: cut the second Dig Deeper box (The Fourth Watch) and the first Win question. **Do not cut** the Question 5 discovery or the Send questions.

PART TWO: DISCUSSION GUIDE

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you see us rowing when we think we are alone, and you come to us across the very things we fear. Speak tonight the word you spoke on the water: take heart, it is I, have no fear. Give us the honesty to admit we are in over our heads, and the faith to cry out to you by name. Catch us, Lord, as you caught Simon, and do not let go. Amen.

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS

Open questions; every answer is welcome. Do not correct or steer.

W1. Tell us about a time you were genuinely in over your head, literally or figuratively. What did you do?

W2. In your experience, what is the difference between doubting that God exists and doubting that He will come through for you? Which one do you actually wrestle with more?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT

READ ALOUD: Matthew 14:22-27

1. Look at verse 22: Jesus “made” the disciples get into the boat. They are rowing into this storm because they obeyed. What does it do to your picture of Jesus that the hard night is not an accident, and not a punishment, but happens inside His plan while He watches from the mountain?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

This quietly dismantles a false gospel many people carry: that if I obey, the water stays calm, and that storms are proof I took a wrong turn. The disciples are exactly where Jesus put them, and it is brutal there. St. Mark adds that Jesus saw them straining at the oars (Mark 6:48). He is not absent; He is praying, watching, and timing His approach. And when He comes, He comes in the fourth watch, the darkest stretch before dawn, walking on the very thing they are afraid of. Obedience does not exempt us from the storm; it means the One who sent us into it sees us and comes to us, often later than we would schedule.

2. A man walking on the sea: to a boatful of Jews raised on the Psalms, this is not just a wonder, it is a claim. What is Jesus claiming without saying a word? And listen to the word He does say: “Take heart, it is I; have no fear.”

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

In the Old Testament, walking on the sea is God's signature move and His alone: it is God “who trampled the waves of the sea” (Job 9:8), whose “way was through the sea” though His “footprints were unseen” (Psalm 77:19). Supply those texts if the group does not surface them. Jesus is doing, in front of eyewitnesses, what their Scriptures say only the God of Israel does. And His “it is I” carries a deeper register the first Dig Deeper box explores. The claim beneath the miracle: the One coming toward you across your fear is the LORD.

READ ALOUD: Matthew 14:28-33

3. “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” Is this faith or recklessness? Look closely at what Peter asks for before he moves.

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

Notice: Peter does not jump. He asks for a command, and he only steps out when he has one. This is Session 1 bearing fruit: the man who said “at your word I will let down the nets” now says “command me, and I will come.” Faith is not impulse plus adrenaline; it is action on the word of Jesus against the visible evidence. Recklessness would be leaping without the word. Presumption would be assuming the power is his own. Peter does neither, yet. And do not let the group miss the other detail: eleven men heard the same voice and stayed in the boat. Whatever we say about Peter's sinking in a moment, he is the only one who found out the water holds.

4. Verse 30: “But when he saw the wind, he was afraid.” Here is the strange thing: the wind had been blowing the entire time. So what actually changed?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

His attention. The circumstances are identical from the first step to the sinking; what moved was the direction of his gaze. While Peter looked at Christ, the impossible held under his feet; when he looked at the danger, and perhaps at himself doing the impossible, he went down. This is one of the most practically useful discoveries in the whole study, so let the group chew it: fear is usually not new information, it is old information newly stared at. Faith is not pretending there is no wind. Faith is deciding, moment by moment, what you will look at. The wind is real; so is the Lord. The question is which one has your eyes.

5. Sinking, Peter cries out three words: “Lord, save me.” It is one of the shortest prayers in the Bible, and Jesus answers it instantly. Why is this tiny prayer enough?

Live discovery: after some discussion, say: “Peter is praying in a very old language tonight. Split into pairs: half of you read Psalm 69:1-3 and 13-15, half read Jonah 2:2-6. Find what deep water means in the Scriptures, and what God does about it.” Give them several minutes and let both halves report before opening the answer box.

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

What the pairs should surface: in Scripture, deep water is the standing image of death, sin, and

everything that is over our heads. “Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck... I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold” (Psalm 69:1-2). Jonah cries out “out of the belly of Sheol” as “the waters closed in over me” (Jonah 2:2, 5). And the standing answer is a God who draws His people out of the deep (see also Psalm 18:16, “he drew me out of many waters”). In these texts, nobody saves himself from the deep: the psalmist and Jonah alike are drawn out by God.

So why is the tiny prayer enough? Because it is the Gospel in miniature, the whole message in seed form. “Lord”: it names who He is. “Save”: it admits what I cannot do for myself. “Me”: it stops hiding behind generalities and hands Him my actual self. It is the prayer of a man with no leverage left, and that is exactly the prayer God has been answering since the Psalms. The group should leave tonight owning this prayer; they will use it for the rest of their lives.

6. Verse 31: “Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him,” and only then, “O man of little faith, why did you doubt?” Look hard at the order of the hand and the question. Why does the order matter?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

Rescue first, question second. Jesus does not lecture a drowning man, and He does not make correction the price of the rescue; He asks His question at arm's grip, with Peter already safe. That order is a portrait of how Christ deals with every honest failure in this study and in this room: correction happens inside salvation, never instead of it. And weigh the words “little faith.” Not “no faith.” The cry itself was faith; small, soaked, and sinking, but aimed at the right Person, and it was enough. If anyone in your group believes their faith is too small to count, this verse is for them: little faith that cries out to Jesus is enough for Him to save. The power was never in the size of the faith; it is in the strength of the Hand it reaches for.

7. Be honest: was Peter's walk a failure? The other eleven stayed dry, safe, and unrebuked. By the time the wind stops, who knows Jesus better?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

All twelve end the night worshipping: “Truly you are the Son of God” (Matthew 14:33). But only one of them knows what His grip feels like. The eleven know Jesus rescued Peter; Peter knows Jesus rescued him. Wet failure that ends in the grasp of Christ gave Peter a firsthand knowledge of Him that the eleven, watching from the boat, did not receive that night. Be careful to press this rightly: the lesson is not recklessness, and the goal is not manufactured risk. The lesson is that obedience to His word, even when it ends in our sinking, lands us in His hands, and His hands are a safe place to land. Note carefully: the eleven were not disobedient; they were never commanded to come. The question is not whether staying was wrong, but what Peter learned in the water that could not be learned by watching. The group should wrestle honestly with which they would have chosen, and why.

DIG DEEPER: IT IS I

The Greek behind “it is I” (Matthew 14:27) is *egō eimi*, literally “I AM.” In the Greek Old Testament God’s answer at the burning bush begins with these words, *egō eimi ho ōn*, “I AM the One who is” (Exodus 3:14), and the unadorned *egō eimi* is His self-declaration in Isaiah (Isaiah 43:10 LXX). At the plain level the phrase can simply mean “it’s me,” and honesty requires saying so. But Matthew has surrounded it with God’s own signatures: walking on the sea, and the divine “fear not.” The Church has long heard the deeper register: in the dark, on the water, Jesus comforts His friends with the divine Name.

DIG DEEPER: THE FOURTH WATCH

The Romans divided the night into four watches; the fourth ran from about three to six in the morning. The disciples had been rowing since evening, and Mark tells us Jesus saw them straining, yet did not come until the fourth watch (Mark 6:48), after most of a night of rowing. Scripture keeps this pattern: God’s rescues often arrive in the last watch, later than we would schedule them. The Fathers read such delay not as neglect but as training. He is teaching them, and us, to keep rowing in the dark on the strength of who sent us out.

SEND: TAKING IT WITH YOU

S1. Where in your life right now are you “seeing the wind”: a situation where the circumstances have not actually changed, but your attention has locked onto the danger? What would it mean, concretely, to look back at Christ this week?

S2. “Lord, save me” takes three seconds to pray. What is the one area of your life where you have been quietly trying to save yourself? Are you willing to pray those three words over it, honestly, every day this week?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Learn the three-word prayer by heart (you already have) and pray it every single time you feel overwhelmed this week, the moment you notice. Keep a private count. Tell no one the number; just notice what changes by Sunday.
2. Pray with Matthew 14:22-33 once this week, placing yourself in the scene: leave the boat, feel the water hold, feel the moment your eyes drift to the wind. Stay there until you have let Him catch you.
3. Notice one moment this week when your attention slid from Christ to the wind. Write a single sentence about what pulled it, and bring the sentence to next session (you will not have to share it).

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, Son of God, you let Simon feel the water give way so that he would learn the strength of your hand. We hand you tonight the places where we are sinking, the winds we cannot stop staring at, and the weight of trying to save ourselves. Catch us. Teach us to pray the fisherman's prayer until it becomes our breath: Lord, save me. St. Peter, who knows His grip, pray for us. Amen.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Take heart, it is I; have no fear."

Matthew 14:27 (RSV2CE)

Before you dismiss: hand every participant Take-Home 2, and give one reminder only: "Keep your sheet from last week safe, guess folded. We will need it." Say nothing else about it.

PART THREE: LEADER REFERENCE CARD

EVERY PASSAGE IN THIS SESSION

Primary Text (read aloud in session)

- Matthew 14:22-27, the compelled crossing, the storm, the sea-walker, "it is I"
- Matthew 14:28-33, Peter's walk, the wind, "Lord, save me," the hand, the worship

Live Discovery Texts (group finds the parallels)

- Psalm 69:1-3, 13-15, waters up to the neck; no foothold; the cry
- Jonah 2:2-6, the belly of Sheol; the waters closed over me

Supporting Texts (supply if needed)

- Mark 6:48, He saw them straining at the oars; the fourth watch
- John 6:15, the crowd's attempt to make Him king (context)
- Job 9:8, God alone trampled the waves of the sea
- Psalm 77:19, His way through the sea, footprints unseen
- Psalm 18:16, "he drew me out of many waters"
- Exodus 3:14, I AM WHO I AM (Dig Deeper)

Way of Salvation Strand (leader only)

- Psalm 3:8, "Deliverance belongs to the LORD"
- Joel 2:32 / Romans 10:13, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved
- Acts 2:21, Peter preaching Joel 2:32 at Pentecost (resolves in Session 10; do not reveal)

Catechism

- CCC 448, “Lord” on the lips of those who seek His help
- CCC 164, faith lived and tested in darkness
- CCC 273, power made perfect in weakness
- CCC 2002, God's free initiative demands man's free response (strand guardrail)

Memory Verse

- Matthew 14:27, “Take heart, it is I; have no fear.”