



# *uncertain times*

holding on to faith and  
yielding to God's sovereignty



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# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4
1. When You Need a True Rescue .....	5
2. When You Need to Find Hope .....	7
3. When You're Not Feeling Grateful .....	9
4. When You Need To Fight Fear .....	13
5. When You're Trying to Survive .....	15
6. When Circumstances Aren't Your Fault .....	20
7. When You're Out On the Water .....	24
8. When the Trials Keep Coming .....	26
9. When You Need Courage .....	26

# Introduction

Hi!

Thanks for downloading my ebook! I hope you are being blessed by this spring's Homeschool Summit. I'm Lucille Stekl and my blog is Life Well Inspired. Way back in 2012, God put the idea for the blog on my heart and I began to understand why I always loved writing. So, humbled by His request, I began blogging out of obedience. I had no idea how much I would grow as a person by sharing what I was learning through reading and studying God's word. It has been an incredible experience and one that has changed me.

One of the biggest catalysts of change in my life was having a child diagnosed with auditory processing disorder. Early on we had him in school but brought him home and began homeschooling when he was in 3rd grade. Both the years in school and then the years at home have been challenging.

Homeschooling family relationships are wonderful but they can also be incredibly difficult. I'm sharing some of my story here and it is my prayer that God uses this ebook to encourage other families traveling a similar road.

Thanks for downloading! Enjoy!

Inspired by Him,

Lucille

## Chapter I

# When You Need a True Rescue

It is always inspiring to see how God worked in the past to provide something needed in the present. A great example of this is the tree that Zaccheus climbed. It was mature enough to hold a grown man, so someone had planted it long before it was needed and likely never knew they had done God's work. But it was God providing a true rescue. It brought Zaccheus to a saving relationship with Jesus.

It's even more remarkable when God does something like that in my own life. Have you ever had any experiences where you realized God had moved weeks or months before and people or things were just in the right place when you needed them? Talk about experiencing God's goodness. You can't help but feel loved. It is a true rescue because it, like Zaccheus experienced, restores our relationship with Jesus.

During my dad's cancer diagnosis roller coaster, I was amazed at the people close to me who walked with me through it. One friend, in particular, had recently become certified in NYS to handle Medicare accounts. So as I tried to get medicine covered for my dad and sifted through understanding the tiers of drugs, I had a trusted friend who had answers for me, and I couldn't help but see God's fingerprints. God didn't move her into that job only to help me, but he knew what I needed and moved to provide it long before I needed it.

In that extended season of being poured out and in desperate need of rest, I was blessed beyond measure by the Enjoy God's Word 2021 Conference. Almost every session spoke right to my heart. Some reminded me of God's faithfulness, and some encouraged me that I wasn't alone, while God used others to reaffirm His call on my life.

When I think of the theme choice, planning, and execution phases of putting the conference together, it blows me away that the messages were exactly what I needed at that time. God is so good. He is faithful in the provision of a true rescue. Psalm 121 paints a beautiful picture for us, but verse 1 is specifically beautiful.

"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

Psalm 121:1

One of the things that struck me was Katie Orr saying that hopelessness was nothing more than forgetfulness. Hopelessness comes when we lose sight of what God has done for us. It is so easy to lose sight of that, though, isn't it?

Another speaker spoke of the scarcity mindset. She said the scarcity mindset sets in when someone is completely poured out and burned out. In our exhausted state, our view often focuses on the negative. It's just how our mind operates. As a result, we often can't see the good around us during challenging times, much less God's goodness!

Have you been there?

Once God opened my eyes to that fact, I had to ask God to show me the good around me. I realized I had slowly slipped into that place, incapable of finding any good. And that makes for even more profound exhaustion. It is not a good place to find yourself. Thankfully, God is all too willing to help us see His goodness when we ask, just like he will give wisdom to those who ask. He will provide a rescue, and it begins with recognizing how you're feeling.

A few weeks before this conference, God began opening my eyes to how negative my mindset had become. I realized things couldn't be as bad as they seemed, but I couldn't figure out how to change that perspective. God began the rescue with that realization. My help, a true rescue, came from the Lord.

So today, I'm grateful for what God has done. I am thankful for the rescue and want to give Him the glory. He has given me my hope back with a glimpse of the truth that He's not finished with me yet. He answered my prayer, and I have begun to see the good things again. The negative aspects are shrinking back in my perception as the positive ones gain space in my mind.

Today, I want to encourage you. If you find yourself hopeless and poured out in the wilderness, take heart! God isn't finished with you yet, either! If you can't see His goodness on your own, ask Him to show you. Remember what He has already done and proved faithful. Remember God's promise from Isaiah 46:4: "I have made you and I will carry you, I will sustain you and I will rescue you." What an awesome God we serve!

## Chapter 2

# When You Need To Find Hope

This week we look towards a new horizon in our world—an unknown horizon. Like so many people who have gone on before us, we scan the horizon with hope for the new day it brings. We bring our past experiences as we look forward.

For centuries, people have looked to the sky for direction. God has created it to give us markers for time, marking years, seasons, months, and days. It not only helps us mark time, but it gives us clues to the upcoming weather. We are all familiar with the saying, "red sky at night, sailors delight; red sky in morning, sailors take warning." A bright red sky in the morning usually indicates a storm is on the way. Science tells us that when we see a ring around the moon, there's moisture in the air, and it is likely to rain.

While the horizon gives us clues literally, the concept of a horizon is also applied figuratively. In each season we enter, there's a figurative horizon. Current events, the political landscape, relationships, and past experiences provide us with those 'red sky in morning' or 'red sky at night' clues.

An unknown horizon usually means change. Change can be scary because change means transitions. Transitions can be tricky to navigate, even when we are transitioning into something good. And we are sure looking at change. Our world will never be the same as it was pre-pandemic, especially now as we face global unrest.

The horizon we find ourselves staring at seems like the red morning sky that warns of bad weather. We are entering a new season in our country and our world, and we are wise to consider those 'red sky' clues. They are a gift from God, reminding us where to seek hope and find our security.

Where can we find hope in the uncertain times as we face an unknown horizon? As I have strived to comprehend what is going on around me, God has encouraged me with some perspectives that have made the horizon a little less scary. The 'red sky' clues direct us to 6 truths in which we can find hope and courage in our faith.

First, God is sovereign. I know this sounds cliché, but honestly, it is the one truth that has gotten me through so many trials. We can't see what the future holds or what the repercussions of what has happened to us will mean. But regardless, God is not up there wringing His hands and shaking His head. He already knows the outcome. And He knows how it plays out and impacts all of history. We can have hope in the uncertain times before us because of this truth.

It says in Daniel 2:21 that it is God who removes and sets up kings: "He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;"

Second, kings and rulers come and go. There are evil rulers and good rulers. Some men and women in leadership love God, and some don't. A great example of this is the kings who ruled Israel. They were a mix of good and bad- some were downright evil. But God was over it all. They all had a purpose in His plan. Some of them God used to bring on judgment, and others He used to usher in times of peace.

The part that comforts me the most is God always saved a remnant of people for himself and protected them. God protects His people, the people who truly love him with their whole hearts. Ezra 9:8 offers a beautiful verse to encourage us: "But now for a brief moment favor has been shown by the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant and to give us a secure hold within his holy place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery."

Third, we will be ok even when things get hard. Our world may seem dark and dreary. It may seem that evil has the upper hand. Crushing fear and anxiety may be a constant companion. But there's a beautiful promise in 2 Corinthians 4: 8-9- "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;"

When we stay close to the Lord, he enables us to keep going, endure the trial, and even thrive in the midst of trouble. We will be ok even when the world around us is falling apart. If we are walking with the Lord, all will be well in our souls because our eyes will be on Jesus.

Fourth, everything, especially the bad, advances the gospel. We all know it's easy to forget God when times are good. We are more likely to run to him when we need His



help. But it's the trials that grow and mature us, often giving us our greatest testimony. God also uses trials to draw people to Him.

Paul was able to flip his perspective to view his trials as being a part of the advancement of the gospel. That's why he could be content in every circumstance and maintain his joy. In Philippians 1:12-14, he tells us that: "I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

We also know that Christianity grew by leaps and bounds throughout history during the most severe times of persecution. As we move into uncharted and uncertain times, we need to be seeking God for our part in advancing the gospel.

Fifth, it is God who fights for us and gives us hope in uncertain times. It often feels like it's us against the power of darkness. I don't know about you, but I often feel like problems are my battle to fight. But God frequently reminds me of the Israelite people as they conquered the promised land. The Israelite army didn't often actually fight.

There are tons of examples where they were obedient to show up and be present, but God was the one who provided the victory.

Think of Jericho. The people showed up and marched around the city. God made the walls collapse, and that's what won the battle.

Remember Gideon? He and 300 men showed up with lanterns and pots. God made the enemy think they were surrounded and outnumbered, so they turned on each other then fled.

Those are just two examples of many where God provided victory in battle. Instead of giving into fear, seek God what he's asking you to do in this time, how you can be a part of the victory. In Exodus 14, the Lord spoke these words directly: "The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

Sixth, like Esther, we were made for such a time as this. Each of us has a purpose. God knew us before we were born and placed us precisely in the exact place, time, and

family in which we are living. This fact is true for every person, born or unborn, child or adult. God doesn't make mistakes. Jeremiah 29:11 gives us a promise we can hold on to: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

We, like Esther, were created for such a time as this. We each have a God-given role to play, and this goes for our kids, too. It is easy to be fearful of their future and feel bad for the world where they will live their adult lives. But God also has them in precisely the place he needs them.

Our hope in uncertain times lies in Jesus, the author of our faith. We can trust Him and rest in His sovereignty. As we move into uncertain and uncharted times, we can confidently reject fear. The next time you see a red sky in the morning, let it remind you to seek the Lord for hope and courage in your life.

## Chapter 3

# When You're Not Feeling Grateful

Uncertainty, facing change, and trials all can produce the same effect. It often prevents us from feeling grateful. Instead, worry and a negative mindset steal our joy and bring dark storm clouds over our lives.

In this post-covid pandemic culture, we find ourselves in a new normal. The pandemic affected us all differently. Some of us are navigating life single again. Others of us struggle to help our kids adjust to academia that abruptly changed. Our kids will never experience school as we did. Still others of us are facing job loss or job change and maybe financial difficulties. And some people are experiencing trials, uncertainty, and facing change all rolled into one.

I often find the feelings of not being grateful creep up on me in a surprise attack. It's usually a slippery slope until God abruptly opens your eyes to the state of your heart. So what do you do when you find yourself not feeling grateful?

As I've studied God's goodness over the last few years, I have come to understand His sovereignty and goodness overarches everything. We can find God's goodness in both the enjoyable good things and the bad things that produce spiritual growth within us. The remedy lies in looking beyond the things of this world when you're not feeling grateful.

God challenged the Israelites to remember what He had done to get their attention off of the difficult circumstances they faced during their time in the desert. Just like it did for them, the remedy to not feeling grateful lies in intentionally putting our focus beyond the insignificant things of this world. To overcome not feeling grateful, we need to remember the things God has done for us. Remembering is precisely what the Lord commanded the Israelite people to do when they crossed over into the promised land after wandering 40 years in the desert, and it will prove helpful for us today.

We can find inspiration from the Israelites' crossing the Jordan. The story records God's command to remember what He had done for them.

In Joshua 4: 5-7, we read the story: "And Joshua said to them, "Pass on before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?' then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever."

The Israelites were finally ready to leave the wilderness and take possession of the promised land. The 40 years of desert wandering were over. God re-created the miracle of the waters separating, allowing safe passage through the Jordan River for this second generation. The people had no doubt grown up hearing their parents talking about their escape from Egypt when God parted the waters of the Red Sea, but those who had witnessed the miracle had died. Now the next generation got to witness the miracle first hand. God brought them safely to the other side by parting the Jordan river, just as He had done for their parents.

After they had safely crossed, God asked them to go back and get 12 stones, one for each tribe, to make a monument. God wanted them to remember what He had done. The reminder was not just for them. The memorial would double as a reminder to tell their children and keep the memory of the miracle alive.

Depending on the perspective, crossing the Jordan could be remembered as both good and bad. God brought them safely across, but they had all grown up in the hardship of calling the desert their home. God had delivered them and kept his promise, but he had administered painful discipline. The people entering the promised land were living their parent's punishment. There are as many bad and unpleasant parts to their story as there are good parts.

But when it was all said and done, God called the Israelites to remember, give Him the glory, and tell the story to future generations. God wanted them to remember the bad parts, too.

His goodness was there even in the bad, and it is in the midst of our bad also. So when you're not feeling grateful, pause to remember the ways God has shown His goodness to you. That is how you can recover a grateful heart!

## Chapter 4

# When You Need to Fight Fear

Not too long ago, I went through a season in my life, pre-covid, when anxiety over sickness ran rampant. It was such a deep-seated fear that it would bring on an anxiety attack if one of my family members just said they didn't feel good. Thankfully, that season ended before covid hit our world, but I intimately understood the panic and fear that ran wild. Unfortunately, the media seemed to thrive on spreading the panic, and it was essential to choose information sources carefully.

While praying over the virus and my family during the pandemic, God blessed me with some perspective that brought peace to my soul. It applies to the post-pandemic world we are facing, as well. So if you need a fresh perspective, I'd encourage you to take some time and read through the book of Job, especially the beginning and the end. The Lord reminded me of the truths of His character that are revealed in the book.

First, we learn that God is in control. As I prayed, God reminded me that He is in total control over everything. In the beginning of Job, we read a conversation between God and Satan. Satan was only permitted to go so far in his attack on Job. God said Satan could do certain things but nothing else. From this conversation, we discover that nothing happens, good or bad, without God bringing it about or allowing it. And everything has a purpose. Nothing is wasted in the hand of our Heavenly Father.

Second, we learn that God is sovereign. After the conversations between Job and his friends, Job questions God and God answers him. Three glorious chapters displaying God's power and might are left for us as God shows Job just how small and powerless he is in reality. God responds, telling Job that He's the one in control of the tides and how far the water advances. God reminds Job that He set the world in place and had His hand in everything of nature.

Third, we learn that God cares. Despite God's power and might, he took the time to respond to Job and set the record straight. God didn't leave Job to wonder if he was being punished for some wrongs he had done. Instead, God healed Job and doubly

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restored everything that had been taken from him.

This Coronavirus? It's under the control of the Almighty. Even as a tool in the hand of the devil, it has limits. God has the sovereign authority to say how much damage it can do, and we can be sure He will use it for His purposes. Nothing is wasted in the hands of our Heavenly Father. It's already beginning to bring about a renewed interest in Christianity.

In times like this, we need to keep our eyes on Jesus. "How?" you might be asking. What does that even mean? Keeping our eyes on Jesus means focusing on God's character rather than the troubles around us. It's crucial to replace the panic thoughts with things that scripture instructs us to think about, taking every thought captive to Christ.

So when fear starts to send its icy tentacles up and down your spine, remember who's in control. Replace the what-ifs with thoughts of God's character. Read through God's response in Job 38-43 and write down one or two verses showcasing God's sovereign power to replace those what-if thoughts. My favorite one is Job 38: 8-11:

Who shut in the sea with doors,  
When it burst forth and issued from the womb;  
When I made the clouds its garment,  
And thick darkness its swaddling band;  
When I fixed My limit for it,  
And set bars and doors;  
When I said,  
'This far you may come, but no farther,  
And here your proud waves must stop!'

Our God is the one in charge, and he is the conductor, if you will, of all of nature. God gives us that beautiful imagery in Job of Him creating and directing the natural processes of the oceans, sunrise, storms, and weather. God further reminds Job that he knows and cares for the animals in profound ways.

This Coronavirus is still within God's sovereign control. Likewise, the change in our world's culture because of the pandemic is still within God's control. If nothing else, we can pray and thank God for that truth when we feel overwhelmed by all this.

When the panic thoughts start to bombard your thoughts, stop and pray for the

When the panic thoughts start to bombard your thoughts, stop and pray for the advancement of the gospel and an awakening of God's truth for your country, city, or town. Ask God to bring about his will and His purposes from this pandemic. Seek Him for what he wants to do in your life because of the trials. Even this pandemic will not be wasted in the hands of our Father, who cares deeply for us.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 6 that our Father cares for us even more than the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, so he will surely provide for us as He provides for them. That's a promise we can hang on to in these uncertain times.

## Chapter 5

# When You're Trying to Survive

There is a huge movement in Christian circles that focuses on prosperity and ease in the Christian life. The prosperity message soothes people's minds with the idea that God wants them to have a life of ease. The prosperity message teaches that people can create a life of good health, money, and material possessions with just belief and by claiming certain scriptures.

Sure, it is tempting to chase after that kind of life when there are hardships in our lives. No one likes to experience physical and emotional pain. Whether it's a child gone astray or struggling, financial hardships, a troubled marriage, or other relationship, who wouldn't want their problems to disappear and everything to go smoothly? Who wouldn't want good health, lots of money and nice houses and cars?

That desire has been put in each of us because that is actually our longing for heaven. We are citizens of another country, and all the trouble will be gone when we get to heaven! This life here on earth isn't meant to fulfill our desire for heaven, though! If we are going to survive the hard times, we need to understand this fact.

Peppered throughout scripture are examples of how difficult life will be. For example, some of those scriptures, the story of Job, even show us that God allows the painful, hard, and difficult things into our lives. To strive for the easy here on earth, then, is pointless. The question, then, is this: "How do we survive the hard times?"

Make no mistake. Nothing happens without a purpose. God is absolutely sovereign and in control. The Bible has some helpful advice for surviving the difficult times. In Isaiah 25:4-5, we read that God is a stronghold to the poor and the needy in distress. We see the picture of our trials being compared to heat. The Lord is called our shelter like a cloud that offers relief from the hot sun. It says, "For you have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat; for the breath of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall, like heat in a dry place. You subdue the noise of the foreigners; as heat by the shade of a cloud, so



so the song of the ruthless is put down.”

A little further down in chapter 25, verse 9, Isaiah gives a glimpse into how the people made it through the hard times. He tells us that they waited on the Lord: "It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

We won't escape the hard things in life. Peter tells us in I Peter that we will undoubtedly have struggles because of our faith. That is the exact opposite of what our culture preaches today. In fact, I Peter 2: 20-21 tells us that Christ's life is an example for us so that we know how to struggle. He says, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps."

We need to stop chasing after the life that the prosperity message tempts us with and start leaning into the hard times. The hard times are realistically more in line with scripture and our calling as Christians.

Yes, we are called to walk the hard road. The hard road will grow us in our faith, change us to be more like Christ, and bring unbelievers to a saving faith in the Lord. Isaiah 40:28-31 tells us that the key to surviving the hard times in life is waiting on the Lord.

"Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.  
He gives power to the faint,  
and to him who has no might he increases strength.  
Even youths shall faint and be weary,  
and young men shall fall exhausted;  
but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint."

The word wait in Hebrew, which is used in these passages, means to look for, hope,

and expect. In other words, through the trials and difficulties, we need to keep our eyes on Jesus. We need to fully trust His plan for our lives through good and hard times. Our bodies and hearts were made for heaven, and that desire has been placed in our hearts. Instead of striving to make heaven here on earth, we need to keep the perspective that God will safely get us there one day. In the meantime, we need to focus on what He has for us to do here on earth while we are journeying home to Heaven.

Our work is in the hard times. The blessings are actually in the hard things. So keep on keeping on. Embrace the hard and keep your eyes on Jesus. God will right all the wrongs one day and banish pain and tears forever. We are right to long for that time and expectantly wait for that day. That waiting will give us strength and provide the proper perspective for our day-to-day, especially through the hard times.

So how do we survive the hard times? We wait on the Lord and trust His plan. We seek to do His will and focus on living out the purpose for which we have been created and called.

## Chapter 6

# When Circumstances Aren't Your Fault

What do you do when you find yourself in circumstances that are not your fault, circumstances that another person's choices and decisions have brought about?

As Ruth opens, we read the story that sets up the rest of the story, the story about how Ruth came to be widowed and childless in a foreign land. Tucked into the most romantic love story in the Bible, we find a woman who is hurt and feeling rather down about her life's circumstances. In the first chapter of Ruth, I unexpectedly found myself deeply relating to this woman who had her life turned upside down because of another person's choices.

Naomi's husband, Elimelech, had taken his family to Moab to provide for them, as was his duty as head of household. In leading his family away from Israel, he brings on hardship to them. He ultimately didn't trust God to provide in the hard times God had brought on Israel. Elimelech saw the prosperity of the pagans and took his family there.

Sadly, his decision not only brought about his death but also the death of his two sons. It also left his wife destitute. His choices brought about the bitter life that Naomi speaks of when she returns to Bethlehem. The actions of another person brought on Naomi's bitterness, which seems unfair. How often do we, too, suffer at the hands of others or because of others' actions?

We must remember that we shouldn't take offense to people because people are just tools in the hands of God. Tools that God sovereignly uses to bring about His purposes in and with our lives. I find comfort in the familiarity of Naomi's response to her life's circumstances. How often haven't I interpreted the hard times and trials as God's bitter dealings with me or his goodness withheld from me, only to find later on that God used them for good in my life.

In response to her travels, the loss of her husband and two sons, widowhood, and childlessness, we find her saying, "don't call me Naomi because my life is not pleasant; rather, call me Mara because my life is so bitter." She took the circumstances of her life

personally and misunderstood what was going on. She viewed her life circumstances through the lens of self rather than through the lens of God's sovereignty.

The truth is that it's never about us. So we need to get good at viewing our circumstances through the lens of God's sovereignty. It's truly all about God's sovereign, overarching plan. Sometimes He needs us to play a difficult part. Sometimes that difficult part is training for something else He needs us to do. Sometimes the painful part is discipline to shape, mold, and change us. And sometimes, that difficult part is to test us. But regardless, those painful parts bring Him glory and fulfill His ultimate plan for humanity.

Keeping that perspective through trials and troubles is crucial for keeping our feelings from being hurt and taking things personally. Keeping that perspective allows us to be willing servants of the King- pliable, moldable, and soft in His hands.

The truth is that without the famine, Naomi and Elimelech would never have gone to Moab. Without relocating to Moab, Mahlon would have never married Ruth, and Ruth would have never come to faith in God. Without Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion's deaths, Naomi and Ruth would have never returned to Judah, and Ruth could have never married Boaz. The most beautiful part is that God had planned to bring both David and later Christ from Boaz and Ruth's marriage.

God had a plan, and all of the heartache had a purpose. Who knows what other Moabites came to faith because of their journey and life story. We are only told about Ruth, but who knows what other kingdom-advancing things happened because of and through the pain of both women's lives.

May we never take God's plan personally and become bitter! May we always be willing to be used by a sovereign God, no matter the cost to us!

## Chapter 7

# When You're Out On the Water

The story of Peter walking on the water is such a familiar bible story. Of course, we are all familiar with the Sunday School version, but have you ever taken the time to contemplate the depth of the story?

He was undoubtedly experiencing so many emotions in those moments. From terror being in the middle of the storm on a boat to fear seeing a figure walking towards them where no figure had ever appeared before, and then awe when he realized it was Jesus walking towards them. Then, from out of the emotionally charged moments, Peter shows his heart and calls out for Jesus to have him go closer to Him.

I wonder what he was thinking when he asked. Regardless of his thoughts, the terror and fear birthed a desire to be closer to the Lord and experience His power firsthand. What a mountaintop experience Peter experienced! And yet it was as momentary and brief as the preceding fear. Moments later, doubt crept in, he began to sink into the waves, and the terror returned. But, of course, Jesus wouldn't let the storm swallow him up. He rescued Peter.

What a picture and how so very accurate a picture it paints of our lives. Can you relate to that sequence? I sure can. It seems as if I am perpetually stuck in the cycle of fear, awe, faith, failure, and rescue. But without the fear and failure, we wouldn't need a savior. We would be ok without Jesus, and that is not where we want to be living.

I came across a devotional from Oswald Chambers, which made me pause to think. He wrote: "— His purpose is the process itself. What He desires for me is that I see "Him walking on the sea" with no shore, no success, nor goal in sight, but simply having the absolute certainty that everything is all right because I see "Him walking on the sea" (Mark 6:49). It is the process, not the outcome, that is glorifying to God."

The moments in which we feel the fear that causes us to reach out to the Lord are the moments that often reveal our purpose. Those are defining moments and moments that produce growth. Of course, we have a higher calling and greater overarching

purpose for our lives, but the moment-by-moment walk with the Lord creates the bigger picture. Our focus cannot be on the bigger goals. It must remain on our daily walk with the Lord. Then as the bigger picture unfolds, God will receive all the glory. It won't just be a goal that we accomplished with the Lord's help. It's just one more way to embrace His sovereignty in our lives.

I love the suggestion of Augustine that it is through His grace that we are able to obey His commands! That's exactly what living in the moment with God is about. It is the practice of praying for Him to grant us the ability to do what He commands and His guidance in our days. Sometimes, I listen to prayerful songs and wonder if we even grasp what we ask. Hillsong UNITED's song Oceans is like that. I love that song but have you ever truly listened to what you are praying when you sing along to the verses?

When our trust has no borders, and we go deeper than we could ever wander, we often find ourselves in trials and times of testing. Those experiences are necessary because we can't fully and truly trust when life is perfect and rosy. God calling us "deeper than we would ever wander" means getting pulled out of our comfort zone. It is a noble desire, but boy does that put us in a position of not being able to do life without Him.

In essence, that song is asking God for Peter's experience. Like Peter, we ask God to call us to Him across the waters, and walking on the water requires trust without borders! It also opens the door for fear and doubt and danger that we will need the Lord like in no other way. But what a mountaintop!! And what unforgettable moments to live for Him and lean on Him. Those moments bring Him the most pleasure and accomplish His will in our lives.

## Chapter 8

# When the Trials Keep Coming

What in the world do you do when the trials just keep coming? When you feel like you honestly and truly cannot fight anymore? When you see all the optimistic promises of hope and goodness and prosperity and reward in scripture but can't identify or ever see yourself being able to identify with those verses?

Sure, we can cling to the verse in 2 Corinthians 4 where Paul says, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed." We can cling to Romans 8:28, where we read that "all things work for the good of those that love God, who are called according to his purpose." But what happens when that doesn't help anymore?

This journey I have been on has been one trial after another, and just when it seemed to be lifting, another wave came crashing down. Through it all, I have been keenly aware that it is God's sovereign hand over my life and that this really isn't about me, although I will come through an entirely different person, praise be to God. Knowing that doesn't make the pain any less painful, though. It doesn't take the discomfort away or make the extra time necessary to live life any less frustrating.

So what do you do when there seems to be no rest for the weary and a relentless torrent of trials crashing through your life? You go beyond religion and fall on Jesus. You study scripture and seek Him.

God led me to study Genesis and Job this year so far, and he spoke so clearly to me through the stories of Joseph and Job. That is what truly has been sustaining me through this time. You can know the truth and Bible verses to back it up and still feel the pain of life. At least that has been my experience. But through my study, God taught me a few things that have been more of a balm to my soul.

First, God is always, always, in control. In both Job and Joseph's stories, it is super clear that nothing happened that was not in God's plan. We are privileged to have the

pre-story to Job's suffering, which is the conversation between God and Satan. When you look at Joseph's story, it becomes clear that God used Joseph to save many lives, including his family's lives, but he also used Joseph in Egypt to keep the Israelite nation pure. The Egyptian people hated shepherds and the Hebrew people, so they would not embrace and intermingle with them. Joseph was in authority enough to assign his family the best land in Egypt for their flocks and herds.

Second, sometimes God's trials last a long time. Although we do not know how long Job suffered, Joseph's trials lasted 37 years. He did not have an easy life at home with his brothers as he grew up and then was sold at 17 and lived in Egypt 20 years before reconciliation. Talk about dire circumstances getting worse!

Third, God's trials produce character growth and do not end in ruin. Although his loss and suffering were significant, Job was doubly rewarded afterward. And, although he was not given double the children, he had the same number but was a changed man and parented quite differently, which produced godly children.

The trials changed Joseph from an arrogant man with intense pride to a man who would take no credit but give all the glory to God. He could forgive those who had mistreated him by accepting that God's way was best. In the end, Joseph became the highest person in Egypt under Pharaoh himself. He was reconciled to his family and saw relationships mended. God fully put back together what he had taken apart.

Lastly, there is a purpose; therefore, there will be an end. Because God is in sovereign control, these things that happen to us are not random out-of-control circumstances. None of what we go through surprises God. The trials have been allowed in our lives for a specific purpose. While sometimes they can be consequences, sometimes their purpose is to test us, like Job, or to prepare us for something God has for us to do, like Joseph. And like Job and Joseph, there will be a completion to the process.

Despite what I was going through, I found great comfort in the insight God gave me as I read and studied the stories of these two men. They were more comforting to me than the verses of promise usually given to comfort the trials of life. Even though these men have long since been in heaven, their stories offered me empathy.

When the trials keep coming, take a minute to read the stories of Joseph, Job, or any other biblical story of trials. I promise it will be more helpful than looking for promises!



## Chapter 9

# When You Need Courage

Sometimes change and uncertainty bring a crisis of our faith. One benefit to the trials of life is that it forces us to grow and mature in our faith. It causes us to stand up for what we believe. Sometimes it even makes us decide for ourselves what we believe. Life crisis often makes us draw close to God and seek Him.

Exodus shows us an example of no compromise. The story of Moses, the Exodus, and the ten plagues is an incredible faith-boosting story. Since tolerance and compromise are so highly valued in our culture, the contrast in Exodus is unmistakable. Egyptian culture and God's way were clearly not able to coexist.

Pharaoh kept trying to get the people to compromise. He wanted to maintain the upper hand and be in control. Three times he offered a compromise, and three times Moses maintained the position of no compromise. When God called the Israelite people out of Egypt, he also dealt with the Pharaoh. It would be on God's terms.

The first time Pharaoh agrees to let the people go with a compromise is after the fourth plague of flies. Pharaoh permitted the people to go and sacrifice within the land. (Exodus 8:24-27). But that's not what God has commanded, so Moses says no.

The second time Pharaoh decided to let the people go, he offered the compromise of just the men being allowed to go (Exodus 10:7-11). Again we see Moses refuse to compromise God's plan.

The third time Pharaoh agrees to let the Hebrew people go is after the 9th plague of darkness. But he still tries to control the situation and offers yet another compromise, telling Moses the people could go, but the livestock and herds had to stay (Exodus 10:21-28). Moses still wouldn't compromise on God's plan.

Trying to compromise God's plan only brought destruction and heartache to Pharaoh's life. The insistence on compromise destroyed the land of Egypt, and lives were lost. From reading this story and watching it unfold, I began to sense just how serious about

His plan God is. It has to be God's way- fully and obediently. Moses is an example of living out the courage to maintain no compromise.

I felt challenged reading Moses' response to God and how hard he fought to obey no matter the cost or how he felt. Just think of the situation- a common slave going in to challenge the king of the land. And not once but more than ten times, including going back after Pharaoh told them they would die if they saw his face again! That's courage, my friend- courage to maintain no compromise regarding our faith in God.

Today, it's not quite as blatant as this story. Often it's much more subtle with our culture trying to make us accept ideas and concepts that clearly go against God's plan. Sometimes it's a personal battle with the devil whispering in our ear, "it's only (fill in the blank). Often, it is just a tiny step away from God's truth. A compromise usually seems so insignificant in the beginning.

But we need to take courage from Moses, search scripture and know what God values and expects of His people. And when we know, may God empower us and give us the grace to live with no compromise!!

“We can’t see what the future holds or what the repercussions of what has happened to us will mean. But regardless, God is not up there wringing His hands and shaking His head. He already knows the outcome. And He knows how it plays out and impacts all of history. We can have hope in the uncertain times before us because of this truth. ”



## Author Bio

Lucille Stekl lives in Western New York with her husband Brian and their 4 kids who range from 3-15 years old. Raised in a conservative Christian home, she cherishes studying scripture and growing in her faith. She has been blogging at [lifewellinspired.com](http://lifewellinspired.com) since 2012 and enjoys sharing what she learns from her personal bible study time and encouraging other women to grow in the Lord. You can find her homeschooling her kids, gardening, or tackling a home project.