

### ***Are You a Boat-Potato or a Water-Walker?***

**Matt. 14:25-31**

**Intro:** John McNeil reports that he was once the pastor at a church in the British Isles. It was heavily in debt. This worried him greatly and he prayed about it a lot. One day a perfect stranger came to his office. He said that he was aware of the church's financial problems and offered to help. He put a blank check on the pastor's desk and promised to come back later and sign it. The pastor couldn't believe what was happening. After the man left, he began to study the situation. "This can't possibly be true. Does this man realize that our debt is thousands of pounds? I don't think he would pay it in full, if he knew. Yet he told me to make the check out for the full amount. But that would be taking advantage of him. I'll make it out for half." After a great deal of thought, that's what he did. When the stranger returned, he signed the check with no hesitation whatsoever. He obviously had meant what he said. The church's benefactor was actually a well-known philanthropist. When the pastor realized who he was and that he was fully capable of paying the debt in full, he wished he had made out the check for the entire amount the church owed.

I would call this pastor a ***Boat-Potato***. Why? Because his faith was weak and small; he couldn't bring himself to step out of the boat and believe what was happening was actually happening.

A **couch potato** refers to a person who spends most of his/her free time sitting or lying on a couch. This stereotype often refers to lazy and overweight men who watch a lot of television.

Generally speaking, the term refers to a lifestyle in which children or adults don't get enough physical activity.

And for the purpose of this message a ***Boat-potato*** is someone, who given the opportunity to, by faith, do something extraordinary for the Lord chooses rather to stay in the boat.

In our text today we are going to see the difference between a ***Boat-potato and a Wate-walker***.

**[Read Matt 14:25-31/Pray/Dismiss Jr. Ch]**

Let's set the scene. Jesus has just feed 5000 men, beside women and children with 5 loaves and 2 fish. The disciples have gathered up 12 baskets full of leftovers. If you read John's account of this event you will see that after He performed this miracle He *"perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king"* (Jn. 6:15).

He then tells the 12 to get in the boat and head to the other side of the sea while He sent the multitude away. So the 12 get in the boat and they begin rowing. For Peter and his friends to get in the boat was no big deal – they'd been boats their whole life. In fact they probably liked them. But this time a storm blew up, not any minor storm but a great storm. The text tells that the boat was tossed with waves because the wind was contrary and they are fighting just to stay alive

The distance across the sea is about 6 miles so they had rowed about 3 miles – the word *'midst'* means point of no return which in the half way point between to places. The third watch would be sometime around 3 am. Since the Jews distinguished two evenings in each day; the first started at 3pm and run until sundown, the 2<sup>nd</sup> began at sundown. So, since in verse 15 the word evening there would likely refer to the first use and in verse 23 the second use of the word evening would be used. That

means that the 12 had been rowing since sometime around sundown until about 3 am – maybe 12 hrs just to go 3 miles. Not much progress for 12 experienced fisherman.

Now, in the midst of fighting the storm, in the middle of the night appears what they first believe is an “apparition.” The word we translate as “*spirit*” actually means, “*an apparition*” and the text says they were troubled and “*cried out in fear*”. But just like our Savior He showed mercy toward them and he said, “**...Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid**” (V.27).

This brings us to our text, in Peter’s question, the Lord’s response and Peter’s actions we see what it takes to be a **Water-walker Instead of a Boat-potato**

What does it take to be a **Water-walker Instead of a Boat-potato...?**

**A Water-walker is someone who...**

I. **Recognizes The Presence Of The Lord**

- A. The 12 didn’t fully grasp it yet but God was making them a visit.
  1. It is just like our Lord to show up when we least expect Him but in His perfect timing – right in the middle of the storm
  2. Dale Bruner writes, “*according to the Holy Scriptures, human extremity is the frequent meeting place with God.*”
  3. The divinely appointed moments will come to you and me.
  4. You see, He still ask his followers to do extraordinary things

5. If you are not looking for him you just might miss Him and the opportunity to do something extraordinary for Him.
- B. 12 disciples set in that boat that night – we don’t know how the other 11 responded to the Lord’s voice.
  1. May with doubt
  2. Possibly with confusion – they had left Him on the beach
  3. Perhaps with disbelief
  4. Most likely with a bit of all of these.
- C. But one of them, Peter, was about to become a **water-walker**.
  1. He recognized that Jesus was present – even in the most unlikely place
  2. He realized that this was an extraordinary opportunity for a spiritual adventure and real spiritual growth.
  3. So, completely in character he calls out to the Lord “**...Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water**”
  4. Peter decided to do something **spiritual!**
- D. Now I am not so sure that Peter expected the response that he received.
  1. But at least he had the courage to ask
  2. And, as we will see, he had the courage to step out if the Lord bid him come.
- E. We are often challenged to ask God to do something through us:
  1. In a message we will be challenged to pray and ask the Lord to give us an open door to someone this week – someone we can share Christ with.

2. But do we? If we do, do we ask expecting an answer? With a heart willing to do what we ask? A faith large enough to at least try?

F. There were 12 men in that boat that night, 11 were **Boat-potatoes**, I was a **Water-walker**

**A Water-walker is someone who...**

II. **Knows The Difference Between Faith and Foolishness**

- A. Why does the Holy Spirit have Matthew record this detail of Peter calling out to the Lord?
- B. Why doesn't he just have Peter jump over the side of the boat and begin walking as soon as he recognizes that it is Jesus walking on the water?
- C. Because I believe this is a story about more than risk-taking and faith.
  1. It is also about obedience.
  2. Obedience means the **water-walker** has to be able to discern between an authentic call from the Lord and what might just be a foolish impulse
  3. Courage alone is not enough; it must be accompanied by wisdom and discernment
    - a. Wisdom is truth applied correctly
    - b. Discernment is knowing the Lord's voice
- D. Risk-taking is not be glorified here
  1. Jesus is not looking for bungee jumping, hang-gliding, tornado-chasing Pinto drivers
  2. If He was I wouldn't be standing here today
- E. **Water-walking** is not something Peter did for recreation
  1. This is not a story about extreme sports
  2. It is about **extreme discipleship**
- F. **Extreme discipleship** means that before Peter climbs over the side of that boat he better make sure Jesus thinks it's a good idea
- G. So he asks, "**...if it be thou, bid me...**"

- H. I wonder if Jesus didn't have a smile on His face when Peter called out – I can almost see one
  1. Someone actually got out of the boat
  2. Only Peter had enough faith to believe that he too could share in the adventure of a life-time.
  3. He decided he wanted to be part of history's original *water-walk*.
- I. The 11 **boat-potatoes** set and watched as Peter became a **Water-walker**

**A Water-walker is someone who is...**

III. **Willing To Risk Trusting The Lord**

- A. Put yourself in this story
  1. Picture in your mind how violent the storm must have been – it was strong enough to keep seasoned professionals struggling just to keep from capsizing.
  2. Imagine the size of the waves, the strength of the wind, the darkness – I would have had to take Dramamine!
  3. These are the conditions under which Peter was going to get out of the boat.
  4. It would have been hard enough to try to walk on water when the water was calm, the sun bright and the air still – but in the middle of a storm in the middle of the night!
- B. Put yourself in Peter's place for a moment.
  1. You have this sudden insight into what Jesus is doing – the Lord is coming to us walking on the water.
  2. He is inviting you to accompany Him on an adventure of a life time
  3. But, at the same time your scared to death
  4. What would you choose – water or boat?

- a. The boat seems safe, secure and comfortable, but...
  - b. The water is rough
  - c. The waves high
  - d. The wind strong
  - e. There is a storm
  - f. If I you get out of the boat – whatever your boat might be – there is a good change you could sink
5. If you don't get out of the boat, there's a guaranteed certainty that you will never walk on the water
- C. If you want to walk on water you have to get out of the boat.
- D. I believe that down deep inside each and everyone of us is a person who wants more out of life than simply setting in the boat being *a boat-potato*
1. We were made for something more than merely avoiding failure
  2. There is something inside you that really wants to walk on water – to leave the comfort of routine existence and abandon yourself to the adventure of following the Lord completely sold out for His Kingdom
- E. What is your boat?
1. Your fear will tell you
  2. Ask yourself this question: *What is it that most produces fear in me – especially when I think of leaving it behind and stepping out in faith?*
  3. **ILL:** For a man named David it was his vocation. He was a builder for 35 years; he was in his 50's. But he was burdened his entire life that God was calling him into fulltime ministry.

He has applied save to the conscience by giving a lot of money to his church and missions and doing as many projects as he could around the church. But he can't shake the haunting fear that he has missed his calling. He's afraid that it's too late for him to "get out of the boat".

4. Your boat might be...
- a. A relationship that you know is bad for you but you fear letting go
  - b. Maybe it's secrecy, you have a bad habit that know one knows about
  - c. It could be a parent. You raise your children; take care of your house and work hard at your career but all you really want is the approval of that mom or dad.
  - d. It could be success or financial security. That was the case for the rich young ruler. Jesus asked him to get out of the boat – **"...go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven..."** but the Bible says the rich ruler, **"...went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."** He wouldn't get out of the boat.
- F. What's your boat?
1. In what area of your life are you shrinking back from fully and courageously trusting God?
  2. Fear will tell you what your boat is.
  3. Leaving it may be the hardest thing you will ever do.

4. But if you want to be a **Water-walker** instead of a **boat-potato** then **you have to get out of the boat**

**A Water-walker is someone who...**

**IV. Knows Where to Turn When Trouble Comes**

**A. There will be Problems when we water-walk**

1. Peter goes to the side of the boat
  - a. The **boat-potatoes**, the other 11, are watching
  - b. They have seen Peter shoot off his mouth before – a lot
  - c. They wonder how far he'll take this thing
2. He put one foot over the side, carefully gripping the edge of the boat
  - a. Then the other foot
  - b. He's holding on with grim determination and white knuckles
  - c. Then he does something real **spiritual** – he lets go
  - d. He abandons himself utterly to the power of Jesus
  - e. Suddenly, almost unexpectedly, for the first time in human history, an ordinary human being is walking – standing – on water.
3. For a while it's as if only Peter and Jesus are there on the water
  - a. Peter is beaming with delight
  - b. Jesus is thrilled with His **water-walking** student
  - c. *Like master, like disciple*
4. Then it happens – Peter “...**saw the wind**...”

- a. Reality sets in, and I can only guess what went through his mind, “*What was I thinking?*”
  - b. He realizes that he is walking on water, in the middle of a storm – there is no boat holding him up
  - c. It terrifies him
5. Nothing has really change though
    - a. The storm shouldn't come as a surprise – its been there all along
    - b. The water – it hasn't changed if is just a wet and tossed as it was when he was still in the boat
    - c. What changed was Peter's focus changed from the Savior to the Storm
  6. We all know the feeling of seeing the wind
    - a. We begin a new adventure full of hope:
      - 1) Maybe a knew job
      - 2) Maybe you're testing an area of spiritual giftedness
      - 3) Maybe you're trying to serve God in a new way
    - b. At the beginning you are full of faith – it's clear blue skies, calm seas and everything is cool
    - c. Then reality sets in
      - 1) You have setbacks
      - 2) There is opposition
      - 3) Unexpected obstacles
      - 4) You see the wind
    - d. It should be expected – the world's a pretty stormy place

- e. But trouble still has the power to catch us by surprise.

#### B. **There is Risk is inherent with Water-walking**

1. Because of the wind some people chose to be **Boat-potatoes** all their lives – they never take a change and get out of the boat.
  - a. If you get out of the boat you will face the wind and the storm
  - b. But you might as well know now, there is no guarantee that life as a **Boat-potato** is going to be any safer
2. **ILL:** Eileen Guder wrote:  
*“You can live on bland food so as to avoid an ulcer, drink no tea or coffee or other stimulants in the name of health, go to bed early, stay away from night life, avoid all controversial subjects so as never to give offense, mind your own business, avoid involvement in other people’s problems, spend money only on necessities and save all you can.*

*You can still break your neck in the bath tub, and it will serve you right.”*

#### C. **Failure is part of Getting out of the Boat**

1. **ILL:** Larry Laudan, a philosopher of science, has spent the last decade studying risk-management. He writes that we live in a society so fear-driven that we suffer from what he calls *risk-lock* – a condition which, like gridlock, leaves us unable to do anything or go anywhere. He summarizes literature on risk management in 19 principles. The first principle is the simplest: **Everything is risky**

- a. You can stay home in bed – but that may make you one of the half-million Americans who require emergency room treatment each year for injuries sustained while falling out of bed.
  - b. You can cover your windows – but that may make you one of the ten people a year who accidentally hang themselves on cords of their venetian blinds.
  - c. You can hide you money in a mattress – but that may make you one of the tens of thousands of the people who got to the emergency room each year because of wounds caused by handling money – everything from paper cuts to (for the extremely wealthy) hernias.
2. If you step to the plate sometimes you are going to strike out.
  3. But if you don’t step to the plate, you will never know the glory of what it is to hit a home run.

#### D. **But the true Water-walker knows where to turn**

1. As soon as Peter began to sink
2. He cried out **“Lord save me.”**
3. What a great cry
4. Have you ever cried that cry?
5. Verse 31 is such a comforting verse, **“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him...”**
6. The fact that I know that Jesus is standing there on the water waiting to catch me makes getting out of the boat so much easier.

**Conclusion:** This world is full of danger and we are all going to fail from time to time We can choose to be a **boat-potato** and set back and play it safe – of course we will never fail and we will be able to avoid problems but then we will pay the greatest price that only a **boat-potato** will pay – we will never grow.

A water walker is willing to **Trust the Lord** because he knows that it will produce real, long lasting and life changing growth

A water walker is willing to **Trust the Lord** because he knows that he serves a Big God

When Peter stepped over the side of that boat I know in my heart that he was not absolutely certain that the water would hold him up. I also know that Peter knew that if he remained in the boat and chose to become a **Boat-potato** that he would never accomplish anything for the Lord.

You see **Boat-potatoes** are the people who calculate the risk in everything they do. When I challenge you to pray and ask the Lord to bring you an opportunity tomorrow for you to share your faith they can find 15 reasons why they cannot for fear of losing their jobs

When it comes time for faith promise and I begin to challenge you to pray and ask the Lord how much He wants them to give to missions each week, start their prayer by looking at their check book to see how much is left over each week.

When it comes to tithing they are the ones who say, *“If I start tithing I don’t see how I could pay my bills.”*

**Boat-potatoes** stay in the boat...

Don’t you want to be a **Water-walker**? Remember, ***If You Want To Walk On Water You Have To Get Out Of The Boat!***

You may be here to day and you have never cried out *“Lord save me”*

If not then why wait?

Do it to day; when the invitation is given won’t you come?