

Have you ever had an embarrassing moment? Of course you have. We all have. Maybe it was a word you misspoke, or a situation you misread, or an action you'd like to do over. But we've all been there – done that!

My most embarrassing moment in life occurred when I was 14 yrs old and I bungled a punt. I've shared this story before. The ball was kicked, I looked up to spot the ball, I looked down to see if I had time to return it, I looked up... and there was no ball... only light. The next thing I know, the ball hit me on top of my helmet – bouncing 10 ft. up in the air... and by time the play was over – the other team (our rivals) had recovered the ball and we lost the game. Not a proud moment in life – of which I still get reminded even today.

Embarrassment is that sense of emotional discomfort and self-consciousness before others where you feel exposed, awkward, and possibly humiliated for having a social faux pas or undesirable moment that's witnessed by others.

But what about **spiritual embarrassment**? Have you ever been so heavenly-minded we were no earthly good? Have you ever done things in Jesus' name that have had nothing to do w/ Jesus? Have you ever told others you're forgiven only to be unforgiving?

I read a story about Soren Kierkegaard, the outspoken philosopher who was critical of the church. Once he was told by some shocked churchgoers that their church had used the sanctuary to host a dance for some teenagers. Kierkegaard replied, “Using the church for a dance on Saturday isn’t half as bad as using it on Sunday AM to make a fool out of God.”

I don’t know about you, but I winced a little when I read this story b/c I thought about the times I’ve been so zealous for the Gospel that I was insensitive to the leading of the H.S. and inadvertently did some foolish things in God’s name.

Truth is b/c of this thing we have called *flesh*, even though we’ve been rescued from sin by God’s grace, we’ve all acted in ways that we’ve embarrassed ourselves in our faith. And we’re not the only ones do so. Even the disciples said and did things that brought them embarrassment. But of all the disciples, Peter was more capable at embarrassing himself than the others. And having just finished a study in 1st Peter, I thought we’d take a few weeks to look into the life of this impulsive disciple. See **Matthew 14:22-32**.

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side... Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves b/c the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on

the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” Peter replied, “Lord, if it’s you, tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

It’d be easy to jump on Peter faith failure, but the truth is Peter has done something no other human has ever done – ***he walked on water***. It’d also be easy to scoff at the disciples who sat in the boat and watched.

Now I’m far more impressed w/ Peter than w/ the other 11 – yet from all of them, we learn the same things – **we can embarrass ourselves in the faith when we claim to trust Jesus in faith but operate in our flesh**. When we say we trust God but allow fear to bring paralysis to our faith.

The Christian life is a life of faith not flesh. It’s a life of trust/obey and not I’ll do it my way. There’s not one verse in Scripture that invites us to live the Christian life in our own ability/ingenuity but only under the influence of the H.S.

For we live by faith and not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

W/out faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe He exists and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11:6

Let's have a moment of confession. Who's ever approached their faith in the flesh? Who's ever sat in the boat in fear like the disciples w/ paralysis by analysis? Who's ever stepped out in faith only to sink in flesh? **Now that we have that out of the way, let's look at what Peter did so we can learn how to have a faith that works.**

**I Faith Takes Personal INITIATIVE
Flesh Sits in the Boat INTIMIDATED**

When Peter and the disciples were in the boat being tossed by the waves and they saw Jesus walking towards them – at first they were afraid thinking it was a ghost. But Jesus said, "*Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.*" Notice Peter response, "*Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you...*"

Did you see it? Peter didn't just sit the boat, he took faith initiative. Now I'm not sure if Peter realized it was safer on the water w/ Jesus than in the boat w/ the disciples, or if he was just wanted to see if he could walk on water, but what is certain is he asked Jesus if he could join Him on the water. We also see that while the other disciples were silent, Peter said, "Lord, I'm ready to take a big step of faith."

NOTICE – What was it that got Peter to take such a step of faith? **The antecedent was FEAR.** As they were being tossed by the wind thinking they'd seen a ghost, the Bible says, they all "*cried out in fear.*" (v. 26)

Can you imagine? A boat full of grown men crying b/c they saw something they didn't recognize on the water! This wasn't their first boat ride; nor was it their 1st time to experience rough seas – they were trained fishermen. And yet they were terrified. But look at Peter's response to fear: "Lord, I'm ready to step out in faith. I'm ready for the impossible. I'm ready for a miracle! Can I come to you?"

In the face of fear we all have a choice – we can choose to trust God or we can trust ourselves or others. Peter took the initiative and said, "*Lord, my circumstances might look grim, so I'm going to get out of the boat and stand w/ you.*"

Let's get real? There are some here today whose lives are racked by fear – the fear of the unknown, the fear of a failing marriage, the fear of losing a child, or the fear of financial disaster or failing health. Peter says the way to respond to fear is by stepping out in faith to trust in God instead of man.

If you want to take your faith to the next level, stand up in the face of your fears and express to God your willingness to step out in faith. Settle it in your own heart/mind and say to God: I'm ready to take a step of faith. Tell me what to do."

II Faith Responds to God's INVITATION Flesh Relaxes in IGNORANCE

After taking initiative to trust God, Peter waited on the Lord to invite him on the water.

Peter replied "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water." Jesus responded, "Come." Then Peter got out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

This is so important. Peter didn't just jump out of the boat – he waited on Jesus to call him. That's how we're supposed to follow Jesus. The problem is this isn't what we do...

A We JUMP Ahead of God

Sometimes we don't wait for God to give us the "go ahead". Instead, we jump 1st and maybe pray 2nd. We live each day as if it's God's job to keep us from drowning – and we get mad at Him if He doesn't bless our mess or bail us out.

B We PROCRASTINATE Following God

Sometimes we say, "Lord, tell me what to do." And He says, "Come..." And we say, "I'm listening God, just tell me what to do." He says, "Come..." And we say, "I'm seeking your will, Lord. If you want to me to get out of the boat – give me a sign – then I'll know it's really You."

C We Place CONDITIONS on God

Sometimes we say, "Lord, tell me what to do." And he says, "Come to me on the water." And we say, "Ok, Lord. But can you first create some stepping stones on the lake to support me? I realize it's not the same as walking on the water, but think of the glory you'll receive when people hear of the miraculous stones you created in answer to my prayers!"

I did this when I sensed God calling me to pastor. At first I told God I'd pastor if he'd let me go and be an XP or teaching pastor first. Then I told Him I'd pastor if he'd put me in a certain size church. I'm sure all the angels in heaven were laughing at my conditions.

D We TAKE a Poll

Can you imagine Peter turning to the other 11 and asking if they thought if he should get out of the boat? I can. And I'm certain there wouldn't have been consensus.

Sometimes, instead of talking to God, we turn to others for their advice. And almost every time I see people seeking advice from those who couldn't pick Jesus out of a line up.

So the question is – **how do we get the go-ahead?** Since Jesus isn't physically here talking to you as he was w/ Peter, how can we know when he's telling us to step out in faith?

While God can speak to us through a multitude of channels – His preferred way is through His Word. For me, at least 90% of the time, I get the "go-ahead" from the Bible. When I spend time in Scripture, God often speaks directly into my life. A particular verse or story will get my attention, and the H.S. will put His finger on the very issue I need direction or whisper in my spiritual ears w/ a voice of conviction.

But in the instance God speaks to me thru others or thru some set of circumstances, it's critical to remember that whatever they say has to line us in agreement w/ what God has revealed already in Scripture. **He will never tell you to do anything that contradicts his Word.**

REMEMBER – *Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word (rhema) of Christ.* Romans 10:17

III Faith Seeks God's INTERVENTION Flesh Settles for INDEPENDENCE

Once you've stepped out in faith you can be certain the storm is going to be rough. And it'd be easy for us to take our eyes off of Jesus and put them on our circumstances. And should focus on the storm then we find ourselves sinking – or we can do what Peter did and ask God for help or we can trust in ourselves to our own demise. **Yet even in the midst of sinking, Peter modeled what we should do – we should turn to Jesus!**

But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.

In this story, we often focus on the fact that Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began looking at the wind which resulted in him sinking. And that was true – when we take our eyes off Jesus we too will begin to sink. So the mini-lesson here is – **don't take your eyes off Jesus**. But in the instance that you do – ask for help immediately!

Truly, my hope for every one of us is that we live each day w/ our eyes fixed on Jesus paying no attention to the wind and the waves around us. If we do, we'll never sink; and walking on the water will be easy. But the fact is we're as human as Peter – and just like him, we're just as likely to step out in faith and panic, by looking at the wind, than we are to keep our eyes on Jesus. So when it happens, like Peter, our immediate response must be – *Lord, save me!*

Peter might've taken his eyes off Jesus; but it didn't take him long to get his focus back where it should be. The second he began to sink he said – *Lord save me!* Isn't that the great thing about living by faith; it keeps us focused on Jesus. When we step out in faith, we know better than to depend on ourselves. When we step out in faith, we know better than to flirt w/ sin. **B/c when we step out in faith, we know if Jesus doesn't hold us up – nothing will.**

If you step out in faith and you suddenly begin to sink, the solution isn't to admit failure and swim back to the boat. The solution is to immediately cry out to Jesus for help.

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him – saying, "You of little faith why did you doubt?" v. 31

Important. What happened b/w the time Jesus caught Peter and they climbed into the boat? *They walked back to the boat together* – w/ Jesus holding up Peter.

This past week Meg and I were talking about how we so often buy the lie that we can live the Christian life in our own ingenuity and ability. She commented that one of the reasons this happens is b/c we've bought into the idea that:

- *God helps those who help themselves*
- *God will never give you more than you can handle*
- *If God brings you to it He will lead you through it*
- *If you work hard God will make you successful*
- *Follow your heart and believe, and you can do anything*

Do you know what all of these statements have in common other than they're not in the Bible? They're all based on our ability/ingenuity instead of on our faith/obedience to God.

We embarrass ourselves when we live the Christian life in our flesh when it can only truly be lived by faith.