

*****Cliffnotes available at page bottom*****

That the apostle Peter was impulsive is hard to deny. After all, it was him that was jumping out of boats and cutting ears off. In such times, I imagine that these sudden bursts of emotions often would be followed by that sinking feeling of “oh my goodness, what did I just do?”

Imagine Peter, sword in hand standing there looking at the ear he had just cut off lying on the ground. Then imagine Peter looking at the mob of armed men that had come with the Pharisees to arrest Jesus. The authority of both the Jewish law and the Roman law was against the group with Peter. The arresting group had not only the authority, but the muscle too. The men with Peter were largely fishermen and they only had a couple swords, the other group was filled with soldiers. But the group with Peter had Jesus, and after all, it was Jesus that had told them to bring the swords they had. But as Peter’s gaze turned from the ear to the mob back to Jesus, he noticed that Jesus didn’t call down fire from heaven to reinforce Peter’s opposition. He went willingly with his executors.

Imagine Peter walking on the water, each step working a miracle; each step bringing him closer to Jesus. He left the security of the boat on faith alone, and Jesus was using that faith to do the unthinkable, to do the physically impossible. But then Peter saw the waves and began to sink. I guess I had always imagined that, just like the flannel graph picture that I saw in Sunday school as a boy; that the waves that night were conveniently about thigh high. You know; nothing serious. And I figured that the water in between Jesus and Peter was calm and flat, kind of like a watery sidewalk. But recently, I’ve had to re-imagine this scene.

Being a guy that likes to fish and surf here and there, I know a little bit about the ocean. I’ve been in a small fishing boat out in the ocean of Alaska with my father-in-law when the seas got really choppy. His 24 foot boat rolled and pitched as we motored from the trough of one wave only to look directly UP at the crest of another. For a moment all we could see was the wall of water in front of us; and it looked mean. Then we’d ride to the crest of that wave where our vision would change and we could see our goal of the harbor in the distance. But this too was temporary, for in an instant we’d be diving back down to meet the next approaching wave. This went on for miles and miles. I’ve also stood securely on the shore watching a set of waves breaking, only to grab my surfboard, attach my leash and paddle into those waves. The thing was, that the closer I got to those waves, the bigger they looked, until I found myself lying on my stomach on my surfboard looking up as a mountain of water quickly approached. As that mountain got closer and pitched itself into a steep wall the sky in front of me disappeared. Though I knew that my goal was just to arrive at the calm water behind those breakers, all that I could see in that moment was that wall of water in front of me; and it also looked mean.

I think that perhaps this is what happened to Peter. I think that from his floating position slightly above the water on the boat, Peter and the other disciples could perhaps see both Jesus and the waves of the storm. But as Peter fully entered the situation (at Jesus’ invitation no less), at times all he could see was the walls of water in front of him.

Perhaps it wasn't even the waves that scared him that night as much as his temporary inability to see his Savior.

Recently, I've begun to see that lack of faith that Peter experienced in that moment, wasn't specific to Peter, but something that we'll all go through at one time or another. I can't say that the storm that I'm walking in right now is big enough to obscure my vision completely of Christ, but one thing is for certain: the water isn't calm. As I am walking this journey, I know that there are certainly waves between He and I. And believe me, I don't have to turn my head far and take my eyes off of Jesus to see these waves; they are right in front of me. Those waves often scream for my attention. When I give them such; when I find myself concentrating on them more than on my savior, like Peter; I feel myself sinking. It is in those moments that I feel overwhelmed. But as I turn my eyes back upon Jesus, and lock myself once again in the security of His gaze; my peace is restored. And it's not just my peace that is restored, but genuine excitement to be right here, right now.

Ok, ok, ok, so I know I've used a lot of metaphors to explain a bit about where I am at, so now I'll bring it down to the practical level. Up to this point, my time here in Brazil has looked nothing like I imagined it would have looked 1 year, or even 6 months ago. I imagined myself heavily involved in a local church and up to my chin in "ministry" with Brazilians. This expectation of my involvement in the local church was shared by my Brazilian brothers and sisters here. What has unfolded, however, has been something vastly different. A lot of my schedule has been consumed by administrative duties and an essential process of trying to define and articulate an OMS Brazil ministry strategy that will guide us in the foreseeable future. This has meant a lot of office time and a lot of prayer time. This office / prayer time hasn't been fully understood by my Brazilian brothers and sisters and I feel an almost constant external pressure to leave the office and actually "do something." As a result I have to fight down the constant temptation to eternally defend my actions to others.

What it really boils down to is a fear of man. I want my Brazilians brothers and sisters to like me, I want them to understand what I'm doing, and I want their approval. But if I do all the things that I know are required to gain their approval, I will have to drop the ball on many of the things I am doing now. And what I am involved in now, I have absolute certainty is what God has for me to do. I had a pastor once that always said: "You will either fear God, or you will fear man." So I have to constantly fight to keep myself locked in the security and peace of His gaze, and trust that in His time He will resolve any current lack of understanding.

The months since our return to Brazil have certainly been interesting. In one sense, they have been the hardest months of my missionary career. But in another sense, they have been wonderful as well. My daily dependence on God has never been felt more strongly, and my relationship with Him has grown immensely. And make no mistake about it; we have joy about being here. Though we see the waves all about us, we have the honor and privilege to be walking towards Him; each step a miracle. A miracle in contributing to

see His Kingdom expand. A miracle that includes each of you. Thank you for walking with us.

Thank you for your prayers for Marla and her stomach. After some help from the medical field, we found out that what was causing Marla's stomach issues were some parasites that she must have picked up in Africa. I guess it was free kind of souvenir. She's been taking some medicine for them and been feeling better. Please pray for an upcoming trip to the US that I'll be taking on Saturday. I'll be going back to Indiana to participate in some yearly meetings. Please pray for the girls in my absence and that the meetings be productive. Thanks!

For the only Cause that matters,
Micah

Ps. The attached pictures are from a recent "Mother's Day" photo shoot. For more pictures don't forget to check out our blog at: micahandmarla.com

*****Cliffnotes: Wave Watching*****

In this e-mail, I discussed how, perhaps how Peter's shortage of faith that happened during his water walking experience was because the waves in which he was walking obstructed his view of Jesus. I had always imagined that Peter started to daydream and lost his focus, but perhaps; it was the situation itself that temporarily took Jesus from Peter's sight.

I then related this story of Peter to how these past couple months have been for me. Please read the last paragraph for prayer requests and picture explanations
