Ready to use all-age service

# Jesus walks on water

### MEETING AIM

To discover that Jesus is amazing!

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 14:22-33

### BACKGROUND

This service is designed to be used with a congregation in a church building. However, with some adaptation, you should be able to use it on Zoom or other video conferencing software.

Younger children will probably happily accept that Jesus can walk on water. They are told that Jesus is amazing and powerful, so why shouldn’t he be able to do this? This acceptance of Jesus’ nature and power can teach adults much about faith and trust in Jesus. Help your congregation to approach this story with a childlike faith and with a sense of awe and wonder. Try to facilitate an atmosphere of intergenerational discovery, so that all ages can learn from each other.

## **WELCOME** – 5 mins

As people join your service, welcome them and ask them about their week. Try to have a mix of ages and backgrounds on your welcome team.

## **OPENING ACTIVITIES** – 10 mins

**OPTION ONE:** Amazing animals
**You will need:** video of animals that can walk on water, such as [this one](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJ__rbsytjI), and the means to show it

Show the video of the animals that can walk on water. If you’re using the suggested video, then get the congregation to vote on which one of the five they like the best or think is the most amazing.

**OPTION TWO:** Testimony
**You will need:** a volunteer with a story about Jesus doing something amazing in their life

Before the service, find a volunteer with a story of when Jesus did something amazing in their life. It could be a healing or a time when he appeared to them. It could be when he sent someone to intervene or brought about an answer to prayer. Check the story with the volunteer beforehand, so you are sure that it is appropriate for an intergenerational setting and that they are confident in telling it.

Ask the volunteer to share their story with the congregation, prompting them with questions if needed.

## **BIBLE STORY** – 10 mins

**You will need:** cardboard (such as opened-up boxes); sticks (such as garden canes); an electric fan; scissors; strong sticky tape (such as gaffer tape); volunteers to play the parts

Before the service, make a boat out of cardboard that is big enough to hold three or four people. All you need are the sides of the boat – you don’t need a bottom – so that its occupants can stand in it and hold the boat up around them. Cut some wave shapes from cardboard and tape each one to stick. Ask one volunteer to be Jesus, one to be Peter and two or three to be the other disciples in the boat. Give another volunteer the electric fan. You don’t need to rehearse this, the volunteers can improvise as you tell this story:

*Start with all the volunteers at the front of your meeting space, with the boat in front of your stage area.*

Jesus had just fed a huge crowd made up of 5,000 men, and even more women and children. He told the crowd to go home, and he sent the disciples out in their boat to cross Lake Galilee. Jesus went up a hill to pray.

*Peter and the disciples should get into the boat, pick it up and sail (walk) down one of the aisles into the congregation. Jesus should stay at the front (if you have a raised platform such as a pulpit, he can climb up that).*

By the evening, the disciples were a long way from the shore and the boat was being rocked by the wind and waves.

*Get the volunteer with the fan to stand in front of the boat and switch it on, directing it into the disciples’ faces. Give the people sitting in the congregation on either side of the boat the waves on sticks and encourage them to move them up and down to show how choppy the lake was. The disciples should stagger back and forth.*

Just before dawn, Jesus came down the mountain and started to walk towards them, on the surface of the lake. *Jesus does this, walking down the aisle towards the boat.* The disciples saw him and were terrified – they didn’t know it was Jesus or what was happening. *The disciples should look at Jesus and act out being terrified. They should shout: “It’s a ghost!”*

But Jesus told them: “Don’t be afraid! It’s me!”

Peter said: “If it’s really you, order me to get out of the boat and come to you.”

“Come on, then,” said Jesus. Peter got out of the boat and started walking on the water. *Peter does so.* He was going well, until he noticed the wind and the waves. He was afraid and began to sink.

“Help me!” he shouted to Jesus. Jesus reached out his hand and helped him back into the boat. *Jesus helps Peter back into the boat.* “Why did you doubt?” he asked Peter. When Jesus got into the boat, the wind and waves became calm. *The volunteer with the fan should turn it off and those with waves should hold them still.*

The disciples were amazed and worshipped Jesus, saying: “Truly you’re the Son of God!”

## **SMALL GROUPS** – 10 mins

**You will need:** large sheet of paper (such as a length of lining paper); marker pens; Bibles

Encourage people to discuss these questions in mixed-age groups. They should get one of their group to lie on the paper, and draw around them. Then they should fill the paper with all the things they can think of that describe who Jesus is.

Give the groups time to think of what they might write and chat about their ideas, referring to the Bible passage if they need to.

## **REVIEW** – 5 mins

**You will need:** roving mic (if needed)

Get some feedback on the discussions from ‘Small groups’, using a microphone to hear people’s contributions if your meeting space is large.

## **RESPONSE ACTIVITIES** – 10 mins

Set these three activities up in different parts of your meeting space or in different breakout rooms.

**OPTION ONE:** Discussion
**You will need:** volunteers to facilitate discussion; paper and pens

Gather people together in small groups, each one with a facilitator, and challenge them to think about the impact that what they have discovered today will have.

**OPTION TWO:** Paper boat
**You will need:** paper; felt-tip pens

Encourage people to make a simple paper boat (you can find instructions online, or just get people to use their creativity to make their own). On the boat, they should write on what they want to say to Jesus this morning. What does it mean to them that Jesus can do amazing things?

**OPTION THREE: Active response
You will need: masking tape**

Mark out a line on the floor with the tape. Ask people to stand on one side of the tape, and say that this represents the boat. Say that sometimes Jesus is calling us to get out of the boat and trust him, just as Peter did, before he started to doubt. Give people time to think about an area in their lives where they need to step out and trust Jesus. Ask them, when they’re ready, to step across the line into the water.

## **CLOSING** – 5 mins

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share anything from the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

**ALEX TAYLOR**is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children’s Work*.