

Win The Day

Week #2 | Kiss The Wave

Big Idea: You have to take the FIRST STEP of faith before God reveals the second step.

Introduction (Video)

After their EXODUS out of Egypt, the Israelites are trapped between a rock and a hard place—the Egyptian Army and the Red Sea. No one knows what to do. There is no way out. That’s when God issues a counterintuitive command: “Tell the people of Israel to GO FORWARD.” The problem with that was this—there is NO WAY forward.

There is a legend in Judaism about a man named Nahshon. He is the great-great-great-grandfather of King David. He disappears almost as soon as he makes his debut, but Nahshon is credited with saving the nation of Israel by one act of courage. According to Rabbinic tradition, this is when the leader of the tribe of Judah steps up and steps into the Red Sea. The *Midrash* relates that during the Exodus, when the Israelites reached the Red Sea, the Israelites stood at the banks of the sea and wailed with despair, but Nahshon entered the waters. Once he was up to his nose in the water, the sea parted.

Nahshon wades into the Red Sea until he is neck-deep, right up to his nostrils. That is when and where and how the Red Sea splits in half. God is the One who makes a sidewalk through the sea, but it was Nahshon who made the miracle possible. How? By wading into the water! “The sea saw him,” says Psalm 114, “and fled.”

There’s an old axiom: *if you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat*. Here’s one more, along the same lines. *If you want God to make a sidewalk through the sea, wade into the water*. Most of us spend most of our lives waiting for God to split the Red Sea. Maybe, just maybe, God is waiting for you to get your feet wet. Maybe, just maybe, God is waiting for you to wade into the water. Here’s what I know for sure: *if you want God to do the super, you have to do the natural*.

You have to take a calculated risk.
You have to make a defining decision.
You have to take a flying leap of faith.

That’s all it takes for God to make a sidewalk through the sea, but you have to kiss the wave. The first step is always the hardest step. Why? You have to overcome the law of inertia by exercising initiative. You have to overcome fear by exercising faith. You have to take the FIRST STEP before God reveals the second step. That’s what Nahshon does! You have to wade into the water, if necessary, right up to your nostrils!

If you have a Bible, you can meet me in Exodus 14.

Scripture: Exodus 14:21-22 (KJV)

21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

Let me set the scene.

The Israelites are trapped between the Egyptian Army and the Red Sea. It seems like a no win situation—death by sword or death by drowning. Put yourself in their sandals for a second. Imagine the sound of horses and chariots. The entire Egyptian army is coming at you full throttle. This is fight or flight, am I right? It says the people panicked. But this is also when leaders lead. This is when Spirit-led leaders stay calm and carry on. This is when Spirit-filled leaders step up and step in. That's who Moses is. That's what Moses does. Verse 13.

Fear not. Stand still and you will see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you today. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.

Three simple thoughts this weekend, as we kiss the wave.

- 1. Face Your Fear**
- 2. Take Your Stand**
- 3. Hold Your Peace**

We all probably know a friend or loved one who suffers from migraine headaches. Moments of relief, few and far between. They've seen specialists, tried every treatment plan. Nothing seems to help too much, for too long. The pain can become so debilitating that they are sometimes driven to a disability to work. Mark Batterson, the author of the book "Win The Day", shares how he approached a friend of his one day, He writes, "I asked him how he manages his emotions, along with the physical pain. And my friend said to me, "I've learned to kiss the wave." I must have given him a quizzical look, Mark continues, since I had no idea what that meant. So, he explained. He was quoting Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon said, "I've learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the rock of ages."

1. Face Your Fear

If you've got the Egyptian Army coming at you full speed, it is fight or flight. Am I right? Yet Moses says, "Fear not." Easier said than done, no doubt. But courage is not the absence of fear. Fear is a prerequisite. The question is this: how do you manage fear in moments like this?

According to psychologists, we're only born with two fears. One is the fear of falling. The other is the fear of loud noises. Every other fear is learned, which means every other fear can be unlearned. Faith is a process of unlearning fear! How? I John 4:18 says, "Perfect love casts out all fear." If you fear God, which is the beginning of wisdom—and it means to hold God in highest esteem, to revere God above all else—if you fear God, you don't have to fear anything else. The fear of God is the cure of every other fear.

Let me push that envelope a little bit.

Pick a fear, any fear.

The cure for the fear of failure is not success. The cure for the fear of failure is failure, in small enough doses, that you build up an immunity to it. You need to identify the type of fear you're dealing with—fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of intimacy, fear of the future, fear of certain social situations. You have to identify it, then you don't avoid it. You actually expose yourself to it, in small enough ways, that you build up some immunity to it. You wade into the water, like Nahshon.

Nine times out of ten, failure is poorly managed success and success is well-managed failure. For some of us, one of the greatest things that could happen to us is for the thing we fear to actually happen because it will set you free.

Let me add one more thing to the mix.

We are a community of faith. We eat faith for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The net result? We dream big, pray hard, and think long. We go after God-sized goals. We elevate and activate each other's faith, and it creates a barrier against fear.

One final thought on facing your fear. All of us want a miracle. None of us wants to be in a situation that necessitates a miracle. But you can't have one without the other. Here's the good news: when you experience a setback, you do not take a step back, because God is already preparing your comeback. What does God say to Moses in Exodus 14:4? "I have planned this in order to display my glory." God is going to put His glory on display, one way or the other.

2. Stand Your Ground

The NLT says, "Stand still." As in, be still and know that I am God. The NIV says, "Stand firm." As in, having done all to stand, stand firm. The amplified says, "Take your stand." The GNT says, "Stand your ground." Whichever way you slice, what is the hardest thing to do if the Egyptian army is coming at you, full speed?

There is a scene in *Ford vs. Ferrari* where Carroll Shelby, the race car driver played by Matt Damon, says, "There's a point at 7000 RPM where everything fades. The machine becomes weightless. It just disappears. All that's left is a body moving through space and time. 7000 RPM, that's where you meet it. That's where you feel it. It creeps up on you, and it asks you a question. The only question that really matters: who are you"

I have no idea what thoughts are firing across his synapses, but the mind of Moses is spinning at 7,000 RPM. *Where do we go? What do we do?* I wonder if he has a flashback to the burning bush. He asks God the question, “Who am I?” Do you remember that? I love the way God answers the question by not answering the question Moses asked but by answering the question Moses should have asked. God says, “I will be with you.” That’s all we need to know.

So, it’s 7,000 RPM and Moses says, “Stand still.” These are the moments when we discover who we are and who God is.

This is so counterintuitive that it ranks right up with something General Anthony McAuliffe said to American troops when they were surrounded by the enemy at the Battle of the Bulge: “Men, we have the greatest opportunity ever afforded an army—we can attack in any direction!” That is flipping the script. That is kissing the wave.

In crisis situations, I go back to ground zero. I go back to the foot of the cross. I make a beeline for the empty tomb. I go back to the promises I can stand on—He who began a good work is going to carry it to completion. He is watching over His word to perform it. He is working all things together for good. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I sing songs like *Great is Thy Faithfulness* or *Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so*.

I go back to the daily spiritual disciplines. Why? The only ceiling on our intimacy with God and impact on the world is daily spiritual disciplines! I stay grounded in God’s word. I press in and pray through. That’s how you stand your ground. Having done all to stand, you stand. You fight one more round.

We have a core value: if you stay humble and stay hungry, there is nothing God cannot do in you or through you. That’s how we stay in our lane. That’s how we stay the course. The most underestimated kind of power is staying power. It’s long obedience in the same direction. It’s the cumulative effect of faith, hope, and love. It’s the compound interest in prayer and fasting.

On November 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted ninety-five theses on the doors of the Castle Church. When he was told to recant at the Diet of Worms, Luther said: “My conscience is taken captive by God’s word. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other.” We need that kind of moral courage, especially in this cultural moment!

How do you kiss the wave? You ground yourself in the Word of God. You anchor yourself to the promises of God. But you also embrace the pain and suffering. You’ve got to learn the lesson and cultivate the character.

You’re probably familiar with the five stages grief—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Let me add one more to the mix. According to David Kessler, there is a sixth stage. It’s called meaning. It feels funny quoting Fredrick Nietzsche on this count, but Nietzsche said, “He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.”

3. Hold Your Peace

There is an ancient tradition, practiced in orthodox churches, called pass the peace. It actually traces back to the Sermon on the Mount. If you're offering a gift and realize you are at odds with someone, go and be reconciled. That's how you counteract racial tension and political polarization. You interrupt the pattern. You love your enemies. You pray for those who persecute you. You bless those who curse you. And when we pass the peace, heaven invades earth. But let me back up one step. It's really hard to pass the peace if you don't learn how to hold your peace.

Let's be honest, a lot of people have lost their peace. One-third of Americans struggle with anxiety or depression. How do we get it back? How do you hold your peace when it seems like the world is spinning off its axis, when the train is going off the tracks!

As those who follow the prince of peace, we stay calm and carry on. We are a people who rebuke the wind and the waves. We say to the storm, peace be still. We don't take offense. We play offense. We don't react. We proact. How? As grace givers and peace makers. And when we do, we shift the atmosphere.

How do you hold your peace? One way you do it is by owning your past. If you don't own the past, the past owns you. You cannot change the past, but you can learn from it. Then you can bury it six-feet deep. I don't know what you need to bury, but it's time to kiss the wave.

Conclusion

Pretty simple message this week. If you want to kiss the wave, you have to face your fear, you have to stand your ground, you have to hold your peace. Nothing easy about those three things. Easier said than done, no doubt. I love what happens next. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the Israelites to GO FORWARD."

I'm not sure what step of faith you need to take! I do know this—the first step is the hardest step. You have to overcome the law of inertia by exercising initiative. You have to overcome fear by exercising faith.

If you need marriage counseling, it's hard to wade into the water. If it's losing weight, it's hard to wade into the water. If you're training for a marathon, it's hard to wade into the water. If it's resolving conflict, it's hard to wade into the water.

Maybe the fear you need to overcome this morning is the fear that keeps you from accepting Jesus as your Savior. Maybe you hear the howling winds of the devil's accusations, "You can't be forgiven for THAT!" Maybe it's the waves of worry that you won't be able to be "good enough" and that you will be ridiculed for your failure. Listen, it is true that Peter began to sink after he got out of the boat, but hear me, there were eleven other guys in that boat that never

again got the chance to walk on water! I'm asking you this morning to do the thing that Peter failed to do...keep your eyes on Jesus!

There's one more encounter with waves that I want to close with this morning...it's found in the gospel of Mark 4:39 and the disciples have just woken Jesus out of his Sunday afternoon pastoral nap. And ***he rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.***

The first step is always the hardest step. If you will trust Jesus, and “kiss those waves” of doubt, He will take care of the storm.

But if you want God to do the super, you have to do the natural. If you want God to make a sidewalk through the sea, you have to wade into the water and kiss the wave.

There are two kinds of people in the world—plotters and plodders. I better spell the difference. Plotters, with two t's. Plodders, with two Ds.

Plotters are those people who see the far-off future. They have vision beyond their resources. They set God-sized goals. They dream the unthinkable and attempt the impossible. I admire plotters with two t's, but I'll tell you who I admire even more—plodders, with two Ds. These are the people who get up every morning, and Win The Day. They stay humble and stay hungry. They stay in their lane, and they stay the course.

Remember Nahshon? He's the patron saint of plodders. What if he stopped after stepping into the water? *Well, that didn't work.* Or quit when he was waist-deep? *This isn't happening.* What if he had stopped when the water reached his chin? *That was a waste of time and energy.*

We quit too soon.
We give up too easily.

Come on, church. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. For the joy that was set before, he endured the cross. In other words, he kissed the wave for you and for me!

Yesterday is history.
Tomorrow is a mystery.

Kiss the wave!

Let's pray together.