

Matthew *A New Perspective*

6. The Ups and Downs of Faith

Matthew 1-2

Aim of the Study: Highs and lows in our lives and spiritual journeys are both normal and should be expected, but it's how we grow through them that matters. This study looks at some of the highs, lows and growth of the first disciples.

To Start With

Either: What one thing is always guaranteed to put you in a good mood, to set you on a high? Why?

Or: Can you think of a time when you've really enjoyed doing something for God? What was it and when?

Engaging with the Text

Give everybody one of the 'disciple's growth' charts enclosed. As you read each of the sections of the text get them to mark on it how they think the disciples must have felt.

Read Matthew 14.1-12

1. How do you imagine Jesus' disciples reacted to this news? Where on the 'chart' would you put them?
2. To what extent do you view John the Baptists death as a successful end to his ministry?
3.
 - a. It is unlikely that any of us know someone who has been martyred for their faith, but what might suffering for our faith look like in our context? When were you last conscious of sacrificing something because of your faith?

- b. What might inspire you to be willing to suffer for God's agenda? When was the last time you did, in however small a way?

Now read Matthew 14.13-21

4. Consider how it might feel to have been one of the disciples in this section of the passage. Briefly go through the passage marking on your chart whether their spirits might rise or fall in each verse.

Finally read Matthew 14.22-33

5. Mark the disciples experiences on the chart then read *Matthew 8 v 23-27*
6.
 - a) Compare and contrast these two similar incidents, what are the similarities and differences? (It might help to write down a list of things which are the same and things which have changed).
 - b) What can we conclude from the changes in the disciple's response? How do you think those changes have taken place?
7.
 - a) Sometimes our lives can feel like a cycle of highs and lows, how do you think we should view those patterns? How do you think God views them?
 - b) Have you ever found yourself responding differently the second time you encountered a similar situation? What caused that change?

Reflect and Pray

What situations are you currently finding it hard to respond in a better way to? Spend some time praying in pairs or small groups about situations or cycles people would like God's help to grow in.

