

Day 1

July 30



Pray | That God would use your struggles to refine you

YOU CAN DO THIS THE EASY WAY, OR THE HARD WAY.

Most of us don't like to do stuff the hard way. If we were given a choice between getting \$20 for doing nothing, or getting \$20 for reading Merriam-Webster's Unabridged Dictionary from aardvark to zyzzogeton, we'd grab that \$20, say "Thank you," and get on with our day. Unfortunately, many times it's the hard way that teaches, refines, and strengthens us. Choose reading the dictionary and you'd not only still have the \$20, but also, you'd be ready for your first spelling bee and well on your way to becoming a champion at Scrabble! Thankfully, Jesus sometimes allows the hard way to be our only choice, for our good and for his glory.



Read | Matthew 14:22-25



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

Jesus sent the disciples away without him, knowing that a storm was coming. And when he saw they were struggling in the waves, he didn't immediately calm the wind. Why do you think he let his disciples struggle when he could have made their journey easy?

God allows challenges and struggles to come into our lives to give us the opportunity to learn from or be refined by them. Can you think of one such time from your past where you have seen God teach, refine, or strengthen you as a result?

Do you think choosing to be a follower of Jesus means you're taking the easy way or the hard way? Think of examples from your own life of when following him has been easy or hard, or somewhere in-between, and what you learned from them.

Day 2

July 31



Pray | For deeper trust that God will never leave nor forsake you

TAKE COURAGE! IT IS I. DON'T BE AFRAID.

More than 100 verses in the Bible tell us not to be afraid. From Genesis 26:24 to Revelation 1:17, in numerous books of the Old Testament, and in all four Gospels, God commands us to banish our fear. But amid frightening circumstances, is being told to stop being afraid really going to help you find courage? Probably not. That's why God doesn't just leave us with a command, he backs it up with the ultimate promise: I Am. He says it in a variety of ways, and its depth of meaning is rich with promise, comfort, love, and safety. He is alive. He is here. He is the all-powerful creator of the universe who loves you. He may not change your circumstance but he will stand with you through it. Leaning into that is what makes it possible to banish fear.



Read | Matthew 14:25-27; Deuteronomy 31:6



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

Imagine yourself in the boat with the disciples: you've been traveling all night; you're exhausted. Suddenly, you see a shadow – a figure, walking on the roiling water toward you. You're terrified. How do you think you would react when you hear Jesus' reassuring words in verse 27?

Think about the circumstances in your life right now that are causing you fear. What are some ways you can remind yourself that God is present and he wants you to take courage? Perhaps you could try specific verses, songs, or prayers to bring you comfort.

'Don't be afraid' is one of the most common commands in the Bible. What do you think are some of reasons God chose to remind us of this so many times? Has there been a time when God reminded you to trust him?

Day 3

August 1



Pray | To be open for opportunities to put your faith in action today

PETER STEPS OUT OF THE BOAT: FAITH IN ACTION

David Wilkerson was reading *Life* magazine in his home in rural Pennsylvania when he came upon a picture of seven teenage gang members on trial in New York City for the brutal murder of a 15 year-old boy. A clear thought came to him: Go to New York and help those boys. He recognized it as a call from God and was in New York before the trial even ended. David's ministry to the troubled teens in NYC gave birth to Teen Challenge. Today, Global Teen Challenge operates over 1,400 centers in 125 nations, with one of the highest addiction recovery success rates anywhere in the world. All because one man not only believed God, but also, he chose to step out of the boat and put his faith into action.



Read | Matthew 14: 27-29



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

It's interesting that Peter didn't quickly jump out of the boat when he heard Jesus' voice. He waited for Jesus' call to 'Come' before he stepped out to his Savior. What is the significance of that to you?

After Jesus said, 'Come', Peter didn't hesitate; neither did David Wilkerson when God called him to serve in NYC. What are some of the reasons we might hesitate when God bids us to 'Come'?

Maybe there is something you feel called to do – something that has been a burden on your heart and mind - but you're hesitating. Consider revealing your thoughts to a friend who also is a follower of Christ. And then pray together for you to step out of the boat!

Day 4
August 2



Pray | For your eyes to be focused on Jesus

EASILY DISTRACTED

While you're reading a DailyLife devotional, how many times do you usually get distracted? Perhaps you hear a noise, you read a text, your mind wanders, or there's someone in need of your attention. Maybe you get distracted before you even open the DailyLife email and you never quite get back to it! We can lose our focus in endless ways, especially in our fast-changing world of smartphones, social media, streaming television shows, and never-ending kid activities. It's not necessarily bad to get distracted. But it can be a major problem if you allow busyness and distraction to constantly pull your attention away from God – you will find yourself sinking.



Read | Matthew 14:27-31



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

Instead of keeping his eyes focused on Jesus, Peter gets distracted by his circumstances and starts to sink. Think of a time when you were so distracted by your situation that you didn't pay attention to what God was doing. How might that time have been different had you remained focused on him?

After rescuing Peter, Jesus says to him in verse 31, "You of little faith... why did you doubt?" What do you think he meant by this? Think of your own journey with Jesus – when are you most prone to doubt?

Take a few minutes right now to think about what you've been doing so far this summer. Has God been your number one priority, or has he been forgotten in a haze of water parks, camping weekends, and kids' sports? Challenge yourself to re-prioritize, if necessary.

Day 5
August 3



Pray | Praise God for his constant watch over you

WHERE DOES MY HELP COME FROM?

The disciple Peter was a fisherman by trade. He probably spent his entire life on and in the water and would have experienced many storms at sea. It's likely, then, that he felt comfortable in the water and knew how to swim, even in rough waves. Yet when Peter starts to sink into the water, he doesn't try to save himself by attempting to swim back to the boat. His immediate response is to cry out to Jesus for help. In times of trouble, your first instinct may be to fix the problem on your own. What if, instead, your first instinct was to cry out to Jesus? You just might see his hand reaching out to catch you.



Read | Matthew 14:29-33; Psalm 121:1-4



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

What would you have done in Peter's place – at least make an attempt at swimming, or immediately call to Jesus for help? Spend some time in prayer, asking God to help you remember he is there for you in times of need.

If you've built a habit of relying on yourself in rough times, or going to God only after you've gotten advice from ten other people, challenge yourself to cultivate a habit of crying out to God first. Start practicing right now by spending a few minutes telling him about your troubles.

Sometimes we take pride in our independence and self-reliance; we manage to build a good life on our own power. But there's a missing piece in that life – a greater purpose and meaning. This is what God offers, when we turn to him. If you haven't yet, will you choose to ask him into your life today?

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