

Close-Your-Eyes-and-Fall-Backwards Faith

Susan Verstraete

Do you like storms? Some children find the cracks of thunder, flashes of lightning and howling winds frightening. Other children think storms are exciting, if they can watch them out the window of a sturdy house, snuggled up with mom or dad. But what if you were outside in the storm? Would you like it then? Imagine you were in an open boat, in the dark, tossed about by the wind and the great waves it created. Would you be frightened? Here's a true story from the Bible about some men who were in just that situation.



One evening, after Jesus had been teaching in the city of Capernaum all day, He got into a boat with His disciples and said, “Let us go across to the other side of the lake.” You need to understand that this was not a little lake or a pond, but a large body of water called the Sea of Galilee. It’s about seven miles across and 160 feet deep, but the water is fresh like a lake and not salty like the ocean. It’s near the top of Israel.

Some of the disciples—Peter, Andrew, James and John—were fishermen from Capernaum, which is a town on the banks of the Sea of Galilee. They knew all about boats and all about this sea. They probably felt very comfortable setting sail as Jesus lay down to go to sleep. They might have even been showing off a little! But before they arrived on the other side of the sea, a terrible windstorm came up. The wind blew so hard that the disciples couldn’t control the boat. It rocked violently and great waves came crashing over the sides. The boat began to fill with water. It was dark outside, so the disciples couldn’t see the shore or if there were other boats nearby. They all thought the boat might sink there in the middle of the sea, with no one around to help them. They were terribly frightened!

The disciples ran to wake Jesus, who was still asleep. (Can you imagine sleeping though a violent storm like that?) They must have all been talking at once! “Lord, save us. We’re going to drown” someone said. Another disciple cried, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” Someone else shouted, “Master, Master, we’re going to drown!”

Jesus woke up and spoke to His disciples. “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” He asked, gently pointing out to the disciples that they were not trusting Him as they should. It’s important that you know that Jesus was *not* correcting the disciples for waking Him up. Calling on Jesus to save us in times of trouble is *always* the right thing to do. The problem was that they were so very

frightened, even though Jesus was right there in the boat with them! They were not showing real faith in Jesus.

I played a game with some children to help them understand what the disciples did wrong and what real faith in Jesus is like. I told each child that if they fell backwards into my arms, I would catch them. All the children *said* they believed that I would catch them. They even *thought* they believed me. But when it came time for them to close their eyes and let themselves fall backwards into my arms, not all the children could do it. Some of them didn’t *really* trust me—they didn’t really have faith in me to catch them. They were afraid.

The disciples were afraid, too. Even though they believed that Jesus was the Messiah and that God had a special plan to accomplish through Him, they didn’t trust Him in the storm. They acted as if God might allow all of them (including Jesus) to die before Jesus did what He came to Earth to do. Like some of the children I played the game with, the disciples only had hear-it-and-agree-with-it faith. They didn’t have close-your-eyes-and-fall-backwards faith in Jesus.

After Jesus corrected the disciples, He did something that no one else has ever done, something that no mere man *could* do. He said to the wind and waves, “Peace, be still.” Immediately the wind stopped and the water was calm. (Close your eyes and picture what that was like: The violent storm, the great crashing waves, the wind blowing so strong it was hard to stand up, the boat being tossed around the sea like a carnival ride and suddenly—stillness!) Jesus showed His disciples that *He* is the one who rules the wind and the waves. He showed them that He is God. The disciples were amazed, and asked each other, “What kind of man is this?”

Do you think the disciples trusted Jesus more after seeing Him calm the storm? I’d like to think they did. When I played the falling backwards game with my little friends, I noticed that the children who knew me better had an easier time falling into my arms. I think it was like that for the disciples, too. As they learned more about who Jesus is by watching what He did and listening to Him teach, they had more reasons to trust Him. And as we learn more about Jesus, about all the wonderful things recorded in the Bible about Him, and as we hear others tell of how He answers prayers, we will trust Him more. It will be easy to have close-your-eyes-and-fall-backwards faith because we know Jesus.

Copyright © 2009 Susan Verstraete. Permission granted for reproduction in exact form. All other uses require written permission