



NAVIGATING THE STORMS OF LIFE

Major storms / hurricanes / tornadoes hit the US every year. You've probably been through a few yourself. Perhaps you have heard the saying, *"Into each life some rain must fall."* Well, what if what you're experiencing is more of a deluge than a little rain? I've observed that trials in life we go through often come often come in multiples.

We've probably all heard stories like this:

- I have cancer.
- I lost my wife / husband
- I don't have enough money to get by
- I'm desperately overwhelmed. My life is full of good things, but I can't enjoy them.

When rain is falling in my life, I like to turn to the story of **Noah** (Genesis 6-9:17). **He knew a storm. In fact, he knew one that was so long and so strong that it virtually wiped out everything around him.** Because Noah had no choice but to trust in God for his very survival, his story serves as powerful inspiration for us.

The thing that most impresses me about Noah is his faith. So often it's easy to think about our faith solely as an internal anchor when we hit hard times. But that wasn't the case for Noah. His was accompanied by the building of a huge, physical ark. This external ark was illustrative of his internal life. It was a tribute to his obedience to God, the very thing that saved him.

I see God highlighting (in the story of Noah) the importance of the practical steps that we can take to navigate the storms in our life. James is so honest when he claims, **"Faith without works is dead" James 2:17**. Noah didn't just hear and accept the instruction of God to build the Ark...he actually did it! Nail by nail and board by board...while everyone else was mocking his faith.

Just as Noah used everyday tools to build the ark, there are everyday spiritual tools that we can employ to successfully navigate adversity. Those tools, formulated as simple steps below, will help us honor God in the midst of life's storms:

1. Stand on God's promises.

Look through the Bible for encouragement particular to your situation. Claim those promises aloud by faith at least once a day. **It's not a coincidence that the ark was floating on water.** Sometimes scripture is our only solid ground to stand on that keeps us from sinking. **It can and will keep us afloat.**

2. Pray with out ceasing

(1 Thessalonians 5:17). I see this encouragement playing out in two ways. First, we can **pray individually** to God throughout the day; that's like an ongoing dialogue of sharing and listening to him. I love how the Bible demonstrates God specifically instructing Noah in order to save him. God will faithfully give us guidance too. Second, we can **come together with one or more fellow believers** to lift up pressing concerns together.

3. Affirm your faith with praise.

Whether we've traveled safely through the storm or are still in it, God delights in hearing our thanksgiving and praise. Paul, who had been beaten, shipwrecked, and imprisoned knew this principle well. That's why he encourages each of us to always petition God with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6). Doing so reminds us of the goodness of God and strengthens our faith.

4. Keep showing up.

Large feats begin and end with small steps. **The massive ark was built one piece of chiseled wood at a time.** Everyday that we are faithful in the small ways, we are opening the door for God to do something incredible that we cannot. We must take the concrete actions that only we can do to see our situation through.

5. Believe in miracles!

Sometimes we hope for a miracle and it doesn't happen. But sometimes we hope for a miracle and it does. **Take the limits off of God. Open the door for him to work.** Noah was willing to risk everything when he did.

Plank by plank, nail by nail, the ark was built. That translates into prayer by prayer, affirmation by affirmation, God will see us through. His hope and presence will never leave us. Rays of sunshine will return.

It's important to realize that we won't be where we started when the storm ends, however. **Just as the ark carries Noah to a new location to start again, we will be different, changed.**

Hopefully, we'll feel that olive branch of peace in our own hands as we trust the One who works all things for our good. But certainly, if we keep looking up, we'll notice our rainbow.