



SMALL · PRAYERFUL · AVAILABLE · RELATIONAL · KERYGMATIC

## SPARKLER 2: Come to the Water

Leaders can invite their group to a gathering by a body of water or on a boat, or just to a simple get-together. The gathering is deliberately relaxed, with a short presentation and even a song for you to play. Our hope is that you enjoy your time together as a group, reflecting on how Jesus walks with us through the storms of our lives.

The Discussion Questions are in blue. You can pose them within the presentation or save them until the end, depending on what your group prefers.

**Opening Prayer:** God of all creation, including the deepest oceans and the smallest brooks, we thank you for the gift of your son, who walks with us in raging storms and calms the mighty waters. May our hearts well up in gratitude, and may we grow closer to you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Opening Joke:

Jesus, Moses, and an old man go golfing.

The first one to tee off is Moses. He smashes the ball, and it is heading right for the water hazard by the green. Moses raises his club, the water parts, and the ball makes it to the green.

Jesus gets up to swing and cranks it out. As it is heading for the water hazard, Jesus closes his eyes and prays. The ball skips across the water and lands on the green, two feet from the hole.



ST. MARY MAGDALEN  
WITNESSING TO THE RESURRECTION

The old man's turn comes, and he drives the ball. It looks like it is going to drop directly in the water. A fish jumps from the water hazard and swallows the ball just as an eagle drops from the sky, grabbing the fish. As the eagle flies over the green, a bolt of lightning strikes the eagle, making it drop the fish. As the fish hits the green, it spits out the ball, which drops into the hole, making a hole in one. Jesus looks at Moses and says, "I really think I'm leaving Dad at home next time!"

**Opening Question:** What is your favorite way to spend time by the water?

**Presentation:** Much of Jesus' ministry was spent around water because he was often in the area around the Sea of Galilee. This lake is about 65 square miles, which is about half the size of the city of Detroit. We hear many stories of life around a lake, especially because fishing was so vital to the region. A favorite is the story of Jesus walking on water.

This takes place immediately after Jesus feeds the multitudes with fishes and loaves. Jesus demonstrates God's abundant love for us through satisfying our needs and nourishing our bodies and souls. He then sends his disciples across the lake in a boat as he goes up on the mountain to pray. Later that night, when the exhausted disciples are miles away from him, a sudden storm hits. Because of the geography of the area, storms can arise quickly and without warning. Small boats can be in immediate danger. We hear this account from Matthew:

Matthew 14:22-33

Then he made the disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening, he was there alone. Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear. At once [Jesus] spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how [strong] the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink,



ST. MARY MAGDALEN  
WITNESSING TO THE RESURRECTION

he cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” After they got into the boat, the wind died down. Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, “Truly, you are the Son of God.”

Matthew mentions that Jesus came to the disciples during the “fourth watch.” The fourth watch is from 3am-6am. It is the darkest time before dawn. It is the time when our bodies are the most tired and when we sleep the best, deepest sleep. It also represents that time when we are most uncomfortable; when we have lost all hope. We are most adrift, most “at sea.”

However, the fourth watch also represents the time when God manifests God’s self, doing God’s best work!

Here are some examples:

- When Moses leads the Israelites through the Red Sea, it is during the night watch that the wind blows to create dry land for the Israelites to cross safely.
- It is overnight that Samuel hears God calling his name four separate times.
- It is during the night watch that the angels appear to the shepherds in the field, announcing the birth of Jesus.
- It is implied that Jesus rises from the dead during the night watch, right before Mary Magdalen approaches the tomb near dawn.

This is God’s time, the time of miracles.

- [Have you had times of despair in the fourth watch? Did God come to you?](#)
- [Is it reassuring that this is known as “God’s time?” Does it help to feel less alone in times of lost hope?](#)

When the disciples see Jesus approaching on the water, they are terrified. In true human nature, their first reaction is one of doubt. They don’t recognize Jesus because they were not looking for him to be there with them in their time of struggle. It shows us how hard it is for fear and faith to live in the same heart, as fear frequently blinds us to the presence of the Lord.

Fear of the Lord is one of the Spiritual Gifts from the Holy Spirit. This is a different type of fear and should be thought of as *Wonder and Awe of the majesty of God*. This is a type of fear that should be encouraged, as it will result in blessings.



ST. MARY MAGDALEN  
WITNESSING TO THE RESURRECTION

But a “spirit of fear” can hinder our walk with the Lord. 2 Timothy 1:7 says that “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love.” We must look to the Lord for help in overcoming this type of fear.

- Where does fear get in your way of seeing Jesus in your life? Where are you blind to him?
- When Peter had faith, he could walk on water. When he had fear, he sank. Is fear controlling your decision making? What might set you free?

In our lives, we are all buffeted by storms. The chaos of life, hard times, times when we feel incredibly lost and alone. Just as Jesus came to the disciples across the water from miles away, Jesus always comes to us in the storms of life. He may not come when we think he should, because he knows when we need him the most. Jesus waited until the disciples were as far as possible from land, when they were removed from every human hope. That is why he showed up then. And he walks on the water to show them that the very thing they were afraid of, the roaring sea, was merely the way he was able to reach them.

- Often, we fear the difficult experiences of life, the storms such as illness, loss of loved ones, or financial difficulties, only to realize that these are the experiences that can bring us closer to Jesus. Has your relationship with Jesus grown deeper through the hardships of your life? (That was a long question. You might need to read that again!)
- We are called to invite Jesus into our crazy, chaos-filled storms in order to bring calm even when we don’t understand how. How easy for us is that?

Jesus calls to us to have faith. “Do not be afraid,” he says. Peter replies to Jesus, inviting Jesus to command him. Peter steps out in faith and walks on the water to Jesus. The storm continues raging around Peter, but Peter doesn’t feel it anymore while his eyes are on Jesus. Imagine how he must feel at that moment! But then human nature takes over again, and he looks away, sinking into the waves. He cries out for Jesus to save him, which Jesus does. Even when we are not perfect in being faithful, Jesus is always there to rescue us. He helps us along the path as we get better and better at keeping that faith.

- Do you ask Jesus to lead you? What is the result?
- Are there areas in your life where you are not inviting Jesus to command you?



ST. MARY MAGDALEN  
WITNESSING TO THE RESURRECTION

- Don't take your eyes off Jesus, especially when life is a storm. Are your eyes on Jesus? How does this affect the storm around you, either way?
- What distracts you or makes you take your eyes off the prize?
- Faith is simply taking the next step, whether on land or on water! What next step have you been invited to take?
- Faith encourages us to notice where Jesus is at work in our lives. Does this get easier with practice?

**Discussion Questions:** (These are the same questions as above.)

- Have you had times of despair in the fourth watch? Did God come to you?
- Is it reassuring that this is known as "God's time?" Does it help to feel less alone in times of lost hope?
- Where does fear get in your way of seeing Jesus in your life? Where are you blind to him?
- When Peter had faith, he could walk on water. When he had fear, he sank. Is fear controlling your decision making? What might set you free?
- Often, we fear the difficult experiences of life, the storms such as illness, loss of loved ones, or financial difficulties, only to realize that these are the experiences that can bring Jesus closer to us. Has your relationship with Jesus grown deeper through the hardships of your life? (That was a long question. You might need to read that again!)
- We are called to invite Jesus into our crazy, chaos-filled storms in order to bring calm even when we don't understand how. How easy for us is that?
- Do you ask Jesus to lead you? What is the result?
- Are there areas in your life where you are not inviting Jesus to command you?
- Don't take your eyes off Jesus, especially when life is a storm. Are your eyes on Jesus? How does this affect the storm around you, either way?
- What distracts you or makes you take your eyes off the prize?
- Faith is simply taking the next step, whether on land or on water! What next step have you been invited to take?
- Faith encourages us to notice where Jesus is at work in our lives. Does this get easier with practice?



ST. MARY MAGDALEN  
WITNESSING TO THE RESURRECTION

**Play song:** *Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)* Hillsong

Links follow the descriptions of the song version. Or go to Youtube.com. Search: "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail) BYU Noteworthy." There are two versions of this. They are almost 6 minutes long.

The first one has the group of women standing in water.

(<https://youtu.be/a8d7yrKK1X4>)

The second is an ocean view. (<https://youtu.be/1cqkDNDxoVA>)

Either will do if you are only listening. If you are watching as well as listening, the ocean view one is better. Reminder: There may be an ad before the video plays.

## Intentions

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, we thank you for our time together. We praise you and ask your blessing to come upon each of us. We lift up our intentions to you, knowing that you love us and want what is best for us. We invite you into the storms of our lives. Calm us and help us grow in faith. As the disciples did in the boat, we give you homage, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God." Amen.



ST. MARY MAGDALEN  
WITNESSING TO THE RESURRECTION

*Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)* (Hillsong) lyrics:

You call me out upon the waters  
The great unknown  
Where feet may fail  
And there I find You in the mystery  
In oceans deep  
My faith will stand

And I will call upon Your name  
And keep my eyes above the waves  
When oceans rise  
My soul will rest in Your embrace  
For I am Yours  
You are mine

Your grace abounds in deepest waters  
Your sovereign hand  
Will be my guide  
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me  
You've never failed  
And You won't start now

And I will call upon Your name  
And keep my eyes above the waves  
When oceans rise  
My soul will rest in Your embrace  
For I am Yours  
And You are mine, oh

(And you are mine, oh)

Jesus, oh. You are mine.

Spirit lead me where my trust is without  
borders

Let me walk upon the waters  
Wherever You would call me  
Take me deeper than my feet could ever  
wander  
And my faith will be made stronger  
In the presence of my Savior

Spirit lead me where my trust is without  
borders  
Let me walk upon the waters  
Wherever You would call me  
Take me deeper than my feet could ever  
wander  
And my faith will be made stronger  
In the presence of my Savior

Spirit lead me where my trust is without  
borders  
Let me walk upon the waters  
Wherever You would call me  
Take me deeper than my feet could ever  
wander  
And my faith will be made stronger  
In the presence of my Savior

Yeah-yeah-yeah-yeah

And I will call upon Your name  
Keep my eyes above the waves  
When oceans rise  
My soul will rest in Your embrace  
For I am Yours  
And You are mine, oh

