

Responding to the STORMS OF LIFE

■ by Katie DeYoung, MA, LCPC, LMHC

This article is based on the presentation given at the 2019 "Dare to Be" conference led by Natalie Grant and Charlotte Gambill. Their theme was "Speak to the Storm" referencing Acts 27 where Paul experiences a storm when sailing for Rome. After attending this conference with my coworker Aimee, we decided that these teachings held great promise and application for our clients as well.

Storms are a part of life

Storms are uninvited and bring devastation, destruction and confusion. These storms impact our spiritual life, feeding off fears and seeking to destroy our God-given purpose. They can come in the form of challenges, conflict, pain and hardship. No one is immune from the storms of life. You are either in the middle of one, just got out of one, or brace yourself because you are about to enter into one.

The point of the conference was not to evoke fear, but to remind us that God is our creator. As our creator and savior, through him, we have the ability and power to speak into these storms with firm boldness, the truth of the word and a trust and faith in the One who can calm the storm. We can choose to live out praise throughout our storms until the promises of God are revealed. We can choose to believe until there is a breakthrough and we can choose to declare whom we serve until the darkness of the storm passes.

In the Christian walk, God often gives warning prior to a storm's arrival. Think of Jonah and Noah. Remember how God warned each of them of what was ahead? God offers us the opportunity to get ready while it's calm but we are often too busy and distracted that this decreases our ability to listen and act on this warning. Sometimes these distractors can disguise themselves as positive developments, activities or opportunities, yet they still serve to dull our ability to hear God. The danger of being distracted and then finding ourselves in a storm is that this can cause a change in our spiritual hunger. As a result, we may stop reading the Word, stop worshipping or stop expressing gratitude.

Four different man-made responses to storms are described in the Acts 27 passage: Ropers, Throwers, No Hoppers and Rowers.

Ropers

Ropers try to over-prepare, protect and hold things together by their own strength. In the Acts 27 story, men tried to keep the ship from being torn apart in the storm by tying ropes around it. The danger in this is that God doesn't ask us to rely on ourselves but to trust in his provision. Becoming more aware of the areas in our lives where we rely more on our own abilities than God, starts by paying attention to where we find our rope burns.

Throwers

The second possible response to storms in life is to be a thrower. Throwers try to navigate the storm by throwing things over the side of the boat to lighten the load. They are easy to spot as these individuals may be throwing a tantrum, throwing their beliefs in people's faces or throwing out their feelings to anyone who will listen. Sometimes good things get thrown overboard in this

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mindset as you throw out anything in life that might not be helping in hopes of lightening the load, such as a job, goals, confidence, generosity or even faith. Items that if you were being reasonable and clear-minded, you would never have thrown overboard.



MY STORM SAYS...	GOD SAYS...
I can't go on	My grace is sufficient 1 Corinthians 12:9
I can't manage	I will supply all your needs Philippians 4:19
I can't forgive myself	I forgive you Romans 8:1
It's impossible	All things are possible Luke 18:27
I can't figure it out	I will direct your steps Proverbs 3:5-6

No Hoppers

A third way we tend to approach the storms of life is with an attitude of hopelessness. In this mindset, we see no value in things like worship, prayer or fellowship. God's grace, mercy, provision and faithfulness seem out of reach. This "what's the point" attitude leaves people sitting immobile as the storm continues to rage.

Rowers

The fourth response to storms in life is to be a rower. Rowers are people who held it together and trusted God during the beginning of the storm when the first wave of turmoil hit, but after the second and third wave hits they change course and follow their own plan B. Often associated with a feeling that God didn't come through as He didn't do what he was supposed to do. These individuals bail after initially trusting God and due to their disappointment don't allow God to finish what He began. When doubt arises that God will ever bring an end to the storm, you may be easily tempted to take things into your own hands by getting into a life boat and rowing to shore.

How Should We Approach the Storm?

Instead of being a roper, thrower, no hopper or rower, we need to FULLY trust that God will find us in our storms. In talking about storms, Gambill described that the eye of the storm (what some might consider to be the strongest area of wind and rain), is actually unbelievably peaceful, still, and tranquil. Thankfully we can hold on to the truth that Jesus is the Great "I" in our storms: He is the great I Am. With Him we can experience peace, stillness, and tranquility in the midst of the uncertainty and fearfulness of the storms we face.



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