Making It Through Life’s Storms
(Leader Notes)

Group Time

Ice Breaker
Describe the destruction you have personally seen from a storm—whether a wind or firestorm, earthquake, tornado, flood, hurricane. Describe how differently people reacted to that crisis.

Worship
If you’re looking for help with worship, head to https://vimeo.com/album/2977729 and choose a couple of the songs you find there. The password is wolsg. Worship is also available at the beginning of each teaching video on our YouTube channel at mywolgroup.com.

Introduction
Storms are those difficult times we all encounter. As has often been mentioned here at Water of Life, if you’re not in a storm today, you probably just got out of one or will soon enter one. They are part of life and they are never fun. However, we can choose to use them to grow in our spiritual walk. In fact, what we focus on, how we react, and who we look to when storms come, or just before they hit, impacts how we weather those storms. Let’s see today what the Holy Spirit has to share with us about life’s storms.

Discussion Questions and Leader Notes
1. Read John 16:33. What does the word “tribulation” mean within this passage? What can be considered a storm? What kinds of emotions do people, who are amidst a storm, tend to experience? Have you ever thought you could avoid storms by being good, rich, smart, beautiful or handsome? What are we promised in this passage?

   Tribulations are simply life’s storms. They are something that rattles us, throws off our stability and are difficult to endure. A storm may be a result of bills we cannot pay, medical issues, a relationship struggle . . . whatever. A storm for one person may be perceived as an adventure to another person, so one storm might appear much larger than another. God knows what we can handle.

   Too often it is easy to react to storms with feelings of loneliness, anxiety and even fear.

   According to this passage (and others), we are all going to face storms. In fact, Jesus said we will have tribulation! So, we shouldn’t be surprised when the storm winds blow. However, he also promised us peace, because he already overcame the world. He’s already won! We can trust him to get us through the storms.

2. Read Matthew 14:22-32. Consider Peter in this story. Things were going well at first, so why did he fall into the water? Do you think this was an important lesson for Peter?
Why/not? Read 1 Peter 5:10 and James 1:2-4. What can we learn from weathering a storm? Have you ever grown from a storm? Share.

In the passage, Peter asked Jesus to direct him to walk on the water toward him. As commanded, Peter successfully overcame the raging water and walked across it. He was focused on and excited about Jesus—that is, until he changed his focus to the wind. He became fearful and began to sink.

Though Peter failed at first, he called out to Jesus, once again trusting him. His faith increased, even after a failure. Throughout Peter’s life, he had many other storms as well, each one preparing him to handle increasingly difficult storms.

Just like a tree that bends in the wind, standing successfully against storms strengthens and grows us. We can wallow or choose to use our storms to learn about ourselves, but especially to grow closer to God, building our faith.

3. Like Peter, who sank in the storm, isn’t that just what happens to us too often? We focus on the fearsome problem instead of our lord and savior, Jesus, and we begin to sink in self-pity and failure. What do you tend to think of first—what do you focus on—when a storm hits in your life (i.e. How do you react)? Share. Read Romans 8:38-39 and verse 28. When a storm hits, how can we use these verses to focus on Jesus instead of the turmoil? What will be the practical effect of filtering every bad thing, every storm event, through the knowledge that we cannot be separated from Christ’s love?

Memorizing Scripture, having it in our back pockets, ready to use should a storm hit, allows us to lean on God’s promises more easily. Meditating on the verses and praying them, helps take our focus where it belongs, to Christ.

When we know in our hearts that God is for us and he will never leave us, it is so much easier to face the storms of life with peace. Knowing God will deal with the mess—that it’s not up to us to save the day—helps us relax. Being aware that Christ has a plan and we don’t have to know it, only trust him, gives us a sense of destiny. There’s purpose in the madness! And it’s in that place of crazy peace, that we learn to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit; we can grow and in turn, help others.

4. What do you do to prepare ahead of time for physical storms (rain, floods, fire, earthquakes)? Read Matthew 7:24-27. Consider the preparation you do to ensure that your spiritual house is built on the rock of faith in Jesus Christ and not shifting sand. Share. Read Hebrews 10:24-25, Matthew 18:20 and Galatians 6:2. What part can other people play in preparing you for life’s storms and helping you through them? What steps can you take to better prepare yourself?

In Matthew 14:30 even the disciple Peter became afraid and began to sink. But when he took Jesus’ hand, he was again safe. Oh, how we can be better prepared to grow through the storms of life when we build our life upon God’s
promises, such as Deuteronomy 31:6: “Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.” Additionally, regular quiet time, daily worship, devotions, reading the Word, and prayer are the things that will fuse the shifting sands of life into solid rock, as we focus on Jesus and literally take his hand in ours, surrendering our will to him.

While leaning on Christ is our first support in a storm, people are important in our journey as well. The Bible is clear that other people have a role in our spiritual health. When we attend church regularly, praying and worshipping and learning with one another, growing together, we are forming a community, a family, a bond. Then, when the storms do come, we can turn to that family to help hold us up, not only in prayer and fasting, but by meeting physical needs: giving kind and encouraging words or godly advice; providing a listening ear and a timely hug or joke; casseroles when we are grieving or sick; childcare when we need help; going to the hospital with us. Though Christ is our biggest comfort, he designed us to be a part in helping others prepare for and weather life’s storms.

Prayer/Ministry
In the group, begin with a time for prayer requests. Chances are, there will be people in storms right now. Gather around those members, gently laying hands on them and praying for them. Encourage group members to help one another through prayer, fasting and other aid, where appropriate.

Close in prayer: Holy Spirit, guide and direct each of us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus when storms hit. Help us to trust in you and accept your peace. Teach us to be open and transparent with each other, as we face our storms with a sense of destiny and mutual support for each other. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Taking it Home

Going Deeper
Subscribe to our e-devotionals:
- Devotionals based on the current sermon;
- Sent directly to your email box Monday–Friday;
- iTunes-linked songs played during the weekend’s worship;
- Book suggestions from Pastor Dan surrounding the series topic.
- Subscribe here: http://eepurl.com/cs8_fT or text “edevotional” to 67076.

Memory Verse
John 16:33: “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”