

# SURVIVING STORMS

DEALING WITH HARDSHIP  
AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

A SMALL GROUP STUDY

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Surviving Storms  
Study written by Earnest Thomas

## INTRODUCTION

Formed in 1978 and from Roxbury (outside of Boston, MA), this R&B group hit its peak in the 1980's. With such hits like "Candy Girl," "Cool it Now," "Mr. Telephone Man," and "If It Isn't Love" - New Edition became a household name. Through their music and most recently the movie (The New Edition Story) we came to know Ricky Bell, Michael Bivens, Bobby Brown, Ronnie DeVoe, Ralph Tresvant and Johnny Gill.

We all have our favorite New Edition song. The song that most often comes to my mind was from their Heart Break album in 1988 "Can You Stand the Rain." This is a ballad about a relationship presently going well, but with the man asking the woman if he can count on her in case things turn stormy. Below are a few lyrics from this song:

*Sunny days, everybody loves them*

*Tell me, baby, can you stand the rain?*

*Storms will come*

*This we know for sure (This we know for sure)*

*Can you stand the rain?*

This song is not Bible but it is right on point...storms will come. It is easy to live in the sunshine when everything in life is going well. Life is easy when you have health, money and love. But all of us must learn how to deal with the storms of life because they will come. Storms are simply a metaphor for the hardships, trials, tribulations and disappointment we all face. Being a Christian does not exempt us from storms. The great news is we do not have to travel through storms alone. Jesus has promised to be with us.

### DEFINITION:

Storm - is a disturbance of the normal condition of the atmosphere, manifesting itself by winds of unusual force and often accompanied by rain, snow, hail, thunder or lightning.

## SURVIVING STORMS

This study is designed for believers to come together in groups to discuss and pray about how to survive the storms of life. To get the most from this study take a few minutes to read the lesson and answer questions before your small group or class meets. Then participate during the discussion time. At the end of the class ask yourself "How does this lesson speak to my life?"

Many of the questions are self-reflective and are based on your personal experience. However, all questions have a theological foundation and some are looking for a specific answer based on the Word of God.

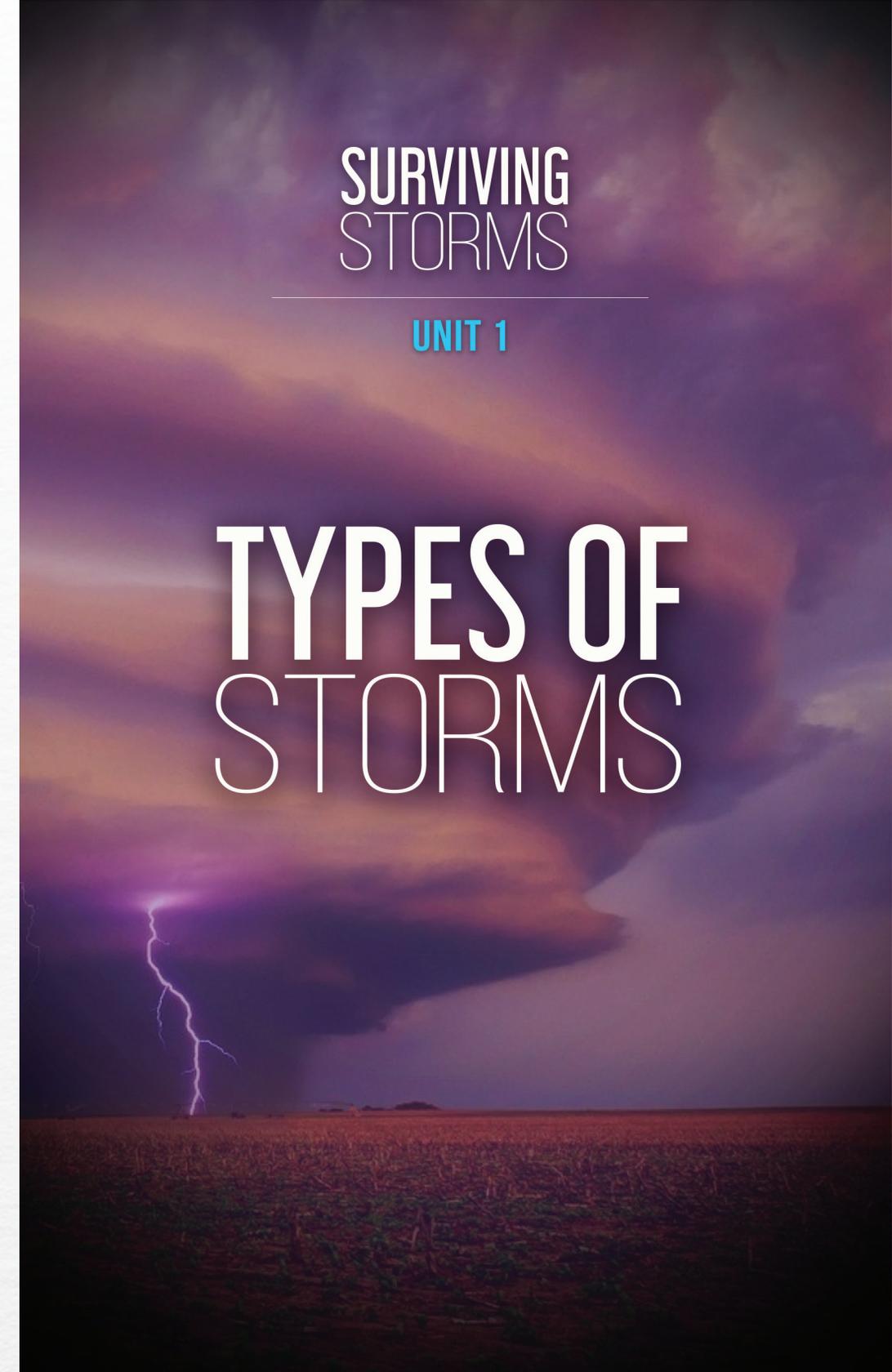
It is my prayer this study will be a great tool for believers to learn together and encourage each other.

# SURVIVING STORMS

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## UNIT 1

# TYPES OF STORMS



## LESSON 1: SELF-INFLICTED STORMS

In 1997, British author J.K. Rowling introduced the world to a young wizard by the name of Harry Potter. It is estimated that since then the Harry Potter series has sold 400 million copies, been translated into 68 languages and the movies have made more than \$8 billion worldwide.

Before the Harry Potter debut and success there were 12 publishing firms that rejected the first novel. These successful and smart business people read J.K. Rowling's manuscript and made the very bad decision of refusing to publish a future mega hit and literary goldmine. More than 20 years later it is hard to believe that anyone would pass on publishing Harry Potter, but several did.

Hopefully, you have not made a bad decision that cost you and your company millions of dollars, but we are all guilty of making bad decisions. It does not matter if you are saved and smart, all of us can look back on our life and see some decisions we made that we wish we could do over.

Fortunately for us, many of our bad decisions have small or minimal ramifications. Like wearing white after Labor Day, paying to watch a bad movie or telling someone how they really look in "that" dress. These decisions may lead to some slight embarrassment or temporary inconvenience, but it soon passes.

However, there are some bad decisions that can cause devastating hardship, difficulties and disappointment. These bad decisions cause storms to come into our lives. Decisions about who to date (or marry), what job to take, whether to drop out of school or where to live - if not made correctly can have unwanted effects.

If we are honest - some storms in our life have been caused by our bad decisions. We cannot blame every hardship or difficulty on Satan, God or our haters. Sometimes we must look in the mirror and admit that we brought this particular hardship on ourselves.

List three decisions (not already discussed), if not made correctly, that can cause personal hardships:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Jonah 1:1-5**

God instructs his prophet Jonah to go and preach to the inhabitants of Nineveh. Instead, Jonah makes the decision to disobey God. He purchases a ticket and boards a ship headed to Tarshish. In response to Jonah's actions God sends a storm. This is a self-inflicted storm due to Jonah's bad decision.

1. What are some self-inflicted storms you have had to deal with in life?

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2. How long and how severe was this particular storm?

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3. What lesson, if any, did you learn from this self-inflicted storm?

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In Jonah's story his disobedience caused the storm. However, the storm did not affect just Jonah but everyone on the ship. (Jonah 1:4-15) Sometimes in life we must suffer through a storm because of someone else's bad decision.

**A self-inflicted storm does not mean  
it is a self-contained storm.**

**Our bad decisions can affect other people.**

For example, your brother and sister-in-law mismanaged their finances. They do not have a place to stay so you open up your home to them and their children. Now they are living with you, sleeping in your living room, eating your food and rearranging your schedule. This is no picnic. You are suffering through a storm but it is because of someone else's bad decision.

4. Can you think of other examples where another person's bad decision can cause hardship and pain to a third party/person?

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## SURVIVING STORMS

5. Have you ever experienced hardship or disappointment due to another person's bad decision? Explain.

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6. Has your bad decision caused others hardship? Explain.

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There is some good news - we can avoid self-inflicted storms. The key is to make better decisions. Unfortunately, like mother Eve in Genesis we make too many decisions based on what we see and what we want. **Read Gen. 3:1-7**

Lot, the nephew of Abraham gives another example of how we make decisions based upon what we see. It is his bad decision that impacted him and his family. **Read Gen. 13:10-13**

7. List some sources of our decisions. In other words, what often determines our decision making?

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8. What can we do to be better decision makers?

- Obey God's \_\_\_\_\_ **1 John 5:3**
- Seek God's \_\_\_\_\_ **James 1:5**

9. Are you growing and maturing as a decision maker? If you are still dealing with self-inflicted storms, what is hindering your decision making progress?

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## LESSON 2: SATANIC INSPIRED STORMS

In literature the antagonist is the person who actively opposes or is hostile to the main character or hero in the story. Those of us who are not literary critics simply call the adversary in the story a villain. We are familiar with villains from books and movies like Lord Voldemort (Harry Potter), Darth Vader (Star Wars), the shark (Jaws), Scar (Lion King), Deebo (Friday), and Nino Brown (New Jack City).

In the story there is always some type of struggle between the villain and the hero. It is through the struggle or conflict that the hero emerges victorious. Craig knocks out Deebo, Harry defeats Lord Voldemort, and the shark is killed in Jaws. It is through hardship and difficulty the hero wins. No struggle, no victory.

In these stories and so many more we find art is simply imitating real life. That is why every Christian should be aware of the antagonist or villain in his/her life. It is not your boss, in-laws, or someone from the opposite political party. The villain in your life is Satan. He hates God and desires to destroy the children of God.

Sometimes God in His infinite wisdom allows Satan to bring storms into our life. This becomes a struggle between our faith in a loving God and the contrary winds of unfavorable circumstances. So God gives Satan permission to attack our home, health, finances, etc. He allows us to go through the struggle so that we can rise above our situation victorious and His Name is glorified.

### Read Job 1:6-22

Job was "blameless and upright". He was a man who feared God and avoided evil. He had 10 children and was a man of great wealth. The Bible tells us that one day Satan presented himself before God and God asked Satan what he thought of Job. Satan accused Job of honoring God only because God had blessed him. So, God allowed Satan to take away Job's wealth and his children. Later, God allowed Satan to afflict Job's body. Job grieved but did not charge God with any wrongdoing. What Job went through is called a satanic inspired storm.

1. Satan was allowed to test Job but God set the boundaries. What were the limitations placed on Satan's testing?

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2. God and not Satan sets the limitations on our trials and tribulations. What does this say about God's authority over Satan? How does this make you feel?

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3. Why would God mention Job's name (1:8) to Satan? What did God say about Job? If God was to mention your name to Satan what would he say about you?

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Several years ago I heard a sermon preached from this text in Job. The preacher called the sermon, "Picked Out to be Picked On". God singled out Job and then allowed Satan to put him to the test.

**A faith that cannot be tested is a faith that cannot be trusted.**

4. We can only imagine all that Job experienced and felt. Have you ever experienced a Job-like moment in your life? What were your circumstances?

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5. Looking back over that experience, how well did you handle it? Were you able to be positive and maintain your faith in God? Would you do some things differently in your situation? Explain.

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## SURVIVING STORMS

6. What are some positives you gained in going through your storm? For example, did you grow spiritually, learn a life lesson or gain new insight about God? **Read James 1:2-4**

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7. Sometimes during tough times we feel like God has forgotten about us. **Read Luke 12:6-7** and **Mark 4:35-41**. Are there any other scriptures that come to mind that reassure you God is there with you in the storm?

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Paul Harvey produced a radio show called The Rest of the Story. He told little known or forgotten facts on a variety of subjects. Usually the key element of the story (like the name of some well-known person) was held back until the end. The broadcast always ended with the tagline "And now you know the rest of the story." **Read Job 42:10-13** for the rest of the story. God restores Job.

8. Why did God have Job pray for his friends?

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9. Our struggles are not just about us, others are watching how we handle them. Has your struggle benefited someone else? If so, how?

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Satanic inspired storms are allowed so that God can be glorified. They also are allowed by God in order for us as believers to exhort, encourage and strengthen one another.



## LESSON 3: SUDDEN, SEVERE AND NORMAL STORMS

I believe every family has that crazy uncle who shows up at the family gatherings and goes on and on about conspiracies. He talks about 9-11 was an inside job, Jay Z and Beyoncé are members of the Illuminati and Tupac faked his death and is in Cuba recording new tracks.

This same uncle told you that Barack Obama was the anti-Christ in 2008. Then in 2016 he said Donald Trump was the anti-Christ. It is interesting, a big reason that Donald Trump was elected president is because he championed the conspiracy theory that Barack Obama was not born in the US and therefore did not qualify to be president. This is known as the birther theory and many Americans believed the lie.

Anyway, your uncle is not the only one who believes these farfetched stories, for some strange reason people love conspiracy theories. That is why there are so many out there for public consumption. Here are a few I have recently heard – the Earth is flat, NASA faked the moon landing, Elvis is still alive, the Royal Family had Princess Diana killed and AIDS was created by the US government.

Psychologists who have studied this subject found that one reason people believe in conspiracies is their desire to feel secure and in control. There is this need to explain everything. For them life just cannot happen. So, if a plane crashes it cannot be mechanical failure or pilot error, it had to be the work of terrorists.

I bring up this subject because too many Christians believe that if you are saved nothing bad should happen in your life. Christians should never be broke, sick or lonely. If something does go wrong it's because you sinned or the Devil did it. They are always looking for something or someone to blame. They ignore the fact that sometimes "life happens."

Never forget that we are fallen creatures who live in a fallen world. Sometimes people lose their jobs (saved and un-saved), relationships run their course and bodies get sick and breakdown. There is no grand mystery to solve, it is just life. To paraphrase Earth, Wind & Fire – it's the way of the world.

In Lesson 1 we learned about self-inflicted storms. These are storms caused by our bad decisions. Then in Lesson 2 we talked about satanic inspired storms. These are storms that God allows Satan to blow our way. Now we move on to discuss what I call "Sudden, Severe and Normal Storms". The cause of these hardships is not Satan or gremlins but life itself.

### **Read Mark 4:35-41**

Jesus had finished a long day of preaching and teaching. He and his disciples got on a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee. Being tired Jesus went to the stern of the boat where he fell asleep. A great windstorm rose, so violently that the boat began to fill with water. The disciples became fearful and woke up Jesus. He rebuked the storm and the winds ceased. There was a great calm and the disciples were amazed.

We all must deal with storms but not all storms are created equal. Our text describes this storm as a "great" storm. The Greek word used to describe it is "mega." They encountered a storm with hurricane like winds.

I was raised in South Louisiana where rain and thunderstorms are common. It is not unusual for it to be sunny in the morning and have thunderstorms that evening. Sometimes these thunderstorms may last a few days.

Every few years you can expect a hurricane. Most people do not panic. They simply board up their house, stock up on supplies and wait it out. Although most hurricanes do not live up to the hype, unfortunately you can get a Hurricane Katrina. The most deadly and expensive storm in US history. Storms happen in life but not all storms are created equal.

1. What is the most devastating or difficult storm you have had to face?

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2. Can you think of a hardship or difficulty you had to deal with that was a normal part of life? For example, like losing your job or getting sick.

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## SURVIVING STORMS

3. How did you react to it or handle it? Would it have made a difference if you understood that this type of trial is a normal course of life? Why or why not?

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4. Did this storm/hardship cause you to feel abandoned by God? What happened?

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5. Looking back can you say that God was with you during those hard times? Have you grown spiritually since then?

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6. Name two spiritual practices which help us avoid feeling like God does not care.

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### **Storms will expose our lack of faith.**

7. In our story, did you notice there were other boats affected by the storm? **Read Mark 4:36.** What are some events that affect many people at once? For example, a company downsizing its staff.

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8. When we are going through a storm, it is important to remember there are others suffering at the same time. Reflect back to your hardship. Do you remember someone else like a friend, family member or co-worker that was having a difficult time? What did you do to help?

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**Suffering is no excuse for selfishness.**

Have you ever asked the question “Whose fault is it?” when dealing with tragedy and difficulty? We want to find someone or something to blame when life goes wrong.

9. **Read John 9:1-12.** Jesus comes across a man born blind. The disciples wanted to know whose fault was it. What was Jesus answer to their question? What lesson should we learn when dealing with hardship and difficulties?

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**DEEPER LOOK:**

The Sea of Galilee is 700 feet below sea level. It is eight miles wide and 12 miles long. There are mountains on both sides. Based on its geography, the Sea of Galilee was subject to sudden and severe storms. The winds would come over the eastern mountains and drop suddenly into the sea. Especially, when the east blows cold air (which is heavier) and it drops as the warm air rises from the sea. This sudden change produces sudden and severe storms.

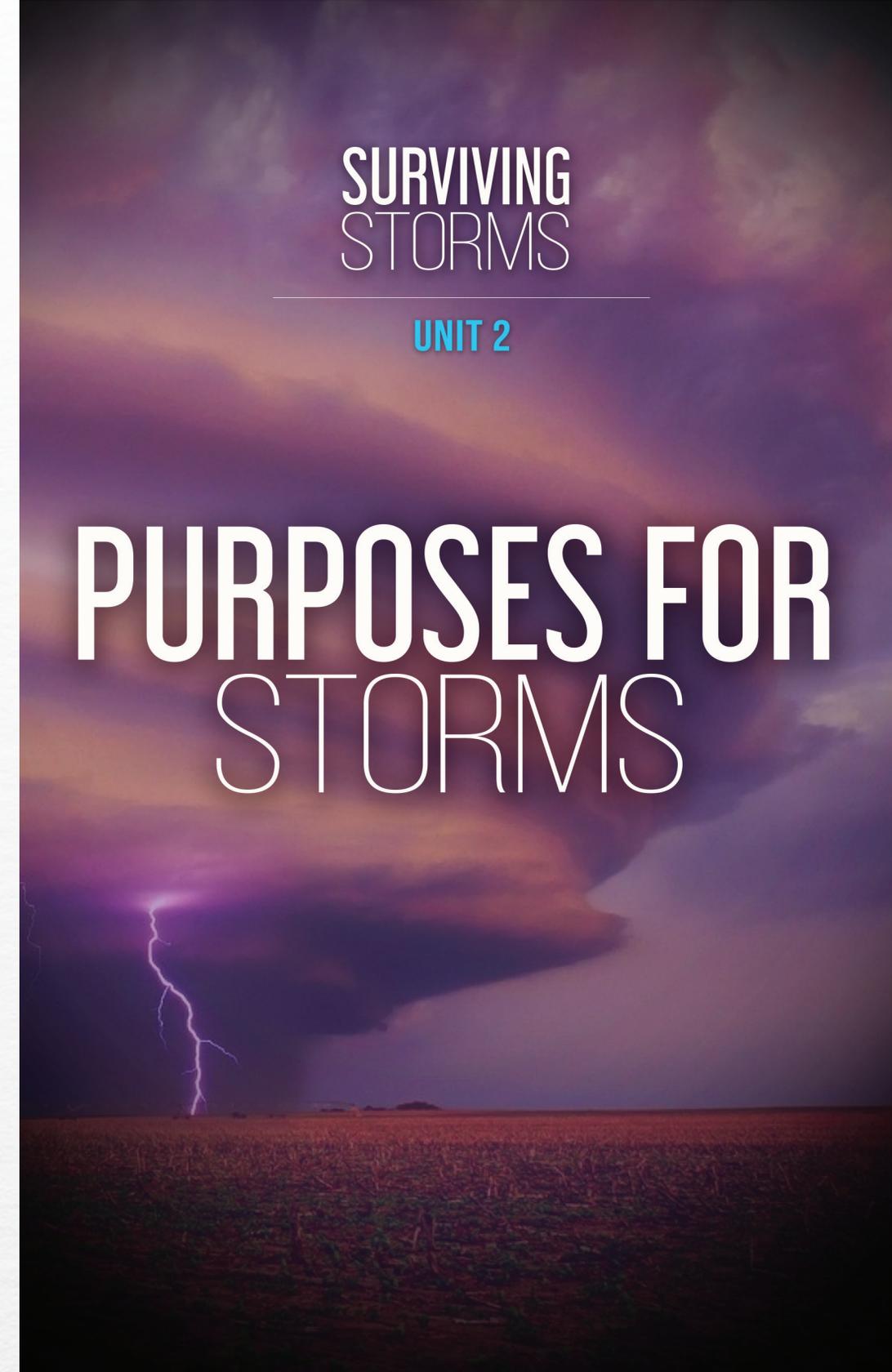


# SURVIVING STORMS

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## UNIT 2

# PURPOSES FOR STORMS

A dramatic storm scene with a lightning bolt striking a field. The sky is dark and cloudy, with a bright purple lightning bolt striking down from a large, dark storm cloud. The foreground is a dark, flat field, possibly a cornfield, under a dark, stormy sky.

## LESSON 4: DISCIPLINE AND CORRECTION

Jennifer Lewis plays Ruby Johnson in the hit TV show "Blackish." She is known for playing roles of mothers in such movies like "Poetic Justice," "The Preacher's Wife," "The Brothers," "Think Like a Man," and "What's Love Got to Do With It." All of her characters are strong, black and what I would call "old school."

As I think back, there was some old school in my mother. She was loving, caring, kind and she believed in discipline. When we did something wrong we did not have time outs or lengthy lectures. Nor did we go to bed without a dessert as punishment. My mother believed in discipline, so when her children did wrong, she laid hands on us...if you get my point.

My mother, like many parents back in the day, was old school when it came to raising her children. She instilled in us a healthy respect for hard work, education and doing what is right. Now, many years later, I realize that it was my old-school upbringing with discipline that made me the person I am today.

There is a good chance that you were raised by parents who believed in discipline. If you heard your mother, grandmother or aunt say any of the following you were probably raised old school. (Read these in your mother's voice.)

- I am not one of your little friends.
- You better check your tone.
- Didn't I tell you!
- Stop running in and out of my house.
- A hard head makes a soft behind.
- Stop all that crying before I give you something to cry about.
- When you get in the store, don't touch nothing.
- I hope you know that school work like you know those songs.
- If someone hits you first, you better hit them back.
- And my favorite old school saying..."I brought you in this world and I can take you out."

Unfortunately, we live in a day and time when many parents want to raise their children without discipline. They want to be their child's friend. The bottom line is you need discipline in raising a child.

We can debate parenting styles but God is the perfect parent. He understands that children need discipline and correction. At times, our loving God uses hardships and tribulations to discipline and correct us. God never abuses us but He will correct us.

**Read Proverbs 3:11-12 and Hebrews 12:5-11.** These scriptures tell us that God disciplines us because He loves us. God's divine correction is proof of His love for us.

1. Think of a true incident when a parent allowed a child to run wild in a store or some other public place. What went through your mind when you saw it happening? What was your impression of that child and his/her parent?

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2. Do you remember a season in your life when you were running wild, out of control, and rebelling against God? Explain.

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3. What happened to stop your rebellion? Was it a hardship, tragedy or change in circumstances?

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## SURVIVING STORMS

4. If God had not corrected or disciplined you back then, how do you think your life would be today?

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### **God uses short-term pain to bring about long-term gain.**

It is a grave mistake to think that every bad thing that happens in our life is because God is disciplining us due to some sin we have committed. This was the mistake that Job's friends made. They thought Job had sinned to cause such great hardship to come upon him. They were wrong. **Read Job 42:7-9.**

Discipline and correction is just one purpose for storms in our life. There are others that we will explore later in this study. Understand the reason God disciplines us by changing our circumstances or happenings is because it gets our attention.

### **Read 2 Samuel 12:1-15**

5. What was David's sin? Why was God so angry about this sin?

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6. What were the consequences of David's sin?

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7. What was David's attitude toward God's discipline? What should our attitude be when God corrects us?

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8. Think back over your life. Have you handled God's discipline properly or were you angry at God?
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**In grace, God forgives all our sin,  
but He does not remove all the consequences of it.**

Self-reflection is the key to understanding if your storm is for the purpose of discipline and correction. Take time and look at your life. Be objective and ask yourself the question, "Has my sin brought this upon me?" If the answer is yes, then repent from the sin and move forward in God's forgiveness. If you do not know the answer then seek God's wisdom in the matter. **Read James 1:5-6.**

## **DEEPER LOOK:**

Some Christians believe that God wants to punish them for their sins. They feel like God is a policeman waiting for them to speed so he can write them a ticket. Nothing can be further from the truth. Remember that Jesus has already been punished for our sin on the cross. Therefore we are not condemned before God (Romans 8:1). I hope the definitions below will help distinguish punishment and discipline.

Punishment is punitive action done to make the offender repay the debt they have incurred. It is done for the benefit of the offended and not the offender. Punishment deals with the past.

Discipline is the corrective action done to change negative behavior of the offender. It is done for the benefit of the offender and not the offended. Discipline looks forward to a better future. God lovingly corrects and disciplines his children.

## LESSON 5: DIRECTION AND CLARITY

Are you a person who cannot remember the directions back to a store or a friend's house? Or when you walk out of the elevator of your office building do you sometimes turn the wrong direction to go to your office or car? In other words, going to a place numerous times is no guarantee that you remember how to get back there.

If you are that person then you are my brother/sister in the everyday struggle I call being "directionally challenged." I believe there are millions of us who have a bad sense of direction. We are not bad people, we just get lost very easily.

Having a bad sense of direction is tough enough, but knowing there are people who have a great sense of direction makes it worse. My wife has a great internal compass. She can go to a place one time and remember how to get back there years later. Her sense of direction is good for us as a couple but bad for my ego as a man.

Before you laugh out loud at my weakness with directions, understand when it comes to life we are all directionally challenged. All of us need help in knowing what to do and which decisions to make. Our spiritual compass is broken and we need a spiritual GPS.

Who ever invented the GPS had me in mind. The one in my cell phone is called Siri and I use it all the time for directions. There is one little problem with Siri. I do not always follow her instructions. I know that GPS is a multi-billion dollar system of satellite technology with the goal of pinpointing any location on earth, but sometimes I feel like I know better.

A couple of years ago I was traveling to Dallas, Texas to visit my daughter. I travel to Dallas often and I know how to get there. However, this time I used Siri because my daughter had recently moved and I had her new address in my phone. I was on I-30 heading west when Siri told me to take an unexpected exit. As I continued to drive Siri insisted that I take the exit. I told her she was "broken", "confused" and just "lost", after all, "I know how to get to Dallas!" So I ignored Siri's directions and passed the exit. One mile later, I understood her insistence in my taking the earlier exit. There was an electronic sign that read "Construction - expect delays of 45 minutes". If I would have listened to Siri it would have saved me time and frustration.

We serve a God who is all knowing and he wants to help direct us in our everyday life. Unfortunately, we are directionally challenged spiritually and our internal compasses are broken, so we think we know better, which then causes us to ignore his voice. That is why God at times uses hardships, trials, and disappointments to lead us. They get our attention and become the electronic signs on the road of life.

### **Read Exodus 13:17-22**

The Lord had won the freedom of the children of Israel. They were leaving Egypt and headed to the Promised Land. God chose to lead the Israelites through a difficult and longer route from Egypt to Canaan although a much easier and direct path existed. This wilderness route presented some unique challenges to the people of God. They encountered a lack of food and water on the way. Did God's GPS have a glitch, need a software update or was he up to something?

1. Why would God lead the children of Israel this way instead of the more popular and direct route?

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2. Have you ever felt like God was using difficult circumstances in life to lead you in the wrong direction? Or have you ever asked God what he was doing? Explain your situation. How did it turn out in the end?

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**God uses problems to point us in the direction of possibilities.**

### **Read Genesis 37:18-28, 52:15-21**

Joseph's divine destination was Egypt. God's plan was for Joseph to be in Egypt and in Pharaoh's house so that he could save his family and many others from a future famine. Who would have thought that it would take being betrayed and sold into slavery by your brothers, falsely accused and imprisoned for sexual assault, and forgotten about by another inmate to get there? That is exactly the steps God used to get Joseph to the throne as Vice-Pharaoh of Egypt.

## SURVIVING STORMS

3. What was Joseph's attitude toward his older brothers? Remember these are the same brothers that betrayed and sold him into slavery.  

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4. What type of attitude should we have when it appears that circumstances are not in our favor? How can we see the big picture in life and not get caught up in the problems of the moment?  

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### **Read Acts 16:25-34**

5. Why were Paul and Silas in prison? How could they sing songs of praise to God while being imprisoned?  

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6. What was God's ultimate goal for having Paul and Silas suffer in jail? Do you think it was worth it?  

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7. Can you recall a specific hardship or disappointment that worked out in your favor?  

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Sometimes God leads us to where he wants us to be by closing doors in our faces. In other words, we will ask God for something like a particular job. To our surprise God says no and we do not get that job. He may say no to several jobs we apply for but later down the road we get the right job at the right time.

**There is a blessing behind closed doors.**



## LESSON 6: DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER

Most people are familiar with the name Arnold Schwarzenegger. He is the original Terminator and former governor of California. However, only a few can recall that Arnold's movie career was helped by a 1977 docudrama called Pumping Iron. The movie described the world of professional bodybuilding and centered on the 1975 Mr. Universe competition between Arnold Schwarzenegger and Lou Ferrigno (The Incredible Hulk). The movie caused an instant increased interest in body building and helped launch the fitness fad of the 1980's.

Have you ever looked at a bodybuilder (professional or amateur) and wondered what it takes to look like that? Fitness experts tell us that to build muscle you apply a load of stress greater than what you are adapted too. Most people do this by lifting progressively heavier weights. The additional tension on the muscle helps it to grow.

The same is true in developing character. You cannot build character in the comfortable places of life. Character is built in the heavy lifting of trials, tribulations and hardship.

God is more concerned about your character than he is about your comfort.

### **Read Romans 5:3-5**

The Apostle Paul clearly states that character is developed from sufferings or tribulations. That word suffering means to press like when you squeeze grapes. Great character comes from being squeezed or pressed in bad situations.

1. Name some good character traits that can come from the bad situations in the table below. For example, being raised in poverty can develop the good character trait of financial stewardship. Can you list some other bad situations that help develop good character and the result?

BAD SITUATION	GOOD CHARACTER
Being raised in poverty	Become a good steward of finances
Going through a divorce	
Dealing with a chronic illness	

2. What character trait was developed in your life due to some type of hardship or difficulty? Explain your situation and the end result.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Can you now appreciate having to go through that hardship? If not, why?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Unfortunately, many people are more concerned about reputation instead of their character. Reputation is how you act around others. Character is how you act when no one is around. You can have a great reputation and bad character.

Thomas Paine said it best, "Reputation is what men and women think of us. Character is what God and angels know of us." Maybe that is why we have seen a rise in ruined reputations like Bill Cosby, Tiger Woods, O.J. Simpson and Robert Kelly. These men had ascended to the highest levels of fame and celebrity only to be brought low by severe character issues.

**Read Matthew 23:25-26; Proverbs 28:6**

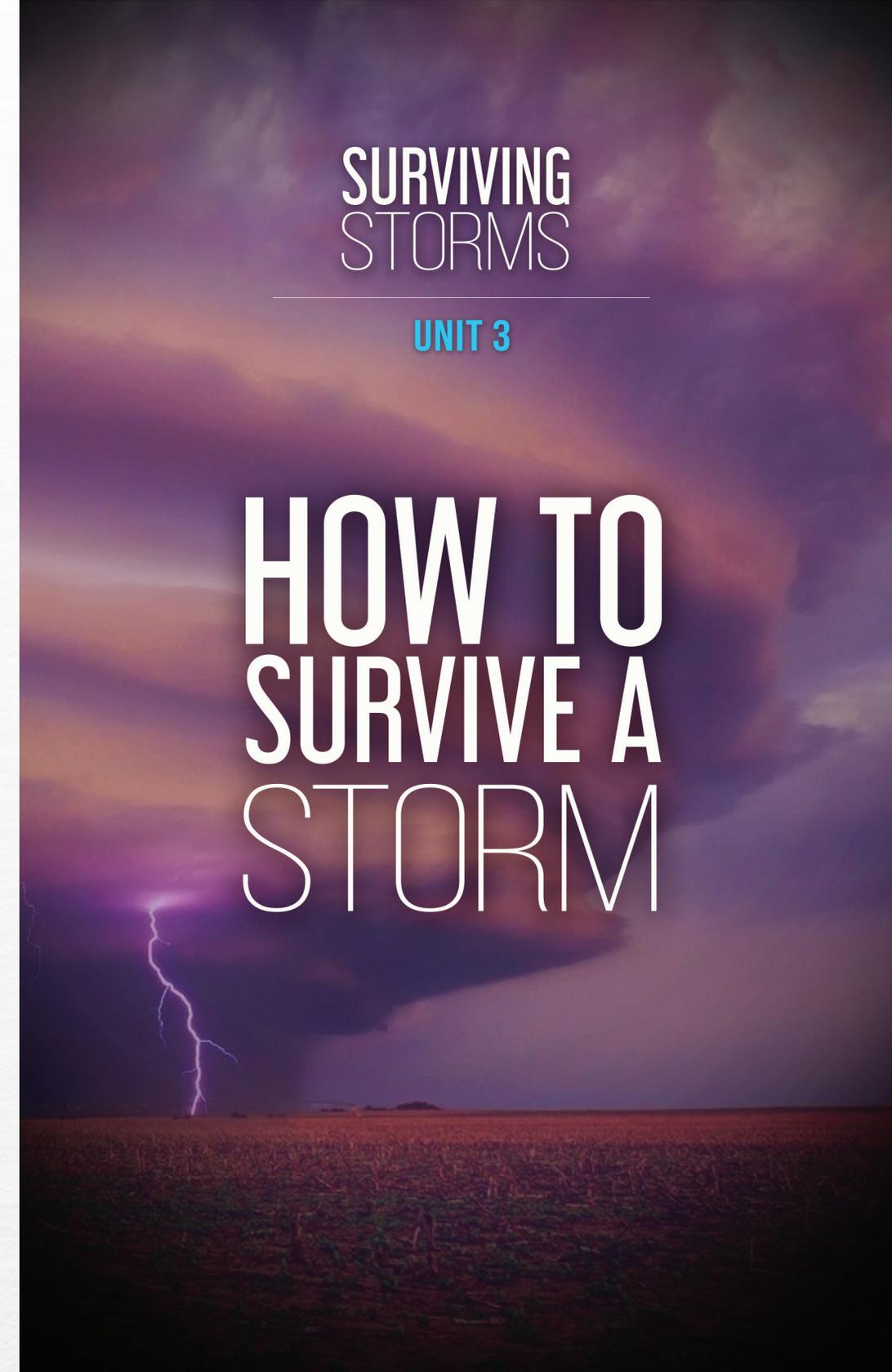


# SURVIVING STORMS

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## UNIT 3

# HOW TO SURVIVE A STORM

A dramatic storm scene with a lightning bolt striking a field. The sky is dark and cloudy, with a bright purple lightning bolt striking down from the left. The ground is a dark, flat field, possibly a cornfield, under a heavy, dark storm cloud.

## LESSON 7: ACTION PLAN

For several weeks you have studied and discussed the types and purposes for storms. Since storms, hardship and disappointments are a part of life it would behoove every Christian to have an Action Plan ready for when a storm comes.

Please take a few minutes to read the steps below and pray about what changes God is asking you to make. Use pages 32-33 to write down any thoughts and scriptures to help you develop your personal action plan. These are practical steps to help with your next storm.

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### **Expect Storms 1 Peter 4:12**

No one wants a storm but they come anyway. Stop being surprised that you had car trouble, your child got a bad report card or the doctor gave you news that you did not want to hear. The Word of God is clear – we will have tribulations. So put on your game face and get ready to fight.

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### **Rearrange your Priorities Acts 27:38**

What is important during good times may become trivial during hardship. Make the tough decisions and get rid of those things in life that are holding you back. For example, cable TV is great when the finances are flowing but when money is tight change your priorities. Cut the cable TV, get an antenna to access local channels and keep pushing.

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### **Ask Questions James 1:2-5**

Seek the wisdom of mature believers and the Holy Spirit. It is alright to ask questions when dealing with a storm. Talking with the right person can not only give us insight into why and how to go through tough seasons, but can encourage us to remain faithful to God.

**Live out the Word James 1:22-25**

It is not enough to know the Word but we must live the Word. It is our attitude and actions that will determine how well we overcome the problem.

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**Learn the Lesson Proverbs 3:5-6**

Every hardship and disappointment teaches us about God and ourselves. Don't miss the teaching moment. Be reflective during times of trouble. Whatever lesson you learn put it into action.

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**Prepare for the Next Storm Matthew 7:24-27**

Don't wait for the storm to hit before you prepare for it. Storms are always in the forecast so we are always preparing ourselves spiritually and emotionally for the next one. Develop your prayer life, personal devotion and willingness to serve when you are in between storms. It will help you weather the next storm.



## References

1. **Lesson 1: Self-Inflicted Storms (Deeper Look) on page 7**
  - a. Nineveh was the capital city of the ancient Assyrian Empire.<sup>1</sup>
  - b. The capital city was famous because it was a center for the worship of Ishtar the fertility goddess.<sup>2</sup>
  - c. The city was described by historians as a symbol of arrogance, idolatry, and atrocity.<sup>3</sup> Nineveh deserved complete destruction because of the dishonest behavior of its inhabitants, therefore Jonah was sent with a prophetic message of warning.<sup>4</sup>
  - d. Nineveh is opposite the present-day city of Mosul in Iraq.<sup>5</sup>
  - e. Tarshish was a city in southern Spain out in the Atlantic Ocean, about 2,500 miles from other colonies.<sup>6</sup>
2. **Lesson 2: Satanic-Inspired Storms (Deeper Look) on page 11**
  - a. Satan is not a proper name although modern Bible translations use a capital letter. The Hebrew word is a descriptive noun.<sup>7</sup>
3. **Lesson 3: Sudden, Severe, and Normal Storms (Deeper Look) on page 15**
  - a. The Sea of Galilee is approximately 700 feet below sea level.<sup>8</sup>
  - b. Information about the physical features of the Sea of Galilee.<sup>9</sup>
4. **Lesson 4: Discipline and Correction (Deeper Look) on page 21**
  - a. Defining Punishment and Discipline for the Christian.<sup>10</sup>
5. **Lesson 5: Direction and Clarity (Deeper Look) on page 25**
  - a. The different avenues God will use to lead us.<sup>11</sup>
6. **Lesson 6: Development of Character**
  - a. The quote by Thomas Paine on page 27...<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lucas P. Petit and Daniele Bonacossie, *Nineveh, the Great City*, (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2017), 15-16.

<sup>2</sup> Julian Reade, "The Ishtar Temple at Nineveh." *Iraq* 67, no. 1 (2005): 347-90.

<sup>3</sup> Lucas P. Petit and Daniele Bonacossie, *Nineveh, the Great City*, 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>6</sup> W. W. Covey-Crump, "The Situation of Tarshish." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 17, no. 67 (1916): 282.

<sup>7</sup> Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 1055.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan B. Laronne, "Agriculture, Diversions, and Drought Shrinking Galilee Sea," *Science of the Total Environment* 651, no. 1 (February 2019): 70-83.

<sup>9</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Sea of Galilee," *Encyclopedia Britannica Inc*, 2017. Accessed via <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sea-of-Galilee>.

<sup>10</sup> Erickson, Millard J. "The Results of Sin," *Christian Theology* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 549.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Bradley, "The 8 Different Ways the Holy Spirit Will Use to Communicate to Us," *Bible Knowledge.com*, accessed via <https://www.bible-knowledge.com/8-ways-holy-spirit-communicates/>.

<sup>12</sup> "Thomas Paine Quotes" accessed via [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/thomas\\_paine\\_117868](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/thomas_paine_117868)

