

PASTOR'S CLASS...SUNDAY, MAY 23, 2010...10:45AM...PARLOR

GATHERING...ANYBODY NEW?...PRAYER TIME WITH JOYS AND CONCERNS

If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat

By John Ortberg A Six-Week Journey on Learning to Trust God

SESSION SIX: "Learning to Wait on Our Big God"

"When human beings get out of the boat, they are never quite the same....Every time you walk on the water, each time you trust God and seek to discern and obey his calling on your life, your God will get bigger, and your worship will grow deeper, richer, and stronger."

INTRODUCTION—Show brief DVD introduction from John Ortberg based on Matthew 14:22-26 and water-walking.

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUP DIALOGUE

1. When in your life has God seemed unbelievably big to you? Why?
2. What do you think it means to wait on the Lord...especially in our fast-paced, horn-honking lives?

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Things to listen and look for: (1) What keeps us from getting out of the boat? (2) How big is your God? (3) God gives us strength to walk with him (Isaiah 40:29-31). (4) God is always watching, protecting, and asking: "Will you trust me and get out of the boat?"

VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS and RELATED QUESTIONS

1. What kinds of things can keep us from fully trusting God?

2. Why, as John Ortberg explains, does Christ get “bigger” the more we trust him?
3. If we really believe that God is always with us, backing us up in the midst of our difficulties (even when we have to wait), how does that belief change the way we live?

WORDS TO THE LARGER GROUP

Would you consider this thought from John Ortberg: “...the way we live is a consequence of the size of our God.” Perhaps, our God is too small. We are not convinced that we are absolutely safe in the hands of a fully competent, all-knowing, ever-present God. That is why so many of us live as if everything depends on us.

The Bible tells us in so many places to “not worry or be fearful” (See Matthew 6:25-34 & I Peter 5:7) because it does not add meaning to our lives. We are first live for the Kingdom of God through Christ, “and all things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6: 25 &33).

The Bible tells us that we are made stronger during times of weakness and trials (II Corinthians 12:9-10) because we learn to trust God’s grace and love and strength—not our own.

The Bible tells us that our big, giant God cares enough to watch out for us and will act on our behalf especially when we are hurting. (See Psalm 9:10; I John 5:14-15)

Worship in Perspective

Worship is a word for the process by which we come to perceive and declare the vastness, worthiness, and strength of God. John Ortberg explains worship this way: “Worship is not about filling God’s unmet ego needs. God has made us so that when we experience something transcendentally great, we have a need to praise it. . . . We worship God not so much because he needs it, but because we do.” In other words, worship is a recognition that God is “sooo big!”

So why is it important to worship God?

- Without worship, we forget that we have a big God beside us and live in fear.
- Without worship, we forget God’s calling and begin to live in a spirit of self-reliance and stubborn independence.
- Without worship, we lose our sense of wonder and gratitude to God. We plod through life with blinders on, unaware of God’s work in our lives.
- Our understanding of God grows as we reflect on what God has done and respond in worship.

Just because we step out of the boat, doesn't mean we'll have smooth sailing. Sometimes, we have to wait, and sometimes we have to wait through a storm in the dark. During the wait, it's more important to keep our eyes focused on our great, big God, who always gives us hope (see Hebrews 10:23). I believe God is always accomplishing something important while we wait, so what we do while we wait is significant. Waiting is part of the process of becoming what God wants us to be.

PERSONAL JOURNEY

When we step out of the boat and walk with God, anything can happen. We may soar, but that's not the only way we walk with God. Isaiah 40:31 describes soaring, but it also describes running and not being weary and walking but not fainting. Although we might think that soaring is the only way to go, God might have a different idea. His purposes may require that we run or walk.

1. Which of the following verbs from Isaiah 40:31 best describes you in your walk with God right now?

You're soaring. Things are great spiritually. You find yourself borne up by God's power. You are out of the boat. God is answering your prayers, using you in special ways. You are productive in your life's work and flooded with strength and wisdom beyond your ability.

You're able to run and not be weary. Life is challenging, with few miracles. But you are running the race with persistence and determination. You feel stretched but also feel God's pleasure in your obedience. You continue to run—faithfully serving, obeying, giving, and praying.

You're walking but not fainting. You are hanging on to God but don't seem to be fruitful or productive. You are hardly triumphant, but you won't let go. You keep obeying God and putting one foot in front of the other. You refuse to quit even though you stumble.

CONSIDERING WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW, WHAT DOES THE NEXT STEP OUT OF THE BOAT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

WOULD YOU WRITE THE WORD OR PHRASE DOWN ON THE PICTURE OF THE BOAT?



CLOSING TIME OF DEDICATION AND PRAYER

We each have the opportunity of a lifetime to get out of the boat and walk with God. No matter how much we know about God, or how much we have experienced with him, getting out of the boat is still a big step. There's always risk and the possibility of failure, but it's the only way we'll ever get to soar!

NEXT WEEK: "Everybody's Normal Till You get To Know Them" John Ortberg