



## **Stories on the Way: Lesson Plans for Small Sunday Schools**

### **Peter Walks on the Water Matthew 14:22-33**

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## Peter Walks on the Water

One evening, after a long day of teaching and working with the crowds who followed him, Jesus sent his disciples off in their boat to cross to the other side of the lake before him while he went for a walk up the mountain. He needed to be alone to think and pray. After a while, he went back to the lake but the boat was already far away from the shore, blown by the wind and the waves. By this time, it was very late at night and Jesus wanted to reach the boat. He started to walk across the water. When the disciples saw him, walking on the waves, they were terrified. “A ghost! A ghost! “ they cried.

Jesus heard them and he said, “Don’t be afraid. It’s just me.”

One of the disciples, named Peter, was still nervous and he wanted to make sure it really was Jesus. He said, “Lord, if it is you, tell me to walk to you on the water.” Jesus answered, “Come on then”.

Peter carefully stepped out of the boat and began to walk to Jesus. He couldn’t believe it! He was walking on water! He looked around but when he saw the wind blowing and the waves crashing he got scared and he started to sink into the cold water.

***(Lesson 1 ONLY: pause for discussion)***

Peter shouted: “Jesus, save me!”

Quickly, Jesus reached out and caught him. “Why did you get scared, Peter?” Jesus asked, “Why did you stop believing that it was possible?” Jesus helped Peter back into the boat with the other disciples and the storm stopped and they weren’t afraid anymore.

[\(Matthew 14:22-33\)](#)

# **Jump! Because Everything is Possible with Jesus**

## **(Peter Walks on the Water Lesson 1)**

Things to know about this lesson:

- The activity is...active. Be prepared for things to get a little rowdy. It is also a lot of fun and involves practically no set up or clean up.

### **Materials**

- small throwing markers of some sort (one per person). Small wooden blocks or badminton birdies or something similar would work well – anything that is not breakable and won't roll.

### **Open with prayer**

### **Introduce the Story**

Today, we are going to read a story about Jesus and his disciples (disciples are like very devoted students), especially a disciple named Peter. Peter was the kind of guy who asked a lot of questions and got in a lot of trouble but learned a lot while he did it.

### **Read the first part of the story (see page 1 – to marked break)**

### **Discussion**

What did the disciples think Jesus was?

How did they feel?

What did Peter do?

How did Peter feel – at first? when he started to sink?

What is the scariest or hardest thing you've ever tried to do? What happened?

Is there something you want to do but you're worried about trying?

Let's see what happened to Peter. What do you think is going to happen?

### **Finish the story**

Remember: Peter was walking to Jesus on the water but when he saw the wind and the waves he got scared and started to sink.

(Continue from break)

### **Discussion**

When did Peter start to sink?

How did Peter get back to the boat?

How did Peter feel when Jesus helped him?

## **Introduce the Game**

We're going to play a game to help us think about what it feels like when we try to do something that is difficult.

Distribute markers. Explain that everyone will go to one side of the room and put their marker just a little in front of themselves. When they are ready, they can jump over the marker. If they succeed, they should go back to the start and move the marker farther away. Keep going until they find a spot that is just a little too far for them to jump. Make sure it is clear that this is not a competition.

Pay attention for interesting things to address afterwards. For example, did anyone take a couple of tries to make a jump? Did anyone put the marker way out in front right away? Was anyone very cautious in their advances?

## **Regrouping**

Collect the markers. Ask the group about the experience. For example,

How did it feel to jump over the marker?

How did it feel when you couldn't do it?

Was it fun to try?

What did you do if you didn't make it over the marker the first time?

Remind everyone of the conclusion to Peter's story. Ask them if Peter could have ever walked on the water by himself. Point out that Peter had to take the first step but he needed Jesus to do something that is usually impossible.

## **Closing Prayer**

We're going to say a prayer that we say at the end of many church services. It is a prayer of praise and one thing it praises God for is the way that God's power can make us do amazing things that we don't always understand or expect.

**Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God, from generation to generation, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.**

## **Painting the Storm**

### **(Peter Walks on the Water Lesson 2)**

While it may seem like this lesson does not “teach” very much (although it does at least hint at the idea that Jesus calms our fears). The primary lesson, however, is about a way of engaging with scripture that helps us to see ourselves and our experiences inside these sacred stories. Part of the philosophy of Stories on the Way is that the stories themselves are our teachers – we just need to learn how to listen to them.

Things to know about this lesson:

- Storms lend themselves to watercolours but crayons or, if necessary, markers will work (pencil crayons are definitely not a great alternative).
- Be sure you have nice big pieces of paper. The idea is to give the students scope for the expression of their experience of the story.

### **Materials**

- Large pieces of good quality painting/drawing paper
- paints (ideally) or crayons/markers/pencil crayons
- newspaper (if necessary for covering work surfaces)
- tape (for taping down newspaper and, possibly, painting paper)

### **Before the Lesson**

Put large pieces of paper and paints/crayons/markers in easy reach of yourself or in the work area but not where the students will be sitting to listen to the story.

### **Open with Prayer**

### **Introduce the Story**

Think of a time when you were really scared. Invite kids to tell their stories.

Last week, we read a story about Jesus’ disciple, Peter, being helped to walk on water and about how Jesus can help us do amazing things. That amazing story happened in the middle of a big storm. Storms can be very scary. Do you think Peter and the disciples were scared?

Have you ever been in a big storm? Maybe even on or near a lake or the ocean? What was it like?

This week, we are going to try really hard to imagine what it was like to be in the boat or on the water when this story happened. While I read it, close your eyes and try to picture the lake. Feel the way the waves are crashing around and the wind is blowing. What temperature is the wind? What temperature is the water? What does it sound

like? Is their thunder and lightening? Or is it just really windy?  
Ready? Close your eyes.

## **Read the Story (see page 1 – ignore break)**

### **Discussion**

What was the storm like?

Ask specific questions about different elements if the kids are slow to answer (Were the waves big? Was there water spraying into the boat? Did the wind whip your hair around? Was it warm or cold? What colour was the lake? What colour were the waves? What sounds could you hear?)

How did it feel to be in that storm? Was it scary?

Were you relieved when Jesus helped Peter and stopped the storm?

Offer to read it again, if they want.

### **Activity**

Invite the kids to paint (or colour) the storm they saw, with or without the boat and the people.

### **Regrouping**

Invite the kids to share their paintings.

### **Closing Prayer**

Dear God, sometimes, we get scared. Help us to remember that you are with us even when we are scared. Help us to notice when other people are scared so that we can help them the way that Jesus helped Peter. Amen.

## **Help in the Storm**

### **(Peter Walks on the Water Lesson 3)**

The third Peter Walks on the Water lesson is intended to lead into Lent and offers the opportunity to introduce the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (the Anglican Church of Canada's agency for sustainable development, relief, refugees, and global justice) as part of a parish-wide Lenten observance.

If you are not from the Anglican Church of Canada, feel free to swap out references to the PWRDF with your own church's development agency, a non-denominational agency doing work you value and respect, or a project of your own parish.

If you do not observe Lent, you can simply cut that piece out of the Regrouping section of the lesson and explain where your church will send the money collected under the Helping Hands wreath.

Things to know about this lesson:

- You will need to order any PWRDF resources (coin boxes, brochures, etc) you want to use well in advance – see [www.pwrdf.org/resources](http://www.pwrdf.org/resources).
- You may want to spend some time on the PWRDF website ([www.pwrdf.org](http://www.pwrdf.org)) or on [justGeneration.ca](http://justgeneration.ca), the PWRDF youth initiative, in order to have some current project examples to present to the class.
- A piece of Bristol board will work better for your display than other large sheets of paper – and might even survive for next year's campaign.
- The craft activity in this lesson is adapted from PWRDF's own Sunday school lesson plan which can be downloaded from [http://www.pwrdf.org/fileadmin/fe/files/res\\_09Sundayschool.pdf](http://www.pwrdf.org/fileadmin/fe/files/res_09Sundayschool.pdf).

### **Before the Lesson**

Determine where you will put your PWRDF display and make sure the area is ready.

Gather the PWRDF resources you are going to use.

### **Materials**

- Construction paper in a variety of colours
- pencils
- scissors
- glue
- large piece of poster paper (ideally Bristol board)

### **Open with Prayer**

## **Introduce the Story**

Think of a time when you were really scared or hurt.

Did someone come help you? Who?

How did that make you feel?

Have you ever helped someone when they were scared or hurt?

Today, we're going to read the story about Jesus' disciple, Peter, trying to walk on the water during a storm. It was very scary. Let's think about how Peter must have felt when Jesus helped him.

## **Read the Story (see page 1 – ignore the break)**

### **Discussion**

How did Jesus help Peter? (Jesus gave Peter his hand)

How did Peter feel?

Have you ever helped someone? Have you ever been helped?

When we help other people, we are doing the work Jesus wants us to do. And when we all help, we can make even terrible things better.

## **Introduce the Activity**

Does anyone know what the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (or PWRDF) is?

Explain that it is one way in which the Anglican Church does the work Jesus wants us to do by helping people around the world who do not have the health care or water or education or safety that all people should have. Offer a couple of examples or see the news updates from *justGeneration* for some ideas of aid projects being implemented:

<http://justgeneration.ca/news>

Through PWRDF, we can reach our hands out to the people around the world, just like Jesus reached his hand out to Peter. Do you have any ideas of how we can help PWRDF? (e.g. give money, tell people about it, pray)

## **Helping Hands with PWRDF**

Hand out construction paper and crayons. Ask everyone to trace their hands and cut them out. Help everyone glue their hands onto a large piece of paper, in the shape of a wreath with an opening at the top.

Explain that the opening is for the hands of all the people around the world who are joining us as we try to help people the way that Jesus wants us to.



## Regrouping

Does anyone know what Lent is?

Lent is the season of the church year that comes before Easter. It begins next week, on a special day called Ash Wednesday.

We use Lent as a time to think about the ways that God wants us to live. We admit that we don't always live the right way and we promise to keep trying. We often make one or two special promises – such as not eating sweets or not watching television – as a way to help us remember what we are thinking about. We also often spend more time thinking about and trying to help people who are in need.

This year, our church is going to think about the work that PWRDF is doing and raise money to help them. Our wreath is going to help everyone remember what we are doing.

Label the picture “**Helping Hands with PWRDF**”. Together, set up a display of the wreath, the PWRDF materials your church is using, and a collection box. Encourage students to take the coin boxes home, if appropriate.

## Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the people who work at the PWRDF and for the people who give their money to help them. Help us always remember the people in the world who are hungry or thirsty or sick or in danger and thank you for giving us the ability to help them. Be with them in their need and be with us in our efforts to reach our hands out to them. Amen.