



FINDING
YOUR
WAY
IN
THE
STORM

STUDY GUIDE

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When you stop and remember the many major storms that have occurred in America, your mind quickly goes to storms like Hurricane Sandy, Hurricane Katrina, and even the recent Hurricane Matthew. Perhaps the most memorable in modern history, Hurricane Katrina in 2008, displaced millions of residents and killed more than 1800 people. As devastating as these super storms were, there is one that was far more devastating, named the Galveston Hurricane of 1900.

The story in the papers read that the Galveston storm killed over 8000 people. Despite warnings and the urging from experts to evacuate, most residents chose to ignore the warnings, and instead, “ride out the storm.” A decision that would lead to their demise. One is left to wonder, had they really understood what was coming, would they have prepared or chosen differently?

Likewise, the aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami reads like a cautionary tale. What started as just a blip on the radar in the Caribbean and one-foot swells on the Navy's telescope, turned into 50-foot waves by the time they reached shore killing over 200,000 people. It was one of the deadliest natural disasters in history.

Storms are real events that can carry devastating news of disaster and harm. Just like there are storms that carry rain, hail, high winds and overwhelming storm surges that can flood the land, there are also storms in our lives that can carry out the same kind of damage and devastation on a personal level. Sometimes, the intensity of a storm isn't fully understood at its inception. And many times, if we truly understood what we were heading into, we would react and prepare differently.

What do you do in a season when it feels like a storm is raging and everything seems to be working against you? It may not look so serious at its inception, but before you know it, the storm is upon you and there is no time left to prepare. Life is made up of time. Some of those seasons are stormy, where everything seems to go wrong, and it would appear that God is nowhere to be found. These times, as brief as they may be, can be defining moments in our lives and the lives of those we love.

Mark chapter four talks about a real-life storm that, like so many other events in the Bible, carries meaning for our personal lives where we find ourselves caught in a storm. I like that old saying, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” What do you do when you get in a season and it seems like everything is just so hard? All of our life, our days are changing and we go through seasons; seasons of weeping and seasons of laughter, seasons of winning and seasons of losing and setbacks. Sometimes, for the believer, the lows can seem lower than they are because we can’t understand why God would allow bad things to happen in our life. What do you do when you get in that rough season and it seems like God has abandoned you?

This is exactly what the disciples went through. In Mark 4, Jesus had just finished teaching the multitudes on the shore as he asked the disciples to get in the boat and go over to the other side. On the way from where they were to where they were going, they found themselves in the crosshairs of a massive storm. They were in the storm rowing and toiling and struggling and straining. They did not want to be there. They had just experienced the miracle of Jesus multiplying the loaves and the fish to feed 5,000 people. They watched that! They would have been fine to sit there and eat their fish and chips and enjoy the miracle that they had just experienced. Instead, Jesus commanded them—the

King James said *constrained* them. That's a strong word. He did not give them a choice. He said, "Let us cross over to the other side" (Mark 4:35). They were not in the storm just because they had messed up. They were there by divine instructions.

Not long after they obeyed the voice of Jesus, the rain began to fall. Sound familiar? Now the storm was raging and the lightning was flashing. They were out some three miles into the water and they didn't have a motor or quick access to get out. They were struggling with what little they had, a set of wooden oars, when it begins to dawn on them, "We could lose our lives!"

We find that the disciples get out in the middle of the raging storm, and notice Jesus is nowhere to be found. I can imagine them saying, "Where is Jesus?" And somebody calling out, "He's asleep!" Can you imagine their reaction to know that in their scariest moment ever, Jesus is below in the cabin sound asleep? When they think they need Him the most, He seems oblivious to their cries for help. Ever felt like that?

Many times in the storms of life, the hardest thing to deal with is silence. Or more accurately, what sounds like absolute silence from the God you have put your hope in. Many nights you might find yourself laying awake saying, "God I need you

now. Where are you? What do I do?” I would venture to say that there isn’t a faithful saint alive today who has not felt this in their hours of need on more than one occasion. When this happens, there are two very important facts that you need to cling to:

1. God is there. He’s right there with you in the storm, and He is far nearer than you could ever imagine. He declares this in His Word again and again.
2. The teacher is always silent and observant during a test. And so very hopeful to see you pass!

God wants our faith to grow! Sometimes it’s necessary to go through situations that stretch our faith and teach us to use the Word we’ve been taught.

God can only take us as far as we act upon the Word that He puts in us. And sometimes, He allows “Transitional Storms” to get us to use the Word that we’ve been taught.

You may just be realizing you’re in a transition yourself. In the times we find ourselves crying out, “Where are you Jesus?” we’re typically right in the middle of the storm. But remember in Mark 4:39, once the disciples called for Jesus, He said,



“They were not in the storm just because they had messed up. They were there by divine instructions.”

“Peace, be still.” Then He admonished them not to fear, but have faith.



**REFLECT ON WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED ABOUT
THESE SILENT TIMES:**

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Where was Jesus in the middle of the storm?

1. Why do you think God chooses to be “silent” at times?

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2. Sometimes we wait on an audible voice or miraculous sign, but more often God speaks through His Word. Because of this, what do you think is the most important thing you can do to prepare for uncertain times?

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God-Sized Storms

It's important to remember that it was God who put the disciples in the storm. It's also important to remember that God is God, and He knew that the storm was coming when He sent them. He knew exactly what He was doing. God does not make mistakes, and if you're in a storm—God has allowed you to be where you are. As a follower of Jesus, you are where you are, and God says, "I am the God who still has a superseding rule over your life called divine instructions, and even out of this struggle, I'm going to get glory."

You're not in the storm because you've done something wrong. John 10:10 says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy" (NIV). This is spiritual warfare. We are in a real battle for our souls, for our families, for our victories . . . for everything! When you became born-again, you became an enemy of the kingdom of darkness and the devil doesn't play fair. You are exactly where God wants you to be. This is not judgment from your past. When He allows you to go through a severe storm and come out on the other side, you gain a perspective the people sitting on the seashore will never see. You gain an appreciation, a faith, an understanding or revelation, and even an intimacy that you cannot have without going through the trial. You are going to see something only God can show you.

Reflections:

Take a moment to reflect on the storm you are going through right now, or a storm you've went through in the past.

1. What were some of the specific things you encountered in that storm?

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2. Can you recall a time in your life you felt God was silent when you needed Him? Looking back, how can you see His faithfulness?

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3. What about right now? What are ways you can see God being faithful in your present circumstance?

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*“You’re not in the
storm because
you’ve done
something wrong.”*

Key Points

1. Remember when you are in the storm, it is no surprise to God. He either placed you in that storm as a season of testing or teaching. He allows you to go through storms to experience His power and His sovereignty.

How does it change your perspective on the storm you just reflected on above to know it was God who either brought the storm or allowed it to come?

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2. You're not in the storm because you've done something wrong.

This is a powerful concept, because as humans, we look for someone to blame, and usually, because we still sin, we blame ourselves. How does it make you feel to know that most storms have nothing to do with anything you have done wrong?

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*“Remember when you
are in the storm, it is
no surprise to God.
He either placed you in
that storm as a season
of testing or teaching.”*

3. You are exactly where God wants you to be.



REFLECT ON THIS POWERFUL POINT:

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4. God's going to give you a glimpse of something that the crowd on the shore can't see.

Not everyone was asked to go over to the other side. Those *on the shore* may never know what you come to know or see what you will see. You were chosen for the season or assignment, just like those disciples who were chosen from the crowd. Reflect on how this makes you feel or changes the way you think about your storm:

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5. *Talking* about storms is never the same as being *in* a storm.



*“In the times we find
ourselves crying out,
‘Where are you Jesus?’
we’re typically right in
the middle of the storm.”*

We wish God would just tell us about the lessons learned in a storm, but ‘lessons’ are never the same teacher as experience. Reflect on what you ‘caught’ that you might have missed if it was only ‘taught.’

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- 6.** When you can’t see God, He can still see you. He notices people who keep rowing in the storm. Our inability to see Him does not stop His ability to watch us. He sees how hard you are trying. He sees all. How important is this to you and why?

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- 7.** God looks to see if you are you going forward.

God’s goal is always to keep you moving forward . . . closer to who He created you to be, and closer to Him. Can you see the difference between who you were before the storm and who you are (or are becoming) as a result of the storm?

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*“It’s not the circumstance
that determines the
outcome, it’s what is on
the inside of us.”*

8. He sees the faith of a mustard seed in you.



**REFLECT ON HOW YOUR FAITH HAS GROWN IN
YOUR STORMY SEASON:**

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9. He sees the praise in you.

Learning to give praise and worship through the storm is one of the greatest lessons we learn about how to navigate the storms of life. What are ways that you can show praise (or did show praise) through your storms of life?

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10. He sees your willingness to not give up.

In some storms, especially physical illness or the death of a loved one, it seems the greatest victories are simply to not give up and to not turn our back on God. Job is the greatest example of not giving up, and not giving in. Reflect on your



*“I have learned in
whatever state I am,
to be content.”
Philippians 4:11*

faithfulness through the storm and after the storm.

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11. He sees the good.

It is critical that you understand God is not in the “gotcha” business. He is a loving Father and He sees the good. Through all the muck and the mud a storm can bring, He sees the good, and He knows your heart. Talk about the encouragement that comes from knowing that your heavenly Father sees the good.

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12. When it gets tough, look for breadcrumbs. Remember what God has already done!

This is so critical in every storm. We must stop and remember all the times God has proven Himself faithful to us again and again. Take a moment to reflect on the faithfulness of God in YOUR life.

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*“You are going
to see something
only God can
show you.”*

13. Remember what God has done in the past by declaring His goodness to you. Confess this statement in faith: “The Lord’s going to prosper me. I’ll be blessed in the city and in the field. I will be faithful through the storm. My cup runneth over! I shall not want, the Lord will supply my needs.”

14. Always remember to welcome Jesus on board. He is nearby right now! Jesus is close to you right now and a miracle is within your grasp. Take the oars of faith, and take a moment to declare victory in your storm right now. Speak faith over your situation and over all those affected by this or any storm.

Transitional Storms

Sometimes there is this gap between seasons and you find yourself right in the path of a different kind of storm. I call these kinds of storms “transitional storms.” This is exactly what happened to the disciples in Mark chapter four. The disciples were seated on the shore with many others while Jesus was teaching them from a boat on the water. At the end of his message, He tells the disciples, “Let us cross over to the other side” (Mark 4:35). He wanted His people to transition.

One of the keys to progress in life is the ability to transition

well. The word transition means the ability to move from one thing to another. Webster defines it as “moving from one place, or condition, to another place, or condition.”

It seems all of our life we're in a transition. It's interesting that just when you master one particular area, life does a shift on you, and something new is required. Like when you finally think you've got parenting down, all the kids are grown. Or when you finally get your commute timed just right . . . roadwork! When you've settled into your career and find that perfect fit, a new boss comes. We are forced into transitions all the time; some are easier to navigate than others.

Life will put you in scenarios you hadn't planned on and sooner or later, transition will come, and you'll have to find yourself moving from one place to another. Sometimes it is geographical and sometimes metaphorical. Sometimes it's voluntary, sometimes it's involuntary. And if you don't know how to transition well, then you'll live a life of constant frustration.

Transitioning Well

Most people do not know how to transition well. Most businesses and companies do not know how to transition well. Most churches absolutely, and surely do not know how to transition well. If you change anything in a church, about

half the people will get upset. But if you don't learn how to transition well, you'll end up using yesterday's solutions on tomorrow's troubles.

Circumstances do not dictate your life. There's somebody who's going through the exact same thing you're going through, and they're making it. So, it's not the circumstance, it is what is on the inside of us. Transition can be a dangerous time in people's lives. When you don't transition well, your conduct will not match your beliefs. For every context, there is a proper conduct. Every time there's a shift or a transition, you have to learn how to conduct yourself in that new place.

The apostle Paul, In Phil 4:11-13 put it like this:

I AM NOT SAYING THIS BECAUSE

I AM IN NEED, FOR I HAVE LEARNED TO BE

CONTENT WHATEVER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

I KNOW WHAT IT IS TO BE IN NEED, AND I KNOW

WHAT IT IS TO HAVE PLENTY,

I HAVE LEARNED THE SECRET OF BEING

CONTENT IN ANY AND EVERY SITUATION,

WHETHER WELL FED OR HUNGRY, WHETHER

LIVING IN PLENTY OR IN WANT.

I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH HIM WHO

GIVES ME STRENGTH” (NIV).

The King James Version says, in verse 12:

“I know how to be abased and I know how to abound.”

We need to understand there is a proper conduct for abounding. When you're on top, there's a proper way to act and live. When you're on the bottom, it's not the same, but there's a proper conduct for when things are low and you're abased.

Some people know how to be abased. They can serve God in the low times. When they lose their job, when everything's falling apart, when they get a bad x-ray, or everything is going bad. You don't have to beg them to come to Church. They're, there!

But many times, as soon as a person transitions from being abased to abounding; when they get a job, they get a

promotion, when everything is going wonderful—they forget about God. They quit coming to Church and end up out on the lake on Sunday in their new boat that they paid for with their tithe money.

There are people who learn how to abound. As long as they're on top, God is blessing them, they're prospering, and everything is wonderful, they're praising God. They're in Church and they're on fire for the Lord! But as soon as they hit a low place, they get discouraged. They say, "God doesn't love me, and God's not fair," and they quit.

What we have to understand is that life is full of transition. One day you're the big dog, and the next day you're the fire hydrant. You have to learn how to transition well from one season to the other. That's why Paul said these profound words:

"In whatever state I am in, I am content"

We must learn to transition well and to be "content" through the transitional storms of life such as the ones mentioned below:

- 1. Growing through the stages of life**

Can you remember the last 'transitional storm' you have gone through? Reflect below:



*“Let us cross
over to the
other side.”
Mark 4:35*

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2. Experiencing newfound freedom

Can you remember a time when you had newfound freedom, or a time where you were able to do more than you normally could? What did you do with this newfound freedom? Did you waste it and do nothing? Did you do things you would not normally do? Did you do anything you regret? Or did you use it to extend God’s Kingdom in you or through you?

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Reflections:

3. Relationship transitions

Reflect on the last relationship transition and how you handled that. Is there anything you would do differently if you could? Any regrets? Anything you are glad you did?

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*And let us not grow
weary while doing
good, for in due
season we shall reap
if we do not lose heart.
Galatians 6:9*

4. Leadership transitions

Reflect on the last time you went through a leadership transition. This could be a time where your own leadership role or capacity changed, or a time when your manager, supervisor, or even pastor changed. How did you respond? Is there anything you would do differently if you could go back? Is there anything you did well? Did you have a positive or negative impact on others during this transition?

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Our ability to transition is based on our ability to hear what the Lord is saying. Jesus was always teaching His disciples how to move forward.

Allow God to speak over your life. He's standing out in your future, and He's saying, *"I'm already out here! I'm already in control of the sea. I promise you, you're going over to the other side. But you won't make it until you learn how to apply My Word."*

In Mark 4, He taught the disciples as much as they were able to hear. In other words, God can only take us as far as we act upon the Word that He puts in us. Sometimes He allows



*Be joyful in hope,
patient in affliction,
faithful in prayer.
Romans 12:12 NIV*

transitional storms to come in order to teach us to use the Word that we've been taught.

You are good ground, and God is going to bring forth fruit in your life. Confess this statement of faith, according to Matthew 13, over yourself right now:

Lord, Your Word says the secrets of the kingdom of heaven have been given to me, that I may hear with my ears, see with my eyes, and understand with my heart all that you have for me. My life is like good soil, and I believe, according to your Word that it will prosper a hundred fold.

Your faith has to be stretched in order for growth. Are you willing to be stretched? Confess this statement of faith, according to Isaiah 54:

Enlarge the place of my tent, Lord. Stretch my curtains open wide. Do not hold back your spirit from me. Allow my faith to multiply according to your Word. I believe that regardless of my circumstances, your compassion encompasses me, your kindness surrounds me, and your love for me endures forever.

God will get you to the other side of the storm. No matter what type of transition you're facing, He will get you through! Do

you believe that? Confess this statement of faith according to scripture:

Lord, I believe I will reap a harvest in due time if I don't give up! Your Word says in Galatians 6:9 to not grow weary in doing good—despite my storms, I will press on! I will persevere doing your will in order to receive the promises you have for me (Heb. 10:35-36). I will be patient in my time of testing and temptation in order to reach the purposes you've set forth!

Take a moment in closing to read and reflect on these powerful words from one of the most popular songs in the church over the last 75 years:

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee,
Thou changest not, Thy compassion's, they fail not,
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.

Great is Thy faithfulness!

Great is Thy faithfulness!

Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Great is Thy faithfulness!

Great is Thy faithfulness!

Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

You may be going through a storm right now. My prayer for you is that each storm would bring you to your knees and back to the Word of God. May you find hope in your time of praise and worship, and may the Lord bring memory after memory, and verse after verse reminding you of His faithfulness. Count on his faithfulness in your present storm . . . and all storms to follow. Never forget, though you think God is silent or too busy for your storm, nothing could be further from the truth. I believe through the years, as you look back at the storms you have weathered, you will find that old parable to be true: In each and every storm you can retrace, you'll find one set of footprints . . . His footprints as He carried you through.

