

Finding Joy in 2021

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I want you to have joy in 2021. Considering the pandemic, it may seem far-fetched for me to say such a thing. Friends and loved ones are dying from COVID. Others are suffering from it. Yet others are fearful of catching it. Now the Delta Variant has emerged. Masks are once again being recommended in some areas. It's been a hard road for all of us.

The impact of COVID is tremendous for many: job loss, housing insecurities, food insecurities, and increased health issues. There is an unprecedented mental health crisis in this country as fear, depression, anxiety, and hopelessness take hold, frequently causing suicidal thoughts that have tragically resulted in young and old taking their own lives.

Joy in the Midst of Loss

Joy can be found in the midst if you understand that joy and happiness are two different things. Happiness is contingent on circumstances and may not be attainable in your given circumstances at the moment. Joy, however, is birthed in your soul. Joy is not based on events and cannot be taken from you, no matter how bleak things get. If you are a believer in Christ, there is always hope.

Look Up to Find Joy

Stop looking around you at the circumstances. You must look to Jesus. He knows your every sorrow. He sees your pain. He understands because He has been in your shoes. He knows what loneliness is, what grief is, what isolation feels like. He walked this earth and lived life as a man and can empathize with your situation.

Read the Bible to Find Joy

Jeremiah 15:16 says, "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty." As you read the Bible, your heart will be encouraged. Joy will flood your soul. Hundreds upon hundreds of promises are given, speaking of the goodness God has planned for you and the faithfulness to provide all of your needs and care for you. You don't have to be happy about the circumstances you are living in, but it is possible to have joy in the midst. The joy of the Lord is your strength.

Fellowship with Others to Find Joy

Philemon 1:7 says "Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother have refreshed the heart of the Lord's people." We are not meant to stay isolated. We need each other. If you can attend church in person, I encourage you to do so. If not, live-streams are available all over the world. Getting together in person with at least one or two people during the pandemic is critical, staying socially distanced of course. We need each other. If possible, find an online or in-person Bible study to join. Get outside and walk with a fellow believer. Whatever means you choose, you must stay connected to other believers to maintain your joy.

I Pray You Find Joy in 2021

Romans 15:13 "May the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Pandemic Impact on Mental Health

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The impact of COVID pandemic on mental health has created a crisis within the pandemic. People who have had no mental health issues in the past are experiencing significant challenges. Fifty percent of adults in America report a decline in their overall mental health this past year as worry, fear, and depression have become a part of their daily life. More than seventy-five percent of employees struggle with burn-out, the highest percentages attributed to healthcare workers, teachers, and day-care workers.

The impact of the pandemic varies from person to person, but it is a safe assumption all of us have had a year like none other in our lifetime. It has taken a toll on all of us. Those who have an unwavering faith of God being in control are better able to maintain perspective day by day. Without coping mechanisms and support to help process the impacts, some are developing PTSD, others have had breakdowns, and tragically the number of suicides is at an all-time high.

Complicated Grief and Mental Health

Those who have lost loved ones to COVID are dealing with more complicated grief than pre-pandemic. Because of restrictions on visitations, many family and friends could not visit loved ones and say goodbye during the final days and hours of a loved one's life. In many instances, funerals were not held or were held with restricted numbers, with many would-be attendees prohibited from traveling to say goodbye.

Grief can develop during intense separation that extends for long periods of time. Most families have been cautious about exposing older family and have not gathered in a year. Some more senior family members are in nursing facilities and are continuing to decline mentally and physically, causing loved ones to grieve loss, although a death has not occurred.

John 11:35 says, "Jesus wept." It's ok to cry as you grieve. But, we cannot stay in the place of grieving as those with no hope. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 reminds us "We do not want you to grieve as those who have no hope." Hope is found in Christ and all of the promises given in the Bible.

Job Loss and Mental Health

While front-line workers have worked extended hours to combat the impact of the COVID pandemic, others have seen a domino effect of losing jobs in the food or entertainment industry. The challenges of trying to secure unemployment have been overwhelming for many. The inability to pay rent or mortgage payments has created housing insecurities. Limited income has created food insecurities. While some lenders have extended grace, many are still demanding payments for services rendered and goods purchased. The comfort for Christians is found in Matthew 6:26 "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" God will take care of you, through providing community resources, stimulus checks, and acts of kindness bestowed upon you by others.

Isolation and Mental Health

Isolation has created more of a crisis than any other factor during the COVID pandemic. The elderly or those with immune-compromised systems have been isolating for a year, in most cases. While some schools have allowed the return of students, others continue with remote learning. Students are feeling the impact of isolation from classroom peers, sports team members, and playdate friends. For the believer in Christ, comfort can be found in Romans 8:28-29 "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The time will come again soon, when we begin gathering with friends, but until then, remember you are not alone. Turn on worship music. Call a friend. Organize a Zoom party.

Parenting and Mental Health

Mothers, in particular, are feeling the impact of COVID pandemic as many are removed from the workforce and social times. The effort of juggling their jobs, supervising the remote learning, and being inside the four walls 24/7 with children has created pandemic overload and depression in many.

Diapers to change. Laptops to charge. Google classroom to figure out. Zoom meetings to attend. Curbside groceries to order and pick up. Meals to cook, mouths to feed, and a kitchen to clean. Bathe everyone, fall asleep, get up to the alarm and do it again. It gets wearisome, even for the most resilient. Galatians 6:9 gives a reason to push through one day at a time. "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Your efforts are not in vain. The pandemic will end, and you will reap the rewards for your labor and efforts to keep your family healthy and educated.

Finally, I leave you with my life verse found in Joshua 1:9 "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." We are in this pandemic together; we will come out on the other side of it together and rejoice together. You are not alone!

Are You Surviving or Thriving?

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Do you feel like you are thriving, or would you describe yourself as someone who is just trying to survive your present circumstances, barely hanging on without toppling over?

Are you able to sing and dance your way through the days, or are you struggling to paste a plastic smile on your face as you tell people, "I'm fine"?

Do you lie down at night able to count the blessings the day has brought, or do you fall asleep crying, with tears of hopelessness streaming down your cheeks?

If you are in the category of surviving, I want you to know you are not alone in the battle. Never before has there been such a struggle as this past year. Maybe you've had to survive COVID. Perhaps it's been trying to cope and survive a lay-off. Perhaps you've faced housing insecurities or food insecurities. Maybe you have been separated from loved ones residing in nursing homes or hospitalized; no visits allowed. It's possible that none of these examples apply to you and the battle for survival is a mental battle or a spiritual battle. Whatever the situation, I want you to know that you have been created to thrive!

"But, how?" you may be asking yourself.

A Tree Planted by The Water

The answer is to stay close to the Lord God, read the Bible, and meditate on those verses 'day and night'. Let's read the passage in Psalms.

Psalm 1:1-3 (ESV) says "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."

Does this passage mean that we literally are supposed to think about and meditate on Bible verses 24/7? No. Not in the literal sense, however, the more we read and the more we study and ponder/meditate on what is meant by the verses, the deeper our spiritual life will be.

Living Water

In John 4:10 (ESV), while speaking to the Woman at the Well, Jesus said, "*If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.*"

The Holy Spirit is the Living Water that our souls need to thrive. The more time we spend in the presence of God while reading the Bible, the more the Holy Spirit can speak to us and revive our thirsty souls.

There Is No Other Way

This is a rough world we live in, and times are hard. Maybe you are like I was, trying every possible way to make myself happy, fix the problems, set goals, achieve, earn lots of money.

In John 14:6 (ESV), Jesus said, "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." It's plain and simple. Once I got tired enough of trying to survive and figure it out for myself, I gave up doing it my way and asked Jesus to take the wheel, proverbially speaking.

Does a life lived for Christ, serving God, automatically mean you will thrive? No. Go back to the top of the blog post. You have to take the intentional action step of reading the Bible, praying, and seeking God to begin to thrive. You are meant to live a thriving life. Make the decision to start now!

Resources Sometimes, specific life circumstances are better overcome with target-specific counseling or support. I recommend Grief Share for those who've lost a spouse or family member, Divorce Care for those recently separated or divorced, and Celebrate Recovery for those struggling with addictions of any type or emotional hurts and hang-ups. All of these are resources widely available across the nation.

Additional Resource

I recently released a 30-Day Devotional entitled 'Lessons From The River.' If you have not already purchased your copy, I recommend you do so today. You will find life-giving lessons of how to thrive in this life, regardless of your circumstances. These are 2-minute reads that are intentionally designed to allow you to meditate on (ponder, think on) the quick object lesson as you continue your day.

Develop Deep Roots

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Have you ever sat in the summer shade of the mighty oaks lining the riverbank? I once sat sipping my coffee and listening to the babbling of rapids and considered the deep roots of the strong oak trees I was sitting under.

Being well-acquainted with the ways of this particular river, I reflected on the number of times waters had flooded this section of the land, yet the mighty oaks remain standing. I considered how many years the drought has dried up much vegetation, including trees with shallow roots. Yet, the mighty oaks remain green, and acorns are forming.

Storms rage through this part of the state and often result in the uprooting of many trees, but not the mighty oak. Multiple heatwaves have not suffocated the mighty oaks, for their roots are deep into the soil of the river banks and perhaps extend out into the deep of the river bed itself.

Develop Deep Roots

The mighty oak trees have stood strong through the decades. Can we say the same? Are our roots deep, deep into the soil of the Lord? Or, do we begin to wither when the heat gets turned up in our lives? Do we withstand storms that will surely come, or do we exit the storms tattered and torn?

Do Not Fear

Do we fear the future, or do we trust that we will continue bearing fruit during the drought and challenging times we see in this world? The answer is to learn from the mighty oak and plant ourselves by the Living Water and allow our roots to go deep and deeper still.

Jeremiah 17:8 (ESV) "He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."

Prayer: Father, I ask that you teach me to sit and drink of the Living Water, that I may grow in strength, like a mighty oak of righteousness, fearing nothing and bearing much fruit; even during the storms of life that are sure to come.

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Finding Peace in the Storm

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If you aren't in a storm of life right now, you have been in the past, or you will face one in the future. Proverbial storms are a fact of life. In most locations, physical storms of varying kinds are also a fact of life.

I have friends caught in the historic winter storm that covered Texas and the Mid-West this year. Given that it doesn't snow in Texas often and certainly not to that magnitude, many were caught off-guard. As roadways piled high with snow and became impassable, motorists were stranded. What started as rolling brown-outs became power outages critical in nature and millions left in the cold and dark. Most of those I know have no alternative heat sources and have had to bundle in layers inside their homes or try to make their way to a warming center.

Meanwhile, the shoreline in North Carolina just north of Myrtle Beach was devastated by a tornado that ripped through with little warning while many were sleeping. The tight-knit community immediately found themselves thrust into the chaos that left a wake of flattened homes, injuries, and deaths.

Others I know have recently been hit with storms different than the physical. A phone call that revealed a cancer diagnosis. Another call disclosing test results that were not what anyone wanted to hear. Several friends and acquaintances have suffered through COVID and the aftermath. Moms are riding the stormy waves of remote and hybrid learning. Others are facing economic storms as jobs have been lost and bills remain unpaid. Yet others are battling the storms of depression and COVID-Fatigue.

Whatever the storm, each person finds themselves in turmoil and desperate for peace. Isaiah 26:3 (TLB) says, *"He will keep in perfect peace all those who trust in Him, whose thought often turn to the Lord."*

The answer to finding peace in the storm is simplistic yet ever so challenging to accomplish. You must trust Him and keep your thoughts focused on Him. Not that we are to pretend that the storms are not real, and not that we aren't allowed to grieve the realities. We are human and have emotions, and the Lord God doesn't expect us to smile and be happy when facing dire circumstances. Yet He supernaturally gives peace to those who will put their trust in Him, in the face of a diagnosis the medical team doesn't have a favorable prognosis for. He gives peace to the one who finds themselves stranded in the cold and dark house yet still trusting that God is in control and will work all things together for their good. (Romans 8:28).

For those who intentionally pray and turn their thoughts to the Lord often, there will be peace. Peace will be found by those who lift their voices in praise, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs while the storm rages. There will be peace in the valley, even the valley of the shadow of death, for those who trust the Lord and keep their focus on Him. Peace comes in knowing Jesus and knowing He is with you. He doesn't leave you or forsake you. He is with you in the storm.

Being omnipresent means that God is not just in your present circumstances but in your future. Our omniscient (all-knowing) God has things well in hand, according to His timing and His plan. I pray you take comfort in that knowledge today, and you can trust Him amid your storm.

Finding Stability in the Chaos

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We've survived the worst of the pandemic. We should be good, right? Shouldn't life be back to normal? Those would be logical conclusions. Reality is a far cry from what we imagined a year ago.

Social chaos. Economic chaos. Political chaos. Household chaos. Things change from one day to the next, and it isn't long before fears begin to set in. How will the mortgage get paid? Will I have to move? Is it safe to go downtown? Will my kids have a secure future? Am I safe? Will my car get stolen? Will I get 'the virus'? Will someone I love?

I want to encourage you and let you know it is possible to have stability and hope amid chaos. It is possible for you actually to thrive in your circumstances.

If there were no other Scripture to hold onto, cling to Jeremiah 29:11. (TLB) "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil. To give you a future and a hope." If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you must hold on to the reality that our God is in charge, and while chaos may happen in all of the arenas mentioned above, His plans for you are good! His plans for you will not be thwarted by the circumstances swirling around you. We serve a God of hope, not just in things while on this earth, but eternally as well. Because of the resurrection of Christ, we can be assured of eternal life in heaven.

It is our hope in Christ that will give us stability during the chaos. I am often asked why I am so calm and peaceful in the midst of the chaos we find ourselves in as a nation. Psalm 27: 13 (AMP) is my answer "I would have despaired had I not believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

Believing in 2020 and now in 2021 that the goodness of the Lord is flowing over me and bringing me a future and hope has gotten me through some dark days. I have to remind myself some days. Days when I, like so many, am dealing with COVID-Fatigue, tired of masks, and tired of not seeing family. Days of the uncertainty of our financial situation, as the economy continues to threaten my husband's job situation. What about you? What are the circumstances of your dark days? Remember, God has a future and a hope for you, a plan filled with goodness.

The next verse (Psalm 27:14) gives the formula for maintaining stability amid the chaos. "Wait for *and* confidently expect the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for and confidently expect the Lord."

Don't wait as those with no hope do, tossed to and fro in the storms of life. Stop and think back to how many times the Lord has 'come through for you in the past. He is faithful and will do it again. Hold fast! May these encouraging Scriptures become stability for you in the midst of chaos.

Hebrews 10:23 (NIV) "Let us hold unswervingly to the faith we profess, for he who promised is faithful."

Protective Obstacles

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Many people love tubing, kayaking, and even canoeing rivers. One weekend not long ago, I went camping along my favorite river, with the intent of sitting back and relaxing on the river for a weekend. Yet, I found myself as busy as ever, cooking and cleaning up the site and not taking time to relax.

The river provides immense opportunities for whoever will partake of the waters. At some point, I decided to go tubing, but in my typical Type A Personality fashion checked my phone and decided it would need to be a quick trip before I started lunch. I hopped into the tube and headed down the river. Much to my dismay, I encountered obstacle after obstacle, some above the surface and some below. My journey time downriver was double what I planned, as I was forced to slow down and follow the course of the river.

Admittedly, I was slightly anxious about lunch being delayed. As I disembarked and made my way back to my site, it occurred to me that the river obstacles were protective, forcing me to slow down and live at a slower pace and observe the details of the river. Was anyone really going to starve if I didn't put lunch on the table at a specific time? (The truth was, no one cared but me.)

How many times do we hurry through our days and seasons of life, frustrated when obstacles get in the way of our plans and timelines? We would do well to tune in to the ways of the living water (the Living God) and realize that sometimes He places obstacles in our path for our protection, allowing us time to rest.

Mark 6:31-32 (NIV) "*Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.*"

Prayer: Lord, may I recognize the obstacles you place before me are for my protection, to allow me to slow down and attend to myself and my time with you first.

From the author: If you are interested in reading more devotionals, hop over to Amazon and check out '*Lessons From The River*'"

Stagnant in the River

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Have you noticed that water in the river becomes stagnant as the summer season progresses? The reason is simple. As the current and water flow decrease, certain sections get minimal movement. Algae begin to build up, and it becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Fish love to hide under the riverbank, unaware they become easy prey for the heron or the snapping turtle. The water begins to smell and becomes opposite the beauty of a flowing river tumbling over the rocks.

We can become stagnant in life and begin to give off a foul odor and appearance if we step out of the flow of the Holy Spirit and the life God has intended for us. At first, it may not be obvious we are beginning to stagnate. Careful consideration will cause us to realize things are more cloudy than usual. Cloudiness will turn to confusion, and we will find answers don't come easily.

Worse yet, left unattended, our stagnation will turn to negative attitudes, depression, and poor decisions. Direction is lacking. We lack the flow of knowledge and wisdom that a life lived for God brings to us. We become a stench to God rather than a blessing. Isaiah 65:5(b) (NLT) says, *"These people become a stench to my nostrils, an acrid smell that never goes away."*

Just as rains bring refreshment and the stagnant water begins to flow in the river again, so it is that we can spend time with God, reading His Word, and the flow will begin again. The more we connect with God, the more the rivers of Living Water will flow through us. John 7:38 (NASB) *"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water."*

We are designed to be filled with life that we may be active and moving, doing those things God has created us to do. As the rivers (of God) flow through us, we will manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) and be effective and successful in our endeavors.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray for rivers of living water to begin to flow through me again. Forgive me for allowing my life to become stagnant. My desire is for the waters to flow that I may be used to bring life to others downstream.

*Except from 2021 release "Lessons From The River"

Survivor's Guilt

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By definition, Survivor's Guilt is the feeling of guilt after surviving a life-threatening traumatic event when others did not. The complexity increases depending on one's personality and tendency to feel responsible for the lives and actions of others.

Those prone to suffer from Survivor's Guilt include first responders, crash survivors, natural disaster survivors, war veterans, and witnesses to violent events. Many who have lost a loved one to suicide also struggle with guilt, as do those whose loved one passes away from a terminal illness. Front line healthcare workers and family members are experiencing Survivor's Guilt in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly those who tested positive and survived. I've listed some reasons a person may experience Survivor's Guilt, but certainly, it is not an exhaustive list.

Symptoms

Regardless of what circumstance precipitated Survivor's Guilt, symptoms are similar for many. Obsessive reoccurring thoughts of what was and was not done before, during, and after the crisis haunt survivors relentlessly day and night. Many battle depression, sleep disorders, confusion, headaches, and stomach aches. Others struggle with feelings of hopelessness and helplessness and, in some cases, become suicidal as a result of surviving.

Survivor's Guilt is Complex

If you are battling Survivor's Guilt or know of someone who is, there is hope and help available. Just giving a person the opportunity to express their feelings and being a listening ear may be all that is needed to allow a Survivor to break free from the guilt.

Self-care is underrated in our lives but is a necessary step in emotional recovery. Taking the time out to rest and rejuvenate is critical to the rebuilding process in the brain and body following trauma. Some ideas for self-care may include going outside for a walk or sitting at the beach, reading a book, listening to music, or meeting a friend for dinner. Eating nutritional food and being active are essential components to regaining all aspects of health, as the overwhelming guilt has impacted all.

The Spiritual Component

Survivor's Guilt is real and affects people of all walks of life, young and old alike. The person will ask questions, all of which are normal. "Why him, not me?", "Why did God allow this?" and so many other questions come into the mind of the Survivor.

People mean well but giving platitudes such as "God needed him more" or "It was God's time for him" are not helpful in this situation. The truth is that Scripture never fully addresses all of the 'whys' for us. Many questions we ask throughout life will not be given this side of heaven, including these.

What Scripture does do is point us to the Comforter and Lover of Our Souls. Jesus is more than enough for us. We may not know this side of heaven why he allowed one to Survive and the other to pass into eternity, but whether you are reading this as a Survivor, a friend of a Survivor, or a lay counselor, know that God cares. It's ok to cry and have human emotions. Even Jesus wept, showing His humanity. It's ok to question, and Jesus also did. Isaiah 53:4 tells us he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He can empathize and bring comfort in the situation.

When Professional Help is Needed

Because Survivor's Guilt is complex, grief is also a component of the mixed emotions a person most likely is feeling. There are online and in-person groups available, including [GriefShare](#), which I've mentioned in previous blogs. Local churches offer pastoral counseling services. Many people recover without professional help, while others may need to see a certified mental health counselor to work through the feelings of guilt.

Bottom Line

Survivor's Guilt is real and impacts tens of thousands of people a year. Leaving the guilt untreated can lead to further mental and physical health issues. Help is available, and I encourage you to seek resources and seek God's comfort.

Weathering the Storms

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Everyone goes through storms of life, but not everyone weathers the storms well. The Bible is filled with verses about storms, both natural and symbolic of our lives.

Perhaps the best known 'storm story' is that recounted in Luke 8. (V.22-25, NIV) One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement, they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

Are we so different today? All seems to be going along fine throughout a given day, and then the phone call comes, and it's not good news. The car breaks down on the side of the road. The baby suddenly develops a fever. The bill comes in the mail and is twice the anticipated amount. A routine check-up results in being referred to a specialist because a lump was found. The secure job with a reputable company dissolves overnight, and the explanation given is a lay-off slip. These are all storms of life. Psalm 107:29 foretold the power of the Lord to control the storms. "He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed."

When things are smooth sailing, it is easy to put your trust in the Lord. It's when sudden squalls come that we panic. If you've ever been in a boat on the water when a storm arises, you've felt the panic in the natural setting. Before we judge the disciples too harshly, we need to remember that they dealt with the same human emotions as we do, and their response was a natural response.

Jesus didn't rebuke their natural response. He condemned their lack of faith. They'd seen Jesus come through time and time again and perform miracles for them and around them. Yet, when the gale arose and they saw Jesus sleeping-fear set in, and they concluded they were in danger of drowning.

Have you ever panicked in a situation and become fearful, forgetting that Jesus is the Master of the Wind, the one who can calm the storm? Or, do you call out to Him when the winds start to pick up, and the squalls come and seek refuge in the Lord?

May Psalm 57: 1 serve as a reminder to you to seek refuge under the wings of the Almighty, who is more than able to calm the seas or carry us safely through the storm to the other side. "Be merciful to me O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, until the storms of destruction pass by."

When you find yourself in a situation such as those listed above, remember that your soul can take refuge in the storm. Put your faith in the Lord, the Master of the Wind, and trust that He will deliver you from the storm.

Trust Him in the Storm

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My three-month battle is over. I said nothing about the battle this round because this is either the 5th or 6th time in 20 years that I've had a doctor tell me they suspect cancer. More than once, there's been a diagnosis followed by miraculous healing. The devil is a liar and a master at copycat. Was there ever cancer? The oncologists past say there was...

Every time there is a suspect situation, it has been just before God is ready to do something big in my life! I personally believe Jesus is alive, and so is the devil who comes to steal, kill, and destroy us. Why? To distract us and deter us from fulfilling the purposes of our life. The bigger the call and the more determined we are to answer the call-the bigger the bullseye on us. He knows what tactics work, and for me-he always hits me medically. This time is no exception. Our job is to recognize his tactics and engage him in a spiritual battle of prayer and fasting and speaking truth from the Bible. Note: I am not saying all cancer is from the enemy or that all we have to do is pray! I'm saying-in my case; this is reality. Others get hit financially. Some relationally.

I found a lump in my thigh three mos ago. During this COVID crisis, I didn't want to see a doctor. It grew to the size of a baseball (there are witnesses). Finally, I went to see the doctor May 15th. He used the phrase, "It's not this, this, this. I suspect sarcoma, and we need to do a contrast MRI to see what we are dealing with."

I wanted to collapse. I told Joe I didn't want to fight another round. I reached out to friends in a couple of prayer groups and our office team at Victory Church for prayer. I met a friend for coffee. Not going to lie. I was scared.

Something triggered in me, and the warrior rose up. Still nervous, but I knew it was an attempt of the enemy of my soul to stop me from moving forward. I prayed so much, and the stress created literal blisters on my lips. Victory was coming, but I didn't know when. I had the MRI on the 19th and had to wait another 24 hours for the report.

Hallelujah!!! The explanation is 'there's a fatty tissue that seems to be stemming from a torn hamstring injury that didn't heal.' Here's the amazing part. Within 24 hours, the baseball size lump had all but disappeared. (I have witnesses). Coincidence? Not to me! I think the devil lost again. God showed up, and the mass showed up as fatty tissue.

I cannot describe the level of exhaustion that followed this battle-but suffice to say-the camping trip this past weekend was exactly what I needed. What are the take-away points from this experience? First, I've had to learn to trust the Lord at a greater level than ever before. There's been the ability to reverse a diagnosis through prayer and fasting AND a lifestyle change in times past. Not this time. My best research efforts resulted in the same roadblock: If it is sarcoma, diet and lifestyle do not contribute to its' formation, nor will sarcoma respond to naturopathic options. No choice was left but to throw myself on the mercy seat of the living God. There are more points, which I will bring out in future writings. But, for now, I just need to rest as I have yet to fully recover from the magnitude of this experience.

The Resurrected King is Resurrecting Me

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It's a week with many names 'Easter Week', 'Resurrection Week,' or 'Holy Week.' Like many other people, I take time to reflect on the true meaning of the week and the impact on my life.

It is widely known that Jesus is the Resurrected King. If we will bow to the one who wore our sin and shame with a crown of thorns, He will do the miraculous for us. Do you need a miracle this week? Are you in need of resurrection?

Do you know that He can resurrect you? Like Job of the Bible, who was resurrected from the ash pile of despair, like the dry bones resurrected in the valley of death, like the son of the widow resurrected from the dead; the Lord Jesus is continually resurrecting those who cry out to Him.

Many are feeling defeated and in despair this week. While the media reports the COVID pandemic is nearly over and the vaccine is touted to be the savior, people are still in fear and still feeling the impact the pandemic has left behind. Officials would have citizens believe The Great American Rescue Plan will be the savior for those facing financial ruin, yet many find they do not qualify for the help they desperately need. Grief and sorrow threaten to swallow any shadow of hope left in the wake of a year like none other in the last hundred years. We need a better savior, a better rescue plan than what the world can offer us.

Jesus is that Savior, capital S. He is the Rescue Plan. He is the one who pulls us up from the ashes of defeat and allows us to have a hope that is found in the eternal truths of the Bible, not the circumstances of this world

If you know Him, rise up! It's your personal Resurrection Week! The three days between crucifixion and resurrection were for you! He fought the battle, stormed the gates of hell, and took the keys of death for you! He did it for you, believe that! The work is finished. Now, it is your choice to believe and apprehend all He has done for you!

The Bible is filled with promises given to us of hope and a future. His eye is on the sparrow. You will be taken care of. His plans for you are good. You can be sure that the work He has started in you will be finished. Stand firm on the promise that He will work all things together for your ultimate good. He who owns the cattle on a thousand hills is more than able to meet your needs. He can heal your disease. He can restore fractured relationships. Lift up your voice and give a shout of praise to Jesus because your Resurrected King wants to resurrect you, restore you, and reconcile you!

The Resurrected King is resurrecting me. He is no respecter of persons. What He's doing for me, He will do you! It's your Resurrection Week, brothers and sisters in Christ. Don't let another day go by, sitting on the ash pile of despair and hopelessness. Rise up, rise up! Ask Jesus to resurrect your situation and turn it to good! It's Resurrection time for you, just as it was for Jesus over two thousand years ago!