

I. Faith in the Storm Gee Sprague, Lead Pastor August 17, 2008

A. The Bathtub Test

During a visit to the mental health institution, a visitor asked the Director how do you determine whether or not a patient should be institutionalized.

"Well," said the Director, "we fill up a bathtub, then we offer a teaspoon, a teacup and a bucket to the patient and ask him or her to empty the bathtub."

"Oh, I understand," said the visitor. "A normal person would use the bucket because it's bigger than the spoon or the teacup."

"No.." said the Director, "A normal person would pull the plug. Do you want a bed near the window?"

B. Have you ever been so focused on the problem or the task at hand, that you fail to see the simple solution.

C. It happens to me all the time.

D. I get so caught up in the crisis or problem that I fail to see the solution that is so obvious.

E. Last week we saw Jesus acknowledge the faith of three people who had real problems to conquer and challenge the faith of two people who seem to be making excuses for their inability to follow Him.

F. We ended with the challenge that disciples, followers of Jesus, have to get into the boat.

G. *(Mat 8:23 NIV) Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him.*

H. Now let's see what happens next!

II. *(Mat 8: 24-27 NIV) {24} Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. {25} The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" {26} He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. {27} The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"*

III. My experience with boats

A. My experience growing up on Lake Conway in Orlando

1. Series of canals that connected the chain of lakes.
2. We lived on the north lake which was an excellent lake for skiing, but the lake south of us was just a little better. It was larger and had a longer perimeter around which you could ski and there were some really cute girls who lived on that lake.
3. You didn't want to get caught in a storm when you were out in that lake.
4. It was about 2 miles across that lake, and the waves could bounce you around a bit.
5. Our boat had a tendency to always break down in bad weather, and I have a few miserable memories of being towed across a choppy lake in the rain.

B. In March of 1993 a group of us had planned to go on one of those Barefoot Sailboat Cruises.

1. We were scheduled to leave Fort Lauderdale and spend a week sailing around the Islands of the Bahamas.
2. Just our luck that weekend a storm now known as The Storm of the 20th Century, also known as the '93 Superstorm, No-Name Hurricane, the White Hurricane, or the (Great) Blizzard of 1993, which affected all the East Coast of North America. It was unique for its intensity, massive size and wide-reaching effect. At its height the storm stretched from Canada to Central America, but its main impact was on the Eastern United States and Cuba. Areas as far south as central Alabama and Georgia received 6 to 8 inches (200 mm) of snow and areas such as Birmingham, Alabama, received up to 12 inches (300 mm) with isolated reports of 16 inches (410 mm). Even the Florida Panhandle reported up

to 2 inches (51 mm), with hurricane-force wind gusts and record low barometric pressures. Between Florida and Cuba, hurricane-force winds produced extreme storm surges in the Gulf of Mexico, which along with scattered tornadoes killed dozens of people. Wikipedia.

3. The River Run was postponed til Sunday, and the high winds and record lows made it very interesting.
4. We were scheduled to leave Sunday morning March 14, but delayed it til Monday.
5. On Monday after the Storm of the Century we left Fort Lauderdale for Bimini in 15-18 foot seas.
6. I know a little of what the disciples were feeling.

C.It must have been a pretty bad storm.

1. The Sea of Galilee is a very large inland lake
2. It is about 13 miles long and about 8 miles wide
3. Four of the disciples, Peter, Andrew, James and John were fishermen, all from Capernaum. They were used to storms.
4. So maybe this was a bit out of the ordinary.

D.It wasn't, however, enough to worry Jesus. He was sleeping through it.

E.Sandy and I had done a couple of trips on her father's boat, so on our sailing trip to Bimini, when we realized the weather was rainy and cold, we went down below and climbed into our bunk and went to sleep.

F.I don't know that we had that much faith, but we knew there was less chance of getting seasick if we went to sleep.

G.But the disciples were rattled.

IV. **Focusing on the Storm leads to Fear**

A.{25} *The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"*

B.*In A Pit With A Lion On A Snowy Day*, Mark Batterson pg. 48 "Faith is the process of unlearning your irrational fears."

C.Now, let me qualify this a bit. The storm that they were in wasn't totally irrational . It was real. That was a chance of them drowning.

D.The disciples really hadn't figured out that their Journey with Jesus was going to be such a bumpy ride.

E.This is a bit of a reality check. A test of sorts.

F.I have always lived with a bit of fear of failure, that for the most part has motivated me to do things that will make success a reality.

G.Worry Fear, however, has never done anything in my life except rob me of the energy I need to do the things that God has called me to do.

H.Lord, can't you see I'm drowning in a stack of leadership challenges? Are you asleep?

I.Can't you see the price of gas going up and how it affects our General Fund? Are you asleep?

J.Can't you see how much pain my body is in? Are you asleep?

K.Can't you see that I have been passed over for a promotion again, because I refuse to play powder room politics? Are you asleep Jesus?

L.Why does my child have to be dyslexic and struggle three times as hard as my sister's kid who never goes to church and always gets to put those Honor Roll bumper stickers and I am serving you every Sunday at CrossRoad Church. Are you asleep Jesus?????

M.{26} *He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.*

N. *Living Beyond the Limits* Franklin Graham #54 pg. 203 "Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees, And looks to God alone; Laughs at impossibilities, And cries it shall be done." "Faith is the power that God gives us to break out of our human limitations and become the people He created us to be. Use this power to slay the enemies of faith and experience the joy of living in sync with Him."

V. Faith **trumps** Fear!

A. Are there any Spades players here?

1. There is nothing better than holding a Spade in your hand.
2. At the point when it looks like you will not take the trick, you pull out a low trump card and beat their Ace.
3. Faith is the believers trump card. At the point when the evil one is making us think we are sinking, that's when we should play our trump card.

B. *Break Through Prayer* Jim Cymbala Page 181-183 "Spiritual encouragement is not a matter of giving someone a slap on the back or uttering glib phrases such as "keep your chin up." It's about building up our confidence in God. Unless our faith in God grows, we have not helped anyone at the point of the attack." Page 202-204 "Faith brings stability in times of uncertainty while unbelief causes vacillation." "Trying harder" to do the right thing is not what's needed. Instead, we must have faith in what God can and will do for us."

C. Faith is building our confidence in God.

D. Faith empowers to not just accept the storms of life, but to also believe that God is on our side to still the storms.

VI. Faith is in the **boat!**

A. In their book *Real Survivors* (pp. 37), Steve & Valerie Bell tell the story of Marshall and Susan whose third child Mandy was born with severe disabilities and the journey of her short life. In the midst of their life with Mandy, they gave birth to a son Toby who lived about two minutes.

1. It is a very sensitive story of how these two people dealt with two back-to-back tragic births, yet still walked by faith and discovered an even deeper expression of faith and God's love.
2. Marshall shared at one point that they really began to ask, "Where is God in this?" He just seemed so absent. And yet when Mandy went in for her cataract surgery, it suddenly dawned on me that God had led us to a Christian doctor...who had put us in touch with a Christian pediatric neurologist. He's the one who asked us, "Where are you leaning for support these days?" We said, "The Lord and the church." That's how we found out he, too, was a believer. One of the residents who was doing the surgery on Mandy's eyes talked to us and said, "I want you to know that I'm a believer and I'm praying for you." The woman who fitted Mandy's eyes for contacts said, "Are you believers? I heard from one of the residents that you are. I just wanted to let you know that I'm a believer, too, and I'm praying for you."
3. One afternoon a social worker dropped by and asked, "May I come in and sit with you for a while?" It was apparent she wanted to say something. She started talking about her divorce, a bad second marriage, how she was estranged from God but wanted to get back to Him. We talked about that for a while. Obviously she needed to express to someone her desire to get back in touch with God. She was just one of the people who was drawn to us because of Mandy and our suffering.
4. When we, members of our church, "get it right" as Marshall said, we are an enormous absorber of one another's pain. In reality, the church is a community of suffering. By design we're to share one another's grief and to carry one another's burdens. We are sympathetic by choice, not simply by similarity of experience. We choose to enter into one another's brokenness. We choose to cry with one another. We choose to participate in one another's disappointments and suffering. We choose to identify with one another's grief. When the church operates as a community of suffering, she is incredibly beautiful. There is no other organization on the face of the earth like the church – it's the hope of the world.

VII. Faith focuses on Jesus, not the Storm!

A. Faith empowers us to live with reality, sometimes enables us to change reality, sometimes cope, but never avoid.

B. *The Case for Faith* Lee Strobel Pg. 352 "It's the person who wants to know God that God reveals himself to. And if a person doesn't want to know God—well, God has created the world and the human mind in such a way that he doesn't have to."

C. Storm on Trail

1. On the third day of our recent trail hike the inevitable happened, the skies opened and the rain came down. Rain is never welcomed but it really doesn't impose a threat.
2. Before long the thunder and lightning began to come with it. Safety really becomes a concern then.
3. Our group was divided in two at that time, and our leader, Alex, radioed our group and advised us to follow a lightning protocol that we had been taught that can help prevent the worst physical damage and possibly even save a life if lightning strikes close. For about ten minutes we went into that protocol.
4. During that time, I was really praying for our group. I thought about this scripture and began to ask Jesus to recreate His stilling of the storm.
5. The lightning finally passed, and we were able to continue hiking while it still rained on us for about another 20 minutes where we were able to regroup in a shelter.
6. As we gathered in the shelter, the group who had been with Alex shared that as they were shivering in the rain, bent over in their lightning protocol, she was leading them in praise.
7. I was so blessed and humbled by her faith and leadership during that storm.

VIII. Focusing on Jesus leads us to worship

A. *Healer Testimony*