

Dr. Craig Keener, Matthew, Session 13,

Matthew 14-16

6-min. Video Overview

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Okay, let's talk about something big. What does it actually cost to follow someone? I don't just mean agreeing with their ideas, but really, truly following them. We're going to jump right into that very question by looking at some famous stories from the Bible.

And to help us do that, we're leaning on some incredible scholarship from Dr. Craig Keener to unpack the deep message about discipleship tucked away in the Gospel of Matthew. You see, these stories, they're so much more than just reports of miracles. They are brilliantly crafted narratives that are designed to make us ask ourselves, what does it really mean to commit to a leader, to a cause? The whole point is to push us past the surface and get to the real heart of the message.

And honestly, it's a challenge that hits just as hard today as it did 2,000 years ago. All right, so where do we start? We're kicking things off with a story most of us have probably heard a million times: Jesus walking on water. But here's the thing: this is not just about a cool miracle.

It's really a massive statement about identity. And it's the very first piece of the puzzle for understanding the real cost of discipleship. Now check this out.

The Gospel writers are using language that is almost a direct copy of how God is described in the Old Testament. And let me tell you, that is 100% on purpose. This is a huge, bold claim about who Jesus is, using imagery that anyone listening back then would have instantly recognized as divine.

And it gets even better. So his followers are out on the water; they're terrified, they think they're seeing a ghost, and Jesus says, Ego Ami. Now sure, that can just mean, hey, it's me.

But in this context? No way. It's a direct callback to the I Am, the divine name God uses for himself in the book of Exodus. It's another giant clue about who Jesus is claiming to be.

And then you have Peter. You got to love Peter. He has this incredible burst of faith.

And he actually gets out of the boat and starts walking on the water himself. But the second he takes his eyes off Jesus and looks at the storm, at the wind and the waves all around him, he starts to go down. It's just a perfect picture of what happens when our fear gets bigger than our faith.

You know, this story isn't really just about Peter, is it? It's about us. What are your winds and waves? What's the stuff in your life that pulls your focus away from what really matters? It's a challenge to think about what distracts us when we're called to take a step of faith. Okay, so the stage is set.

We've established who Jesus is claiming to be. Now let's see what happens when that identity runs headfirst into the religious rules of the day. Because this is where the cost of following him starts to get really, really serious.

Jesus brings up this absolutely killer example of how rules can get twisted. God's law says, honor your parents. Pretty basic, right? But a human tradition had created this loophole that basically let people get out of financially supporting their own elderly parents by saying, oh, sorry, that money is dedicated to God.

It's a heartbreaking way to use religion to justify being cruel. And Jesus, he does not pull any punches. He hits them with a quote from the prophet Isaiah, basically saying, "You talk a good game, but your rules are just manmade nonsense that let you ignore what I actually said."

Their religion had become a convenient excuse. And let's be real, this is not just some dusty old problem. We do this all the time, don't we? We filter sacred texts through our own traditions or our culture.

We let what society thinks is normal shape what we believe. Sometimes we even make our own personal experience the most important thing. The challenge to put the original teaching first is just as real for us.

All right, now we're getting to a major pivot point in the whole narrative. It's this huge aha moment for the disciples that immediately gets turned on its head in the most shocking way imaginable. So picture this.

They're in a place called Caesarea Philippi, which is literally filled with temples to other gods. And Jesus just asks them, point blank, who do you guys say that I am? And Peter just nails it. He says, you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

I mean, what a moment. And Jesus' reaction is just, wow. He looks at Peter, gives him a new name, Petros, which means rock, and says, on this rock, on this confession of who I am, I'm going to build everything.

Can you even imagine how Peter must have felt? Like he was on top of the world. But that feeling doesn't last long, because right after that, Jesus starts explaining what the Messiah actually means. It means suffering.

It means death. And Peter, he just can't handle it. This was not the plan.

He was expecting a warrior king, a trumpet hero, not a suffering servant. And Jesus' reply is just jaw-droppingly brutal. He looks at the guy he just called the rock and says, get behind me, Satan.

You are a stumbling block. I mean, talk about emotional whiplash. From the foundation of the movement to an obstacle in its way in 60 seconds flat.

And that jarring moment right there, that's the whole point. It shows us in the clearest way possible that you can't separate the mission from the method. If you want to truly follow Jesus, you have to accept his path, the suffering part included.

They are a package deal. So why such an extreme reaction? Why call him Satan? Because what Peter was suggesting- all the glory without the suffering, the kingdom without the cross- was the exact same temptation Satan offered Jesus in the wilderness. It's the easy way out, the shortcut to glory, and it derails the entire plan.

That's why it's not just a mistake. Jesus calls it a satanic idea. And then, right on the heels of that intense moment, Jesus just lays out the terms of service, if you will.

Following him isn't about power or fame. It's about three things. First, deny yourself.

Second, take up your cross. And let's be clear, that was a Roman instrument of execution. And third, follow me.

And here it is, the central paradox of his whole message. To really save your life for the long haul, for eternity, you have to be willing to let go of it in the here and now. It's a total flip of our normal priorities.

It's saying that what lasts forever is just so much more important than what's temporary. So after all of that, we're left with a pretty tough question to chew on, aren't we? If we really believe we're living for eternity, how does that change the way we live today? What are we actually willing to give up for the sake of what truly matters forever?