

What readers are saying about Jesus Centered

“The writer of Hebrews reminds us that we need to fix our eyes on Jesus so that we can finish the race that God sets before us ... and Steve Brown shows us how! In *Jesus Centered*, Steve’s words rekindled my wonder at the thought of being loved by God, refocused my definition of the qualities of a Christ-like leader, and re-energized my passion for introducing others to Jesus.”

Paul Borthwick

Jesus follower since 1971, missionary and author

“Steve has written a wonderful resource to help you grow in, up, *and* out! So often, our spiritual formation focuses on our souls *at the expense of* evangelism. In this clear and focused book, Dr. Brown calls leaders to the important and rewarding work of integration! Identity, purpose, calling, formation, and fulfillment all come together in this easily accessible resource. I highly recommend it.”

R. York Moore

Executive Director-Catalytic Partnerships,
National Evangelist, Intersarsity,
Author with Gary Chapman of *Seen. Known. Loved.*

“When we were launching Arrow years ago, a leadership specialist asked me to put our vision in one sentence. These words sprang to my mind: ‘To help young leaders worldwide to lead to Jesus, like Jesus, for Jesus.’ Now Steve Brown has taken this seed thought and expanded it into a book that guides us into precisely that kind of Jesus-centered living and leading. I eagerly welcome and highly recommend this book; may it be widely read and practiced!”

Leighton Ford

Founding President, Leighton Ford Ministries

“Those committed to Jesus-centered living and leading find themselves confronted daily by the weapons of mass-distraction. Steve Brown provides encouragement and practical instruction to find and hold focus, eyes fixed on the author and perfecter of our faith: Jesus!”

Commissioner Floyd J. Tidd

The Salvation Army, Territorial Commander for Canada and Bermuda

“This is a welcome reminder of capturing the wonder of Jesus that offers practical steps to make Him the center of our lives and leadership. Steve Brown combines Jesus’ story with his own story to invite readers to re-center their lives and to be Jesus-centered leaders. As a Leadership Coach, I really appreciate Steve’s very practical and relevant reflection and discussion questions at the end of each chapter, along with the prayers of yielding and worship.”

Dr. Ingrid Davis

Leadership Coaching International

“If you, like me, are a Christian leader who is somewhat to very ADHD you will love Steve Brown’s core message: Focus! He takes us to the foundation of our relationship with Jesus, helping us to learn from Jesus, the master leader and teacher, and then challenges and coaches us in actually leading lost people to Jesus. Read every chapter, ask every question, pray every prayer . . . twice! Your family, your neighbors, and your church will see the impact and be drawn to Jesus.”

Dave Brereton

International Director, Youth for Christ International

“The world needs more Jesus-Centered leaders and Steve Brown lights the path forward. Gather some friends around and read this book together. It will help your team take new steps in their faith. You will be blessed by investing the time and effort!”

Rich Birch

Founder, unSeminary

“There is something so foundational to *Jesus Centered* that made it hard to get through the first chapter without a deep wrestling and reflection as a follower of Jesus and a leader of an organization. You will sense a renewed invitation by Jesus that is tender and tangible. Steve points us towards living Jesus-centered lives and leading out of that place; may we all embrace that invitation to see real change!”

Jen Schepens

Director for Envision

(a ministry of the Christian and Missionary Alliance)

“This book has come out during a crazy and unsettling time in our world. At a time like this, we are given the opportunity to make some changes and even reset some areas of our lives. Steve Brown has given some thoughtful insights and practical steps to throw off everything that hinders us in our lives, work, and ministry by centering our identity, motivations, and actions on Jesus. I will be giving a copy of this book to all of our leaders.”

Tim Coles

National Director, Youth for Christ Canada

“As a student of leadership, I have been drawn to *identity* as the essence of all true leadership—beyond the mere knowing and doing of leadership. Steve’s book is a powerful and timely reminder that being *led by Jesus*, *leading more like Jesus*, and *leading more to Jesus*, is surely the way of receiving and living out the gift and calling of Christian leadership.”

Sidney Muisyo

Senior Vice President of Global Program, Compassion International.

“I believe that the first thing a leader must do to make decisions, or at least the ‘right’ decisions, is to get grounded. Steve Brown has written a sage book for us all, encouraging us to stay grounded on Jesus. Being Jesus-centered matters whether you are leading in your neighborhood, work, home, school, or country. Steve’s experience mentoring leaders worldwide, combined with his clear articulation, make *Jesus Centered* an excellent encouragement to stay grounded.”

Dr. Carson Pue

Executive Mentor and Founder: Quadrant Group, Author of *Mentoring Leaders: Wisdom for Developing Character, Calling, and Competency*

“What does a surrendered life to Jesus look like? As leaders who are committed to be led more by Jesus, lead more like Jesus, and lead more people to Jesus, we have to be ‘all in.’ Dr. Steve Brown helps us navigate what it takes to surrender our will, hopes, and preferences because Jesus changes everything. Challenging our preconceived ideas of safety and facing fear, this book is a vital tool for the uncharted ground we are living and leading in today.”

Melissa McEachern

Chief Operating Officer, Crossroads Christian Communications Inc.

“Steve Brown is a leader of leaders, not because of a fancy title, but because his life and leadership were tested by the crucible of fire, and he survived to tell the tale. You can’t lead others where you haven’t been or give to others what you don’t have. This poignant and judicious book shows us the way to living Jesus Centered.”

Rev. Dr. Sam D. Kim

Co-Founder of 180 Church NYC
Research Fellow, Harvard Medical School Center For Bioethics

“During this season of uncertainty, how do we replace fear with faith, distraction with focus, and the question ‘why now?’ with ‘what’s next?’ Through this insightful book, Steve shares how the answer is Jesus. If you want to cultivate a renewed wonder at who Jesus is, how he led, and how we can deepen our engagement with him in our life and leadership, this book is a gift.”

Michael Messenger

President and CEO, World Vision Canada

**Focusing On Jesus
In A Distracted World**



**Jesus
Centered**

Steve A. Brown

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To Luke, Ainslea, and Lauren

May you always persevere in faith and life by knowing
“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”
Hebrews 13:8

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Opening Prayer

Father God,

Thank You for Jesus. He has no equal and no rival. He is the One and Only. He humbled Himself to enter into human space and skin. He sought Your splendor and glory. He obeyed Your will as a servant and died to bring forgiveness for the sins of the world. He conquered death and is exalted to the highest place. He is Lord of all. He is Lord of me.

Through this book, please stir in me a greater wonder of Jesus and help me focus on Him in a world filled with so many distractions.

My desire is for Jesus to be the center of my life and to center my life on Jesus. Guide me and shape me to be led more by Him, to live and lead more like Him, and to lead more to Him.

I pray these things in the great, the wonderful, and the powerful name of Jesus.

Amen.

Introduction

Finding Your Focus

**He is before all things, and
in him all things hold together.**

COLOSSIANS 1:17

Sometimes in life we can lose our wonder. It can happen gradually or overnight, but we find ourselves losing awe in something that once captivated us. Our once childlike, wonder-filled outlook begins to dull in light of the familiar.

I remember when I first saw an iPhone. I was amazed by the sleek packaging, stunned by the elegant look, and blown away by the dazzling technology. I was in awe of all it could accomplish. Not only could I call and text on this device, I could email, navigate, google, and even shoot animated angry birds across the digital sky. But then, as time passed, I began to lose my sense of wonder with it. I became distracted by newer and more mesmerizing technology. Now, years later, I view it with the same level of wonder as I view my toaster and sock drawer.

How did this happen? I think that slowly over time, I began to take my iPhone for granted. It became too familiar and my focus drifted elsewhere. Distraction led to dissatisfaction in what once satisfied. What I once embraced with wonder eventually became another helpful tool to accomplish things or entertain myself. It went from the center of my attention to the sidelines of my focus.

Now take Jesus, who is definitely someone to marvel about: do you ever reflect on whether He is at the center or the sidelines of your life? With all the distractions of life competing for your attention, have you lost your wonder of who He is? In our Amazon Prime, short-attention-span culture, we are quick to move from next best thing to next best thing without blinking an eye. Add in the complexity, competing voices, and disruptive change swirling around us and it's easy to be distracted away from Jesus. But when we are not centering our lives on Jesus, we are missing out on *the* best thing: an unparalleled life transformed by the presence and power of the greatest person to ever walk the earth. Despite this, sometimes we lose our wonder of Jesus, or, at least, I do on occasion. I take Him for granted. He becomes too familiar. Our once vibrant relationship becomes transactional. I allow distractions to creep in and I begin centering my life on other things. Before I know it, Jesus is found on the sidelines of my life.

Sound familiar? Can you identify? My goal in writing this book is to help you become captivated afresh by Jesus—and to stay there.

Jesus has no equal. He has no rival. He rises above all. Jesus transcends any and all distractions. He alone is worthy of not just our wholehearted attention but our worship. Only Jesus is God in the flesh. Only Jesus has died for the sins of the world. Only Jesus has conquered death. There are no philosophies, best practices, or fads that can stand up to

Him. There's simply no better example to study. There's no better leader to follow. Jesus lived different. He led different. He's in a league all His own. And yet, Jesus invites you and me into a deep and transformational relationship. He cares about you and wants the best for your life. He wants to be actively involved in every aspect of who you are and what you do. He doesn't want to be treated like a spectator on the sidelines. He desires for your life to be centered on Him where the fulness of His joy can be found.

Jesus being at the center changes everything. This doesn't mean trying your hardest to somehow imitate Him, it's about Christ being formed in you and transforming you from the inside out. Jesus at the center means His character and priorities become your character and priorities.

Philippians 2:5–8 is one passage of Scripture that has helped me to see some of the goals of this radical transformation. You may know this passage well already, but let's look at it again:

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

As Jesus willingly entered into a temptation-filled world that focuses on personal gain, He chose to seek God's glory, purposes, and priorities.

In a world that idolizes celebrities, Jesus chose humility. In a world that embraces entitlement, Jesus chose obedience—even unto death. In a world that esteems being served, Jesus chose servanthood.

If you continue reading the passage, you can see how the Father responded to Jesus' unique character and radical choices: "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (vv. 9–11).

The word "every" in these verses stands out to me. Jesus above *every* name. To Jesus *every* knee will bow. *Every* tongue will acknowledge Jesus is Lord.

Jesus desires that His radical ways become your radical ways. He wants humility to be your hallmark. He calls you to obey Him even when there is sacrifice, submission, and suffering involved. He intends for you to serve others. He longs for God's splendor—His glory, praise, and fame—to be your primary focus.

Our world is filled with distractions that may fill your day, but they won't transform your life. When you fix your eyes on Jesus, you never lose your wonder of Him. When you focus with a fresh wonder of Jesus, you will be drawn closer to Him. When you are drawn closer to Jesus, you will be transformed by Him. When you are transformed by Jesus, you will draw others to Him.

Part I



**Being Led
More by
Jesus**

*Jesus at the center starts
with following Him.*

1

Follow Him

**“Come, follow me,” Jesus said,
“and I will send you out to fish for people.”**

MARK 1:17

Most of the crew were fishermen, and they knew their way around a boat. It was the place they felt most comfortable, but this night was different. There was a storm brewing above and within the water. They found themselves in the midst of it, getting drenched by the powerful waves and hit by the harsh winds. They were desperately searching for land, scanning the horizon for a sign of safety. And then they saw something ... well, they saw someone. Someone was walking on the water.

Assuming they saw a ghost, the disciples became frozen in terror. But as Peter and the rest watched, they realized their Friend was doing the impossible. Jesus' arrival on the scene was an unexpected disruption that was going to change everything.

This wasn't the first disruption Peter witnessed. When Jesus first met Peter, He said three life-changing words to both Peter and his brother Andrew: "Come, follow me" (Matthew 4:19). Those three words were a grand disruption. They had to clear their plans for the day. Fishing was their livelihood, and Jesus wanted them to drop everything to follow Him. They may have even had people waiting to resell their catch. Yet, Peter and Andrew embraced this unexpected disruption. Mark records their response: "At once they left their nets and followed him" (Matthew 4:20). It was an immediate response. Little did they know that this initial decision to follow Jesus would continue to disrupt their lives in ways they couldn't comprehend or imagine.

Choosing to follow Jesus is the starting point for becoming Jesus-centered. The choice is based on an invitation. Notice that Jesus doesn't plead nor force His way with Peter and Andrew. He invites. Peter and Andrew had a choice. The same goes for you and me. Jesus invites you to follow Him. You get to choose your response.

It's important to note that choosing to follow Jesus is not simply a one-time decision. In fact, the invitation to follow Him is an everyday choice. Sometimes it's an every-moment choice, requiring an ongoing response.



Following Jesus usually starts with a God-initiated disruption. We have our plans, and we are doing our own thing when God intervenes. The disruption is an invitation to follow Jesus, even though it likely pushes us out of our comfort zone. It's an invitation that usually excludes much explanation and includes many unknowns. The invitation can even seem to include stepping into real danger.

Just think of all the people written about in Scripture who faced God-initiated disruptions and, from there, became history makers and kingdom builders. Moses was tending his father-in-law's flock when he was disrupted by a burning bush (Exodus 3:2). Moses was confronted by God's call for him to lead the Israelites to freedom. Esther was an orphan when her world was first disrupted and she was chosen to be queen, and through her position she saved the Jewish people from the king's decree to exterminate them (Esther 3). Saul (later known as Paul) was on a mission to persecute Christians when a big disruption came. A light from heaven flashed, he heard God speak and went blind (Acts 9). Saul's invitation from Jesus was to make a complete U-turn and embrace His call to spread the same gospel he had been trying to shut down.

And then there was Mary. She was an unmarried teenager whose life was radically disrupted by an angel who told her she would become miraculously pregnant with God's son (Matthew 1). This disruption would have left her with a distraught fiancé, bewildered family, and gossiping community. She would have to process being pregnant with a son who was prophesied to take on David's throne and establish a kingdom that would never end. She would watch this son perform mind-boggling miracles, teach with an authority unlike anyone else, and become the object of rumors, gossip, and hate. She would one day have to watch Him die a horrifying, humiliating, and public death on a cross.

The list could go on and on, but each scenario is similar. It starts with a God-initiated disruption and then an invitation to follow. I can vividly remember a scenario like this that took place in my own life. My wife, Lea, and I were happily settled into a community near family and friends. We were working, serving, and raising our two very small children. Then came a disruption. My boss at the time told me he had

come across a job posting that “sounded like me.” It’s always interesting when your boss suggests you might be better suited for another role, but I trusted him and knew he would be sensitive to what God might be doing. I decided to take a look at the post, and what I saw intrigued me.

The role was with Arrow Leadership, a Christian ministry focused on developing Jesus-centered leaders. I was familiar with the ministry because my own life and leadership had been transformed through their program. However, the job seemed out of my league. Plus, it was 2,500 miles on the other side of the country. I couldn’t imagine moving that far from our roots and support system. So, I quickly dismissed the idea out of mind. But just a few days later, I received a call from a mentor. He, too, had seen the same job posting and thought I should consider the role. I couldn’t believe it. Now, I had two trusted friends making this suggestion! My initial response was low-level internal panic. I mean, what if Jesus was in this? What if He was inviting me and my family to follow Him across the country? Would I even do well at this job? It seemed like craziness to move that far with two kids under the age of two and no support system to help us.

At this point, I asked God to confirm this was Him asking us to follow. If this was God’s invitation, I asked to hear directly from Arrow Leadership’s then president, Dr. Carson Pue, figuring this was never going to happen. However, a day or two later, the phone rang. It was Dr. Pue, suggesting I consider the role!

By this point it felt as if Jesus was inviting me to follow Him into a new role, or at least consider it. But it was a disruption that rattled and broke the barriers of my comfort zone. It also confused me. Was this an invitation to faithful obedience or was this foolhardy? Could it be both? I knew that, unlike Peter, we weren’t in a boat on raging seas in

the middle of the night. But, leaving everything and everyone we knew seemed somewhere between reckless and stupid.

Following Jesus is the first step to becoming Jesus-centered. We are to be followers first. God initiates and His invitation often disrupts our status quo. The ask can seem impossible, foolish, or even dangerous. This is where we must do some discernment and reframing.

When Jesus appeared on the lake, He radically disrupted the chaotic scene of the darkness, wind, and waves in the early morning. To Jesus' words, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid," Peter then asks a question to discern his next steps (Matthew 14:27). He asks, "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water" (v. 28). Take note of Peter's words, "Lord, *if* it's you . . ." Peter is seeking to discern if this is indeed Jesus and not a ghost or his own imagination. Then, Jesus answers, "Come" (v. 29).

Hearing from Jesus doesn't make Peter's decision to follow Him easy. The first step out of the boat is still a huge one. But, through discernment, Peter now knows that this is Jesus. He also knows that if anyone is trustworthy to follow, it is Jesus. This is the same Jesus who first called him and his brother. This is Jesus, the worker of miracles. Peter has seen Him heal the sick—even his own mother-in-law. Peter has witnessed Jesus free people from demons. This is the same Jesus who has led him, taught him, and empowered him to serve. This is the Jesus whose mission is from God.

What or who we follow makes all the difference in the world. Notice how Peter isn't choosing whether or not to follow a philosophy or a belief system. He's called, just like you and me, to follow a person—Jesus. Thankfully, Jesus is in a category all His own. Beloved pastor and theologian John Stott makes this clear by saying, "So we may talk about Alexander the Great, Charles the Great, and Napoleon the Great,

but not Jesus the Great. He is not the Great—he is the Only. There is nobody like him. He has no rival and no successor.”¹ There’s simply nothing and no one better.

To follow, we need to know it’s Jesus doing the inviting and calling and not our imagination, our fears, our preferences, or the desires of others. There is a fine line between obedience and stupidity. Sometimes our obedience may seem stupid to others or even to ourselves, but if it is what God has asked us to do, then there is no better thing to do. Other times we may simply do something stupid that is far from what God has asked us to do. The key is discernment.

Which leads me to ask, how do we hear and know God’s call? How do we separate God’s voice from our own voice or the voices of others? The starting place is to acknowledge that God does speak, and that He can be creative in doing so. Scripture gives examples of God speaking through angels, dreams, signs, and wonders—even the mouth of a donkey. While you may or may not encounter God through these rare forms of revelation, you can hear from God right now through Scripture. The words of the Bible are the very words of God. As 2 Timothy 3:16–17 says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Listening to God through Scripture is at the heart of following Jesus and being Jesus-centered.

The first step in listening to God through Scripture is to see if there is explicit direction. Does God say anything about the specific issue or question? If He does, we simply need to obey and follow. If we can’t find anything specific, we should look for principles from God’s Word that apply to the situation. Principles go beyond a specific question and

inform a general approach. For instance, we won't find God's explicit direction on how to deal with a specific person. However, we will find that we should deal with the person in keeping with the principle of love. The bottom line is that we should never take steps that are in opposition to explicit or general principles already made clear in Scripture.



My own journey has been filled with actively listening for God and to God. His “still small voice” is best heard when I slow down and engage in silence and solitude (1 Kings 19:12 NKJV). This takes practice and patience. Sometimes I can think I hear one thing, but I need to seek out wise counsel in community and the Holy Spirit to help confirm it. I have learned that, when left on our own, we can unintentionally deceive ourselves. Listening just to our own voice can lead us off base and create an echo chamber that only reinforces our own desires. That's why Proverbs 12:15 says, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise” (NKJV).

In Peter's case, seeking discernment helped to confirm that he was seeing and hearing Jesus. After that, he had to make a decision: Was he going to follow Jesus' voice and invitation? Was he actually going to get up, walk to the side of the boat, put a leg over, and step out onto the water? Would he leave the relative safety of the boat and step into the dark—in the midst of raging waves and howling winds—to follow Jesus?

The other disciples were probably used to Peter's awkward and spontaneous actions at this point. They had seen their share of his seemingly stupid missteps. Stepping out of the boat during a storm, however, took things to a whole new level. Some disciples must have been rolling their eyes and shaking their heads. It must have felt as though

Peter was stumbling toward his own drowning. Yet, Peter still made the decision to follow Jesus.

On the surface, Peter was stepping into real and serious danger. The wind, the waves, and the darkness made a strong case for it. This is where we need to reframe our perspective about danger. Our culture craves comfort and idolizes safety. Our prayers are full of requests to “keep us safe.” But what if what we see as danger isn’t really as dangerous as we think?

To follow Jesus means that Jesus is leading. This also means that He is present with His followers. We aren’t somewhere off on our own and apart from Him. Jesus changes everything because He is Immanuel—God with us. What is dangerous in a world where God is with us? If the all-powerful and all-knowing God is with us and even in us, in the form of the Holy Spirit, then shouldn’t God’s very presence dramatically change our calculus around any danger we may face? Furthermore, if we know our story ultimately ends with a “happily ever after” scenario, shouldn’t that change our perspective of worry or doubts about following Jesus? Shouldn’t the fact that you have a “living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade” (1 Peter 1:3–4) put the perceived danger of following Jesus into perspective?

Spiritual writer Theresa of Avila wrote in the sixteenth century, “In light of heaven, the worst suffering on earth will be seen to be no more serious than one night in an inconvenient hotel.”² This quote is in no way meant to trivialize or minimize the very real pain and suffering endured by people on this side of heaven. But the key words “in light of heaven” bring an eternal perspective that highlights the unimaginable wonder, beauty, and goodness of heaven, which causes current suffering

to become relatively and comparably small. What seems dangerous now will look far different from the perspective of heaven. We weren't put on the planet to seek out comfort: instead, we are called to join in a mission. Being Jesus-centered means being called to live radically and faithfully with God for God's purposes.

There's no getting around the fact that there can also be very real costs to following Jesus. Too often, the picture of following Him is painted with mountaintop moments, perks, and benefits—eternal life is the ultimate benefit. Yet Jesus was clear that following Him had a cost in the here and now. In Luke 9:23 He says, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."

Following Jesus means surrendering our will, our hopes, and our preferences to Him. This surrender is a decision that begins our relationship with Him—and it's an ongoing, everyday decision as we continue to follow Him. Sometimes it's a string of moment-by-moment decisions.

This invitation to "take up your cross and follow me" was as Philip Yancey writes, "the least manipulative invitation that has ever been given."³ We are allowed to count the cost before surrendering. Sometimes it will involve big things and sometimes little things. Being Jesus-centered means choosing a lifetime of surrendering.

By calling us to surrender, Jesus isn't asking you and me to do something He didn't do himself. In perfect obedience, He surrendered to his Father's will and plans. He submitted to bearing the weight of our sins and drinking the cup of suffering. On a brighter side, Jesus also brought everlasting glory to God and opened the way for God's reconciliation with all of humanity. Jesus' obedient surrender at the cross defeated sin and death, gave access to the kingdom of God, and initiated a revolution that continues two thousand years on. Through His surrender, Jesus is

exalted at the right hand of His Father, where every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Following Jesus requires surrender, but there's a beautiful irony. As Mark 8:35 says, "For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it." In other words, in God's upside down kingdom economy, the act of surrendering your life actually brings you the *real* life you may be trying to seek. Similarly, the act of not surrendering costs us more than we will ever know.

I remember feelings of fear and danger stirring inside me when I listened to a phone message from a mentor. He invited Lea and me to consider leading a summer mission team to countries that were frequently in the news for being hostile and actively opposed to Christians. I perceived the destinations to be pretty dangerous. So, when I returned the call, I asked my mentor about the "danger factor." His response floored me and changed my perspective. He said, "Steve, it depends on your definition of danger. I think it's far more dangerous for people to stay home in their basements scrolling through media all summer."

Where we think is safe may actually be more dangerous. The boat may have looked safer to Peter, but was a water-logged boat buffeted by the waves *actually* safer than being next to Jesus? No. In the grand scheme of things, by choosing to abandon his boat and follow Jesus' invitation, Peter was in the best place possible.

The decision to follow Jesus will stir your fears. I bet Peter's knees were knocking in fear as he swung his legs over the side of the boat. I bet Esther's hands were shaking with nerves as she walked into the king's court to plead for her people. We know that even the bold and unflappable, super-missionary Paul dealt with "conflicts on the outside, fears within" (2 Corinthians 7:5), so don't be surprised if your knees

start knocking. In Peter's case, he began to walk on the water toward Jesus, but when he saw the wind, "he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'" (Matthew 14:30). In a world filled with distractions and apparent dangers, we need to abide in and keep our eyes focused on Jesus.

Reflection Questions

1. Can you think of a time when you sensed Jesus disrupting your life and asking you to follow Him? Was it an easy or hard decision? How did you respond? How did God respond?
2. What fears stir in you when you consider following Jesus? In the grand scheme of things, why might these fears be unfounded?
3. Like Peter in the boat, what might you be holding onto other than Jesus for security right now? Why? What might the act of holding on to something other than Him be costing you?
4. How does the idea that you are "called to live radically and faithfully with God for God's purposes" inspire or challenge you?



A Prayer

Father God,

By Your grace, as part of being Jesus-centered, I choose to deny myself and pick up my cross and follow You today.

You are my Master. You are the way, the truth, and the life.

Help me to hear Your voice, ground me in Your Word, and gather around me a wise community. Guard me from listening to any voice that opposes Your voice. Guard me from idols of comfort and safety.

Give me the courage to follow You, whatever the mission and regardless of the circumstances or cost.

Remind me that following You means that I am not alone. You are with me and that's the best thing possible.

In the one and only name of my Lord Jesus, I pray these things.

Amen.