

TAKE MY HAND

Out of the fires of trials and storms

BY JONI LAMB

The man was now certain he was drowning, that he was going under. And to think, mere moments ago he was full of courage, stepping out in faith, obeying his Master's call to come. A miracle was happening before his very eyes. Not only was his Master walking on the water, he was! But then something else happened. His eyes shifted away from the One beckoning him and onto the storm raging all around. Wind whipped and waves hammered, as pounding pellets of rain stung his face. He was sinking fast and fought frantically to keep his head above the turbulence. Fear was engulfing him along with the sea. Surely, the Master could be trusted? Surely, He wouldn't call him out of the boat only to let him drown. Surely? With one, final, desperate lunge before submerging into the depths, the man cried, "Lord, save me!" If he could but cling to his Master's hand, he knew he would be safe. "Immediately Jesus reached out his

hand and caught him." Safely in His grip, Jesus told the man, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matt. 14:30-31, MEV).

Stormy Weather

I'm sure most of you are familiar with the above story. The disciples were in their boat crossing the Sea of Galilee after Jesus had given them unmistakable instructions to go and He would meet them on the other side. They were simply obeying His word when around 3 a.m. a violent storm blew in, catching them off guard. With no satellites to predict the weather, this was common on the Middle Eastern seas. Wind and rain beat against the boat, tossing it back and forth. Likely the sail was twisted, and the vessel taking on water. Everything in the external pointed to them going down. But then, off in the distant darkness they see a figure, perhaps glowing, walking toward them on the sea. A different kind of



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fear grips them as they assume it's a ghost. And it wasn't their imagination because they all saw it. However, as the ethereal form drew closer it became clearer—Jesus. It was Jesus. He was coming to them in the storm. "Take courage!" He called out. "It is I. Don't be afraid." Undoubtedly, they must have remembered the episode not long before when they'd been in the boat during another raging storm. Fear had

it through.

The Bible doesn't say much about what Peter thought concerning that specific experience and how it impacted his life going forward. It does say the disciples were amazed and claimed, "Truly You are the Son of God." Of course, they had said that the first time, too. But don't you think that after Peter had clung to Jesus's hand as He walked him through the storm, that the

those previous fears had been replaced with the assurance that Jesus was with him, in him, still holding his hand, and would take him across to the ultimate "other side."

Cling to Your Navigator

You don't have to live very long to know that life is challenging under the best of circumstances and downright overwhelming at times. Storms of life are inevitable.

They come in a variety of ways, with varied intensity. Some threaten to blow us away, sink us and drown us, while others are minor inconveniences that seem huge in the moment. One thing is certain, regardless of the intensity, we all experience storms. We are either coming out of one, in the middle of one, or about to go into one. At some point all of us will go through severe storms. This is not a negative statement. It's simply the reality of living in our broken world. Jesus said, "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who

built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock," (Matt. 7:24-25). It is not a matter of if storms will come, but how is your foundation built when they do. Jesus also said, "In this world you will have trouble." That's a promise not many of us have taped

gripped them in that moment too as Jesus was sleeping soundly in the stern. Shaking Him awake they cried hysterically, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" He replied with similar words, "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 (Matt. 8:23-27).

Now, outside the boat standing atop the cutting waves, Jesus, the Creator of the elements, calls to Peter to step out and come to Him. Full of faith and courage, Peter jumped out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. It was one of the most miraculous moments in his life. It was then, however, that he took his eyes off Jesus and focused on the turbulent storm.

That's when he began to sink.

That's when we begin to sink, too. Yet, after crying out for the Lord to save him, and reaching for His hand, Jesus grabbed it and walked with Peter on the water back to the boat. As they climbed in, the wind and rain died down and they crossed over to the other side. From the first moment He instructed them to go to the other side, Jesus knew the storm was going to come and that they were going to make

next storm he went through he would have a little more courage, a little more assurance, and cling a little closer? I think so. Actually, I know so. Though Peter would continue to have his struggles, he would eventually come face-to-face with the resurrected Jesus and then be filled with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus inside him, who became his empowerment. Something He didn't have before.

As believers, we have that same Holy Spirit inside us. Peter would one day write, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty," (2 Pet. 1:16). Peter was speaking of the transfiguration, the Resurrection, but certainly he remembered all of the times Jesus had delivered him from the storms. How could you forget walking on water? Peter wrote the above passage as he was about to go through the greatest storm of his life, being martyred for the One who had walked with him. Now, facing a certain and brutal death,



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to the mirror. The good news is He also said, "Be of good cheer, I've overcome the world," (John 16:33b). With Jesus as our

foundation, we can face the storms of life courageously, without fear. The Lord is in the storm with you. Before He made that statement, Jesus said, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace,” (v. 33a). With Him holding your hand, you can experience peace in the middle of the storm. Jesus doesn’t always stop the storm from coming, but He is always with us and will calm the storm and lead you through to other side.

Many Storms Lead to Many Peaceful Days

Taking hold of Jesus’s hand and letting Him walk me through the storms has become a theme in my life. I’ve known firsthand His peace in the turbulence. With each storm the Lord has brought me through, the more confidence I have in His absolute faithfulness. Over the years of walking with Him, a calm assurance has grown in me that we can absolutely trust Him in the most turbulent of circumstances. Not only that, with each storm He brings us through we grow stronger in that trust. It’s like a notch in our life belts. It’s not that we are somehow better. We are still human vessels, but our trust becomes more secure in Him.

Personally, the Lord has brought me through so many storms that I could write a book. I did! After 40-something years of being in public ministry and particularly, Daystar, that is now reaching over 2.2 billion households worldwide, many of my storms were public, though the details of what I went through behind the scenes were not. Other storms were private. In all of those cases there was a deeper story that the public didn’t see. As a result, people talk, speculate and create lies. So many have speculated, “Well, what happened to Marcus and Joni?” Or “What happened when Marcus was in the hospital?” Or “What’s Joni doing now?” All these questions, and people deciding they know the truth or looking at the internet. I understand that’s part and parcel of being in a ministry like this and that’s a storm in itself. Well, I’m now telling the true story, and this is my story. And God has been faithful through it.

With the big platform, you’re going to get criticism, but at the end of the day, I don’t have to please everybody. I have to please God. And that’s my goal. And

that’s for people who know me, people who walk with me. They know my heart. And people that watch me regularly, they know that. What people don’t see, though, is the crying out to the Lord in private until you can’t cry anymore, then eating too much ice cream and crashing with the pillow over your head. They don’t see the desperate prayers to the Lord for wisdom and then the supernatural confirmation and guidance. They don’t see the personal surrendering to the Lord, the courage it takes to obey and keep going when everything in you wants to quit, especially when you know the whole world is talking.

In my new book, *Through the Storm: Courageous Faith in Turbulent Times*, I am sharing some of my deepest thoughts and reflections, the truth that gets to the bottom of so much speculation. Ulti-

what? I can make it through anything, because God is faithful.”

Thankfully, none of us have to go through our storms alone. Jesus shows up on the threatening waters holding out His hand saying, “Take it. Trust Me. I’ve got you.” But we have to grab hold and not let go. My grandfather Trammell told me many times when growing up, “Joni, hold tight to His hand. He will never let go.” I certainly don’t have all the answers to the zillion questions of “why?” but Jesus promises not just peace, but “perfect peace” in the midst of extreme distress and suffering. He is real and fully present, even when we don’t feel it. He sees and listens. He hears our cries. And He directs.

My wounds sting like everyone else’s. Yet, the Lord is teaching me day-by-day to take courage in His power, grab hold of His hand, like Grandpa told me, and trust



mately, the goal is encouraging you in your own storms. If the Lord can do it for this South Carolina gal, He can do it for you.

Being in ministry for all these years, I’ve not only watched the Lord walk with me through my storms, but I’ve watched Him walk others through theirs, often much more turbulent storms than what I’ve been through. I’ve learned a lot, especially from the people I’ve been privileged to interview on *Table Talk* and *Ministry Now*. I want to let you know that, “The Lord is faithful, no matter what you go through.” I pray you will see, “You know

Him when everything around me screams, “I’m going under!” ◀

JONI LAMB is the president of Daystar Television Network, co-founded with her late husband, Marcus Lamb. The network reaches over 110 million homes in the U.S. and over 5 billion people worldwide. She is executive producer and host of her daily talk show, *Joni Table Talk*, which has earned 10 Telly Awards, three Lone Star Emmy Awards and five Daytime Emmy nominations. Lamb also co-hosts Daystar’s daily, live flagship broadcast *Ministry Now* with her husband, Dr. Doug Weiss. Her new book *Through the Storm* releases this month.