

**2025 ACYOA
Fall Retreat Guidebook**

“Faith Over Fear”



DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH (EASTERN)
Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries

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October 22, 2025

Dear Pastors, Parish Council Chairs, Youth Advisors, and ACYOA Seniors Chairs,

We are pleased to share the **ACYOA Fall Retreat Guidebook** with parish leadership across the Eastern Diocese. The content is drawn from the sessions that will be offered at the ACYOA Seniors Fall Retreat in Kansasville, WI, November 7–9. Since not all young adults will be able to attend in person, we encourage you to use this guidebook to plan and host retreats for both the ACYOA Juniors and Seniors in your parish community.

Inside, you will find practical tools and resources for running a retreat, including:

- Sample schedules
- A registration form and a sample Code of Conduct
- Suggested movie titles for the theme
- Icebreakers
- Four engaging session lesson plans and discussion questions

Think of this as a starting point: clergy and facilitators are encouraged to add their own style and adjust the sessions to fit the needs of their group best.

We are available throughout the planning process to answer any questions or provide additional guidance as needed. We hope this resource will inspire meaningful discussions, foster fellowship, and strengthen the faith of your ACYOA members.

We thank our Ministries team for reviewing our work and providing feedback. We look forward to hearing about the retreats you host in your parishes!

Jennifer Morris, Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Program Administrator

Lori Dorian, ACYOA Central Council, Ministries and Outreach Coordinator

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(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA FALL RETREAT**

SATURDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

11:00 - 11:30 AM	Registration and Welcome
11:30 - 11:45 AM	Morning Prayer Service
11:45 - 12:30 PM	Icebreakers
12:30 - 1:30 PM	Lunch & Group Photo
1:30 - 2:30 PM	Session 1: Courage Powered by God
2:30 - 3:30 PM	Session 2: Recognizing Jesus in the Storm
3:30 - 3:45 PM	Break
3:45 - 4:45 PM	Session 3: From Sinking to Syncing
4:45 - 5:15 PM	Evening Prayer Service
5:15 - 5:30 PM	Clean Up & Depart

(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA FALL RETREAT**

DAY 1 - FRIDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

5:00 - 5:30 PM	Registration and Welcome
5:30 - 6:00 PM	Evening Prayer Service
6:00 - 6:45 PM	Icebreakers
6:45 - 7:45 PM	Dinner
7:45 - 8:00 PM	Group Photo
8:00 - 9:00 PM	Session 1: Courage Powered by God
9:00 - 10:30 PM	Movie**/Board Games/Snack Time
10:30 - 11:00 PM	Prepare For Bed/Quiet Time
11:00 PM	Lights Out

DAY 2 - SATURDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

8:00 - 8:30 AM	Wake Up
8:30 - 9:00 AM	Breakfast
9:00 - 9:15 AM	Morning Prayer Service
9:15 - 10:15 AM	Session 2: Recognizing Jesus in the Storm
10:15 - 11:15 AM	Session 3: From Sinking to Syncing
11:15 - 11:30 AM	Break
11:30 - 12:30 PM	Session 4: Climbing Back In: Worship After the Trial
12:30 - 1:30 PM	Lunch
1:30 - 2:00 PM	Pack Up, Clean Up & Depart

(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) ACYOA FALL RETREAT*

**If following this schedule, be sure to remind participants to bring a church-appropriate change of clothes for Sunday Badarak*

DAY 1 - SATURDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

2:00 - 2:30 PM	Registration and Welcome
2:30 - 2:45 PM	Midday Prayer Service
2:45 - 3:30 PM	Icebreakers
3:30 - 3:45 PM	Group Photo
3:45 - 4:45 PM	Session 1: Courage Powered by God
4:45 - 5:00 PM	Break
5:00 - 6:00 PM	Session 2: Recognizing Jesus in the Storm
6:00 - 7:00 PM	Dinner
7:00 - 8:00 PM	Session 3: From Sinking to Syncing
8:00 - 9:00 PM	Session 4: Climbing Back In: Worship After the Trial
9:00 - 10:30 PM	Movie**/Board Games/Snack Time
10:30 PM - 11:00 PM	Prepare For Bed/Quiet Time
11:00 PM	Lights Out

DAY 2 - SUNDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

8:00 - 8:30 AM	Wake Up
8:30 - 9:00 AM	Prepare for Badarak
9:00 - 9:30 AM	Guided Meditation/Personal Prayer
9:30 - 12:00 PM <i>(depending on when Badarak is in your parish)</i>	Divine Liturgy/Badarak
12:00 - 1:30 PM <i>(depending on when Badarak ends)</i>	Attend Fellowship/Coffee Hour
1:30 - 2:00 PM	Pack Up, Clean Up & Depart

(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA Fall Retreat** (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

Sample Registration Form*

(Please modify questions and fields based on the age group of participants)

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____

Sex: Male Female

Parish: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Home Phone: _____

Participant Cell Phone: _____

Participant Email: _____

PRIMARY PARENT/GUARDIAN	SECONDARY PARENT/GUARDIAN
Name:	Name:
Cell Number:	Cell Number:
Email:	Email:

_____ Yes, my *Code of Conduct* has been read and signed by me (and a parent, if applicable).

**Please note: If you'd like to go completely digital with your retreat, you may create an online registration form using [Google Forms](#). Participants can submit their registration using the registration link you send them.*

(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA Fall Retreat** (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

CODE OF CONDUCT

1. As members of the ACYOA, we are part of a Christian youth organization and expect Christian standards of behavior at all times. Therefore, all participants and chaperones shall be treated with respect and dignity at all times.
2. We are a community – we all need to clean up after ourselves, share the facilities, and treat the facilities with respect. The destruction, misuse, or abuse of property will not be tolerated. Those found responsible for such behavior will be held financially liable.
3. Be on time and follow the schedule! You are expected to participate in all activities.
4. Participate in discussions, share your ideas, and remember to listen to others. Everyone deserves a chance to speak, and everyone deserves to be heard.
5. Proper dress and language are expected at all times. Participants will not use foul or abusive language, including words of a sexually explicit or violent nature.
6. No weapons of any kind, firecrackers, or inappropriate audio/video recordings are permitted.
7. Participants will not partake in any form of drugs and/or alcohol while participating in the retreat. This includes but is not limited to alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, illegal drugs, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, snuff, chewing tobacco, vaporizers, hookahs, etc. (and their accompanying paraphernalia).

Any serious violation of these rules by participants will be evaluated on an individual basis and dealt with quickly and firmly, and may result in expulsion from the retreat. Parents and pastors will be contacted after the retreat to discuss any inappropriate behavior.

**I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE CODE OF CONDUCT,
AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE ABOVE INFORMATION.**

Participant Name PRINT: _____

Participant SIGNATURE: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent/Guardian SIGNATURE: _____ **Date:** _____

Introductions and Icebreakers

A NOTE TO FACILITATORS: *Be sure to go around and have everyone introduce themselves with their name, age, and their answer to the special question (i.e., favorite ice cream, favorite hobby, personal hero, etc.). Select one or more of the icebreakers below, based on your registration numbers, group dynamics, and time available.*

ADJECTIVE NAME GAME: Break the group up into 10-12 people. Each group forms a circle in different areas of the room, and each group member is required to think of an adjective that describes him/her AND starts with the individual's first name. Each group member will amplify/act out with a movement their new creative name, and the rest of the group will repeat that name and all the names of the previous people. Continue this until everyone has had a turn.

HUMAN BINGO: Pass out a handout and pen to each participant. Encourage them to spread around the room, and go up to people to introduce themselves and ask the person a question from their sheet. Record their person's name in the square that matches something about them. Then move on to someone else. The goal is to fill your entire Human Bingo card with different names and get to meet as many participants as possible in the time allotted. Click [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) to view two different examples of this, or create your own.

NAME TAG MANIA: Participants are given a name tag and a magic marker. They are asked to print their name on the upper half of the name tag and then draw three objects that represent who they are on the bottom portion of the tag. After completing the activity, participants are then asked to share their names, where they are from, and what they drew on the tags, and explain their significance. (i.e., My name is Jess. I am from Houston, TX. I drew a sailboat, a dolphin, and a paintbrush.) This activity allows for everyone's voice to be heard by the entire group.

THIS OR THAT: Participants will line up in the middle of the room -> there will be a video that plays in the background, and the video will say (Would you rather this or that), then people go to the side they agree with. Click [HERE](#) to view an example.

Click [HERE](#) to view additional icebreaker ideas.

Session 1: Courage Powered by God

Scripture Focus: 2 Timothy 1:7

PREP: Print scripture reading and discussion questions for each participant on a 2-sided handout. Click [HERE](#) for the handout.

SUPPLIES: A large sheet of paper or whiteboard, sticky notes or index cards, and pens.

ROOM SET-UP: Classroom style with chairs.

LESSON PLAN:

0:00–0:05 | Welcome & Opening Prayer

- Welcome participants and introduce the theme: God sometimes calls us beyond what feels safe — into boats, into storms, into unknown waters — but His direction is always purposeful.
- Opening Prayer: Asking God for courage to hear His call and step out in faith.

Prayer for Courage

Lord Jesus,

You call us to step out in faith,

even when the waters feel deep and the winds are strong.

Give us the courage to hear Your voice and follow,

trusting that You are with us in every storm.

Strengthen our hearts, guide our steps,

and lead us always closer to You.

Amen.

0:05–0:15 | Scripture Reading & Reflection

- Read aloud together **2 Timothy 1:7**.
- Key reflection points (facilitator-led):
 1. Fear does not come from God
 - The “spirit of fear” refers to timidity, discouragement, or paralyzing anxiety.
 - Paul reminds Timothy (and us) that fear is *not* the defining mark of a follower of Christ.
 2. God equips us with power
 - “Power” (Greek: *dynamis*) reflects spiritual strength, courage, and the ability to

act boldly.

- This is not personal confidence alone—it's confidence rooted in God's presence and calling.

3. God gives us love

- Love is the anchor of Christian action.
- This love empowers courage because it turns our attention outward—to God and others—rather than inward toward fear.

4. God gives us self-discipline / sound mind

- The phrase can mean self-control, wise judgment, or a disciplined, steady mindset.
- God equips us to think clearly, make faithful choices, and act with intentionality even when circumstances feel chaotic.

5. Courage is tied to calling

- Paul gives this encouragement in the context of Timothy's ministry.
- It's a reminder that when God calls someone, He supplies what they need to walk it out.

0:15–0:35 | Interactive Activity: "Safe Shore vs. Stormy Sea"

Supplies: a large sheet of paper or whiteboard, sticky notes or index cards, and pens.

1. Draw a shoreline on one side (safe, familiar) and a stormy sea with a boat on the other side (risky, faith-filled).
2. Prompt: "What are the safe shores in your life — places where it's easy to stay comfortable?" Participants write on sticky notes and place them on the *shore*.
3. Prompt: "What 'boats' or callings might Jesus be inviting you into that feel stormy or risky — but require faith?" Notes go in the *boat/sea*.
4. Group reflection:
 - What happens when we stay on shore? What happens when we risk stepping out?
 - What storms might we face — and what spiritual preparation do we need?

Facing the Storm: The Lesson from Buffalo and Cows

In the plains of Colorado, where both buffalo and cows roam, there's a powerful lesson about

how we respond to life's storms.

When a storm approaches, cows run away from it. But because the storm moves faster than they do, they end up running *with* the storm—prolonging their time in the wind, rain, and struggle. Their attempt to avoid the storm only makes the suffering last longer.

Buffalo, on the other hand, do the opposite. When they see a storm coming, they instinctively turn toward it and run straight into it. By facing the storm head-on, they pass through it quickly—and though the impact is intense, it is brief.

This simple image carries a deep truth for our lives of faith:

When we face our trials, fears, and responsibilities directly—trusting that Christ walks with us—we often find that the storm passes sooner and strengthens us in the process. But when we avoid or run from our challenges, we only stretch out our pain and delay the peace that follows.

So when the next storm comes, may we have the courage of the buffalo—to run into it with faith, knowing that beyond the clouds, the sun still shines.

0:35–0:55 | Small Group Discussion (4–5 per group)

Questions:

1. Why do you think Jesus allows us to travel into storms instead of calm waters?
2. What does it mean for you personally to “hear and respond” when Jesus says, “Come”?
3. Where in your life is God inviting you to trust His direction right now?
4. What spiritual practices (prayer, scripture, worship, service, silence, community) help you prepare to obey God’s call?
5. What might happen if you never leave the safe shore?

0:55–1:00 | Closing Prayer & Commitment

- Invite each participant to reflect and choose one “storm” or “boat” they are willing to trust God in this week, and keep that thought with them throughout the remaining sessions.
- Closing prayer: ask God for courage to obey His call and to see His presence in the storm.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Give us courage to obey Your call, even when the path leads through the storm.

Open our eyes to see Your presence in the winds and waves,
and strengthen our faith to trust that You are with us always.

Lead us safely through every trial,

and bring us closer to You each step of the way.

Amen.

Closing remarks

As we end this session, let's remember: faith doesn't grow on the shore — it grows in the storm. Like the man in John 5, Jesus meets us where we are but asks us to move — to trust Him enough to take a step forward, even when it feels uncertain.

Storms will come for all of us. We can be like the cows that run away and stay in the storm longer, or like the buffalo that turn toward it and move through it with courage. The difference isn't in the weather — it's in the direction.

When we face our challenges with faith, trusting that Christ is already there, the storm may still be hard, but it doesn't last forever. On the other side, we find growth, strength, and peace.

So this week, think of one "storm" or "boat" in your life — one place where God might be calling you to trust Him more. And remember: the safest place to be is not on the shore, but wherever Jesus is — even in the storm.

Session 2: *Recognizing Jesus in the Storm*

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:7 — “We walk by faith, not by sight.”

PREP: Print scripture reading and discussion questions for each participant on a 2-sided handout. Click [HERE](#) for the handout.

SUPPLIES: Blindfolds (or bandanas), cones/chairs/markers to create a simple obstacle course.

ROOM SET-UP: Classroom style with chairs facing the screen

LESSON PLAN:

0:00–0:05 | Welcome & Opening Prayer

- Briefly recap Session 1 and introduce the theme: Jesus is present even in the chaos of storms, but it takes faith to recognize Him.
- **Prayer for Trust**
Lord Jesus,
You are with us even when the wind is strong
and the waves rise around us.
Open our eyes to see You in the storm,
and open our ears to hear Your voice above all others.
Calm our fears and strengthen our faith,
for we walk by trust in You, not by sight.
Amen.

0:05–0:15 | **Scripture Grounding**

- Read 2 Corinthians 5:7 aloud together.
- Reflection points (facilitator-led, 5 minutes):
 - Walking by faith means relying on God’s direction, not just what we see.
 - Storms/disruptions in life can cloud our vision — but Jesus is still there.
 - Faith over fear begins when we trust His voice more than our circumstances.

0:15–0:35 | **Interactive Activity: Blindfold Trust Walk**

Supplies: Blindfolds (or bandanas), cones/chairs/markers to create a simple obstacle course.

1. Pair participants: one blindfolded (“walker”), one guide (“voice”).
2. The blindfolded person navigates the short course only by listening to their partner’s instructions.
3. Switch roles so both experience leading and trusting.
4. Debrief together:
 - How did it feel to trust a voice without being able to see?
 - What distracted you?
 - How does this mirror trusting Jesus in the storms of life?

0:35–0:55 | Small Group Bible Discussion

Break into small groups (4–6 people). Use these discussion questions:

1. Where in your life do you feel like you’re “walking blind”?
2. What helps you recognize Jesus’ presence when life feels uncertain?
3. What voices compete with God’s voice in your life?
4. How do you personally practice listening for God’s guidance (prayer, scripture, worship, community, silence)?
5. What does choosing *faith over fear* look like for you right now?

0:55–1:00 | Closing Reflection & Prayer

- Invite participants to silently reflect: *Where do I need to trust Jesus more fully this week?*

The Pilot and the Fog

A seasoned pilot once described flying through a thick fog at night. He was alone in the cockpit, thousands of feet above the ground, unable to see a single light below. The world outside was pitch black.

He explained that in moments like this, every natural instinct tells you to rely on your feelings — to turn the plane the way your body *feels* is right. But that instinct can be deadly. Pilots who trust their senses in the fog often become disoriented and end up steering the plane in circles, or even upside down, without realizing it.

That’s why every pilot is trained to fly **by the instruments** — to trust the dashboard, not their feelings. The instruments tell the truth, even when your body insists otherwise.

The pilot said, “When you can’t see the runway, and your gut screams that you’re off course, that’s when discipline and trust matter most. You have to choose to believe what’s true, not what feels true.”

The Lesson

In the same way, faith is learning to fly by God’s instruments — His Word, His promises, and His voice — especially when life feels dark or confusing.

We may not see where we’re going, but Jesus remains the steady guide who never loses orientation. Our “spiritual instruments” — Scripture, prayer, the Church, and the Holy Spirit — keep us from spiraling when we walk by faith, not by sight.

When we rely on what we see or feel, we often drift. But when we trust the One who sees the whole path, we find our way safely through the fog.

Closing Remarks

As we close tonight, remember what we learned through the trust walk and the story of the pilot: faith isn’t about seeing clearly — it’s about trusting the One who does.

When life feels like thick fog or crashing waves, Jesus is still there, even when our eyes can’t find Him. His voice, His Word, and His Spirit are the instruments that guide us safely through.

So this week, when you can’t see the next step, don’t panic — pause, listen, and trust His voice. Keep walking by faith, not by sight, knowing that the One who leads you will never lose His way.

- **Short prayer:**

Lord Jesus,
When storms rise,
help us to see You clearly and trust Your voice above all others.
Keep us steady in faith, even when we cannot see the way ahead.
Amen.

- **Optional group response:** *“Faith over fear. I will walk by faith, not by sight.”*

Session 3: From Sinking to Syncing

PREP: Confirm AV equipment with audio is all set, watch the video in advance, and purchase supplies.

SUPPLIES: Print scripture reading and discussion questions for each participant on a 2-sided handout. Click [HERE](#) for the handout. A dishpan of water for each group of 4-6 participants, and for each participant, a styrofoam piece/or a wooden cross, a small rock, and a Sharpie.


ROOM SET-UP: Classroom style with chairs facing the screen

LESSON PLAN:

0:00–0:05 | Welcome & Opening Prayer

- Begin with a warm welcome and recap of the previous sessions.
- Introduce the topic of this session: “When you feel like you’re sinking, sync with God instead.”

0:05–0:25 | Scripture Reading, Video, & Reflection

- Read Matthew 14:27–29 aloud (maybe twice, with pauses).
- Share a short reflection:
 - Peter stepped out in faith, but when his eyes shifted from Jesus to the wind, he began to sink.
 - Like Peter, when we sync with God, we rise above fear, but when we lose focus, we can sink.
- Show video:  Jesus Walks On Water and Saves Peter (Matthew 14)
 - (Video start and finish: 1:04-8:30)
 - Ask participants to share reflections from the video.
 - Ask how the visualization of the passage is different than reading the passage?

0:25–0:40 | Faith Floats, Fear Sinks Small Group Activity

Supplies: Dishpan of water, Styrofoam pieces/or wooden cross, small rocks, Sharpies.

1. Break up into groups of 4-6 people
2. Each participant gets 1–2 rocks and 1–2 Styrofoam pieces.
3. On the rocks, write down fears, anxieties, distractions.
4. On the Styrofoam, write words of faith: promises of God, prayers, or scripture.
5. Drop them in the water together:

- Rocks sink (fear pulls us down).
 - Styrofoam floats (faith lifts and keeps us afloat).
6. Reflection: “When we sync with God in prayer, faith floats and fear loses its weight.”

0:40–1:15 | Small Group Discussion

Use the provided questions:

1. Peter was already walking on the water with Jesus—why did he begin to sink, and what does this teach us about focus?
2. How does keeping our eyes on Jesus change our perspective on fear?
3. What are the “wind and waves” in your daily life (distractions) vs. things that strengthen your faith?
4. Are there areas where you’re trying to stay afloat on your own instead of syncing with Jesus?
5. What are practical ways you can re-sync with God when life feels heavy? (*prayer, scripture, worship, community, gratitude journaling, silence/solitude, service, etc.*)
6. What promises of God bring you peace when you feel anxious or afraid?

1:15–1:30 | Group Sharing

- Invite volunteers to share one takeaway or one way they plan to “re-sync” with God this week.
- Encourage participants to keep their “rocks” (fears) and “styrofoam” (faith) as a reminder of the activity and their ability to overcome fear.

The Lifeguard’s Rescue

A lifeguard was once asked, “Why do you sometimes wait before rescuing someone who’s drowning?”

He explained, “When a person is panicking, flailing their arms and fighting the water, it’s nearly impossible to help them. If I go in too early, they might pull me under, too. So I stay close, ready — and the moment they stop struggling, that’s when I move in. When they finally stop trying to save themselves, I can lift them up.”

That’s often how it works in our faith, too.

We try to stay afloat by our own strength — fighting the waves of fear, stress, or control — and all the while, Jesus is near, waiting for us to let go and call out, “*Lord, save me!*”

When we stop striving and start trusting, we give Him room to reach out His hand and lift us back up. That’s the moment we stop sinking — and start syncing with God.

Closing Remarks

As we close this session, remember: Peter didn’t sink because the storm grew stronger — he sank because his focus shifted. The waves were always there, but his faith wavered when his

eyes moved off Jesus.

The same happens to us. When we focus on the wind, fear grows heavier. But when we focus on Christ, faith floats — no matter how rough the waters get.

This week, when you feel like you're sinking, pause and re-sync. Breathe. Pray. Remember His words: *"Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."* Let that be your anchor in the storm — not your strength, but His presence.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

When we start to sink beneath the weight of fear or doubt,

Reach out your hand and lift us up.

Teach us to stop striving and start trusting,

to sync our hearts with Yours through faith and prayer.

Keep our eyes fixed on You — our calm in every storm and our strength in every step.

Amen.

Session 4: Climbing Back In — Worship After the Trial

Theme: *The Greater the Challenge, the More Glorious the Triumph*

Scripture Connection: Matthew 14:27–29 (Peter walking on water)

PREP: Confirm AV equipment with audio is all set and watch the video in advance.

SUPPLIES: Print scripture reading and discussion questions for each participant on a 2-sided handout. Click [HERE](#) for the handout.

Click [HERE](#) to view and print copies of “A Letter to Myself”, provide envelopes, stamps, and pens.

ROOM SET-UP: Classroom style with chairs facing the screen

LESSON PLAN:



0:00–0:10 | Welcome & Opening Prayer

- Welcome participants back, reframe the theme: *Trials are not the end — they are opportunities for God to grow our character, deepen our trust, and lead us back into worship.*
- Opening prayer asking God to reveal how He is at work through challenges.

0:10–0:25 | Scripture & Reflection

- Read Matthew 14:27-29 again to anchor the session.
- Short reflection:
 - Peter sank, but then climbed back into the boat with Jesus — and the others worshiped.
 - Growth happens not only in stepping out but also in getting back up and returning to worship.
 - “The greater the challenge, the more glorious the triumph.”

0:25–0:40 | Video Clip: *The Butterfly Circus*

-  The Butterfly Circus [Short Film HD] By Nick Vujicic
- FYI  5.The Butterfly Circus Movie and Discussion Questions
- Show clip: 13:27–17:22.
- Context: Will (Nick Vujicic) is not helped when falling into the water, but that challenge is

what strengthens him.

- Brief pause afterward for silent reflection.

0:40–1:05 | Small Group Discussion (25 minutes)

Questions:

1. Did you think the group was harsh for not supporting Will as he went through the water? In what way did facing it on his own ultimately lead to his success?
2. What are some things in your life you see, as Will did, as weaknesses that could ultimately be strengths and lead to great triumph?
3. Think about what would've been different if Jesus had held Peter's hand the whole time. Would he have gained any insight into his faith?
4. How might God be inviting you to step out of your comfort zone right now, and how can you lean on Him through faith?
5. How have our discussions shaped the way you face your fears? Do you feel called to live differently by choosing faith over fear, or do you feel comfortable with where you are at now? What steps can you take to trust Jesus more, even in doubt?

1:05–1:25 | Personal Reflection Activity (20 minutes)

“A Letter to Myself”

- Each participant writes a personal letter to themselves about one step they'll take to live *faith over fear* in daily life when they return home.
- Encourage them to:
 - Be specific (practices, habits, risks, or acts of trust).
 - Include encouragement and a scripture verse or prayer.
- Seal letters in envelopes, with their name and address on the outside.
- Facilitators will mail these back on/around **January 1** as a reminder and check-in.

1:25–1:30 | Closing Prayer & Sending

- Prayer of surrender: Thanking God for using trials to build trust and for meeting us when we climb back in.
- Closing blessing: *“The greater the challenge, the more glorious the triumph. Take heart, for Christ is with you in every storm.”*

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Thank You for meeting us in every storm and lifting us when we fall.

Teach us to rise again with faith, to worship You after every trial,
and to see each challenge as a path to Your glory.

The greater the challenge, the more glorious the triumph—
and all glory belongs to You.

Amen.

Faith Over Fear Scripture

Optional: Post Scripture focusing on Faith Over Fear all over the retreat center/room for participants to reflect on. Ask them which passage resonates the most with them and why. Provide a handout of the passages at the conclusion of the retreat. Click [HERE](#) for scripture to post. Click [HERE](#) for a two-page take-home handout with the scripture.

God's Assurance in Fear

- **Isaiah 41:10** – *“Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.”*
- **Joshua 1:9** – *“I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”*
- **Deuteronomy 31:6** – *“Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.”*

Faith that Overcomes (NRSV)

- **2 Timothy 1:7** – *“For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.”*
- **Psalms 27:1** – *“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”*
- **1 John 4:18** – *“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.”*

Trust in God's Presence

- **Psalms 56:3–4** – *“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can flesh do to me?”*
- **John 14:27** – *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”*
- **Romans 8:38–39** – *“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Stepping Out in Faith

- **Matthew 14:27-29** – *“But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, ‘Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.’ Peter answered him, ‘Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.’ He said, ‘Come.’ So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus.”*
- **Mark 5:36** – *“But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, ‘Do not fear, only believe.’”*
- **Hebrews 13:6** – *“So we can say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?’*


***Suggested List of Movies and Video Links
With the Theme of Faith Over Fear***


<i><u>SPIRITUAL (for an older audience)</u></i>	<i><u>FAMILY-FRIENDLY (all ages)</u></i>
Facing the Giants (2006)	Akeelah and the Bee (2006)
Soul Surfer (2011)	Heaven is for Real (2014)
A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood (2019)	The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (2005)

Each of these can be followed up with a short reflection or discussion, like:


- *What fears did the characters face?*
- *Where did they find courage?*
- *How does God help us do the same in our lives?*

Session Video Clips:

20-minute  [Jesus Walks On Water and Saves Peter \(Matthew 14\)](#) Show clip: 1:04-8:30

 [The Butterfly Circus \[Short Film HD\] By Nick Vujicic](#) Show clip: 13:27–17:22.

Context: Will (Nick Vujicic) is not helped when falling into the water, but that challenge is what strengthens him.

We have included discussion questions here, should you choose to show the full 20-minute video.  [5.The Butterfly Circus Movie and Discussion Questions](#)