Tinding Peace IN EVERY STORM





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INTRODUCTION

I'm Peyton Hoffman, author, speaker, business owner, and founder of Fighting For Joya non-profit dedicated to the healing, empowerment, and transformation of women. I'm passionate about seeing lives transformed by the radical love of God because I've lived it out myself. The content you are about to read was written initially and led as an in-person teaching for women at a church in Los Angeles, CA. The response was so profound that I decided to rework it and provide it as a free e-book. Regardless of where storms may be raging - at home, work, ministry, family, or relationships, this is for you. The truth is that we live in a fallen world. Things can, and do, come at us out of the blue- both personally and professionally, that have the potential to rock us to the core. Sickness, death, financial difficulties, job loss, or relational breakdowns affect everyone-believers and unbelievers alike.

You know the moment. It's when you're blindsided, bamboozled, or left reeling from the circumstances of life. The rug has been pulled out from under you. The wind has been knocked out of you because the force of circumstances around you overcame the peace that was once within you. It's when life looks precisely the opposite of what God has said. These are the storms I'm talking about. Storms are chaotic, confusing, and messy. Storms are big, loud, dark, and appear to stretch as far as you can see. And while these storms are always a surprise to us, fortunately, they are never a surprise to God. In fact, these have the potential to drive you closer to God if you choose to let them. We're going to have storms. It's how we choose to handle them that sets us apart.

Just because the Lord may be leading you through a storm instead of around it doesn't mean He loves you less. His presence hasn't left you. In fact, it's this very aspect of the Lord's love- how He becomes our peace as He brings us through the storms of life, that I want to focus on because even those of us who have walked with the Lord for years and seen the faithfulness of God in incredible ways can get thrown off-track when the world starts swirling around us.

We'll be focusing primarily on Mark 4, but all of the following are great to reference:

Mark 4:35-41 (AMP)

Luke 8:22-25 (AMP)

Psalm 107:29-30 (AMP)

Before we launch into deep waters, go ahead and read the sections of Scripture that I've included in the following pages. These are relatively short segments, so it may help to mark your Bible and keep these on hand as we journey together.

This mini e-book is divided into five (5) sections. They are:

- 1. You're going somewhere
- 2. The first question
- 3. What is Jesus asking you?
- 4. The final question
- 5. Of this, I am sure



Luke 8: 22-25 (AMP)

Jesus Calms the Sea

²²Now, on one of those days, Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side of the lake (Sea of Galilee)." So they set out. ²³ But as they were sailing, He fell asleep. And a fierce gale of wind swept down [as if through a wind tunnel] on the lake, and they began to be swamped and were in great danger. ²⁴They came to Jesus and woke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we are about to die!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging, violent waves, and they ceased, and it became calm [a perfect peacefulness]. ²⁵And He said to them, "Where is your faith [your confidence in Me]?" They were afraid and astonished, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the sea, and they obey Him?"

Mark 4: 35-41 (AMP)

Jesus Stills the Sea

³⁵ On that [same] day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side [of the Sea of Galilee]." ³⁶ So, leaving the crowd, they took Him with them, just as He was, in the boat. And other boats were with Him. ³⁷ And a ^[a] fierce windstorm began to blow, and waves were breaking over the boat so that it was already being swamped. ³⁸ But Jesus was in the stern, asleep [with His head] on the [sailor's leather] cushion. And they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are about to die?" ³⁹ And He got up and [sternly] rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still (muzzled)!" And the wind died down [as if it had grown weary], and there was [at once] a great calm [a perfect peacefulness]. ⁴⁰ Jesus said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith and confidence [in Me]?" ⁴¹ They were filled with great fear and said to each other, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

Psalm 107:29-30 (AMP)

²⁹ He hushed the storm to a gentle whisper,

So that the waves of the sea were still.

³⁰ Then they were glad because of the calm,

And He guided them to their desired haven (harbor).





Before we talk about the storm, we must understand that in order to actually go through one, we need to be moving somewhere with the Lord. We're not just sitting still. In Mark 4, we see that Jesus had been teaching the crowds by the Sea of Galilee all day. When evening came, we saw that Jesus turned to his disciples and said in verse 35, "Let us go over to the other side (of the Sea of Galilee)."

Jesus had a destination for them. He had a specific place that He needed to get them to, and He had a purpose for that destination. Now, we know what the purpose was in this destination because we can read about it in Mark 5. We discover that the reason Jesus was leading them to the other side of the sea was for the deliverance of a man that a legion of demons had tormented. This very healing and breakthrough would transform this man into an evangelist- spreading the gospel everywhere within the ten cities of the Decapolis, which includes the city of Philadelphia (the church of which is referenced in the book of Revelation).

But Jesus didn't share this part of the journey with the disciples in advance, for whatever reason. They knew the destination, but He held back His reasons behind it. If Jesus had told them that they were going across the sea to bring deliverance to a man in Gersasenes, would the disciples have had more faith in the storm since they had already seen Jesus heal people of evil spirits? I don't know. But I do know that Jesus could have told them and chose not to. As he often does with us, He wanted them to trust HIM when they didn't know the why. He wanted His disciples then, and His disciples now, to see that He, Himself, is the answer in every situation.

Jesus said, "Let us go," meaning that He was going to go with them. The plan was never for them to go through the storm alone. This is important. Jesus had an intentional plan to get them to the destination that He had already chosen for them, and that plan included experiencing the storm. They were always meant to go somewhere and go through something together.

And yet, in the middle of the storm, with the wind and the waves blowing around them, all the disciples could see was darkness. All they could feel was the raging wind and rain. They couldn't see above the storm. They couldn't see beyond the storm. And because they were busy looking AT the storm, they forgot to

remember WHO was with them IN the storm. They forgot who Jesus really was, even if only for a moment. They forgot, or at the very least minimized, all that He had done for them in the past. And because of this, they didn't cling to what they had just heard Him say. Jesus said they were all going to the other side of the sea. So somehow, they were all going to show up, alive, there. But during the storm, they focused only on what was right in front of them at the moment, as we are tempted to do.

We are so much like the disciples of Mark 4 when we go through storms in our lives. You see, you and I are going somewhere with Jesus. He has a destination for us—obviously an ultimate one in Heaven, but also a very real destination here on Earth. How easily do we forget that? How fast do we forget that our God created nature- the very forces of the wind and the waves? How quickly are we to forget that the storm doesn't change what God said? No storm can water down the Word of God.

Knowing that Jesus had a big destination for His disciples and a breakthrough for His kingdom here on Earth waiting for them, is it any surprise that there would be forces opposing Him and His people? Is it any surprise that this is the way it is today? It should not surprise us that a big storm prefaced, and still often comes ahead of, a big breakthrough. The storm is, in many instances, a marker that you are on precisely the right track with the Lord! Because when we are close to our Promised Land, or close to a significant advancement for God's Kingdom here on Earth, the enemy tries to come at us with every tactic of fear, doubt, and noise to get us to lose sight of where we are going and what God said. Storms beg the question, "Will we make it?"

Jesus promised us that "in this world, you will have trouble". I love how the Amplified Bible translates John 16:33:

Jesus says, "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace. In this world you have tribulation and distress and suffering, but be courageous [be confident, be undaunted, be filled with joy]; I have overcome the world." [My conquest is accomplished, My victory abiding.]

So, Jesus not only knew that storms would come in every believer's life, but He also gave us wisdom on how to handle them. And here's the thing- when you truly step out into your God-given calling, there will be storms. You have just identified yourself as a threat to the enemy, and that won't just slide under his radar. Now, sometimes the Lord protects us from the storms, and we are so thankful for the thousands of moments- big and small, where that has been the case. But when He doesn't take us on a detour around the storm but instead leads us directly through the storm, we must remember that we're there with Him by our side.



THE FIRST QUESTION

The disciples posed the first question during the storm. In Mark 4:38 (AMP), they ask, "Teacher, do you not care that we are about to die?"

The Sea of Galilee was, and still is, known for unpredictable weather. It's not unusual at all for tropical storm winds and rain to kick up out of nowhere. Most of the disciples were fishermen. They would have known this about the Sea of Galilee, so it shouldn't have been surprising that a storm arose. And yet, as the storm kicked up, so did the level of fear in their hearts. Even though Jesus had declared, "Let us go to the other side," the storm did to them what it does to us. It had them forget the power of God and immediately jump to the worst-case scenario.

Worst-case scenario mindsets cause us to question whether God even cares about our lives. This is precisely what happened to the disciples. They asked whether Jesus cared about them. Jesus. The one whom they had left their families and livelihoods to follow because they knew He was the Messiah. The one who performed miracles and healings and taught them all matters of wisdom. The same Jesus that was in the boat with them, going through the same tossing of the waves, rain and wind. Experiencing the same storm. That Jesus is the One they asked, "Don't you even care?"

They knew He cared. They had been following Him, walking with Him, and spending time with Him. They had been watching Him provide for them. Of course, He cared! He cared enough to set them apart. He cared enough to handpick them to be His disciples. And yet, they questioned His heart. Instead of asking themselves how Jesus was resting, or even asking themselves if there was something Jesus knew that they didn't know, or perhaps asking Jesus if He was trying to teach them something in this (as He had been doing earlier that day), they jumped in to attack His heart for them. And two thousand years later, we are so much like the disciples. We see the storms raging and run to the Lord, asking, "do you not care that I'm going through this?" We let the presence of a storm redefine the nature of His heart for us. We question God's love almost immediately. It's like a knee-jerk reaction. And we know even more than the disciples did! We know that Jesus already died on the Cross for us—so that we could have life abundantly. He loved us so much that He died just so that you and I could have this chance to live. And yet, we question and doubt Him in the storm.

Note that nothing changed in the storm when the disciples asked their questions. Speaking out of fear does not change anything; fear; fear only amplifies the storm. It wasn't until Jesus stood up in peace, authority, and faith and rebuked the wind that the storm died down. The Amplified says that the storm "grew weary," which I love because the words of Jesus, our Living Water, wore it out!

Remember that Jesus was asleep during the storm. He was in perfect peace and perfect love. 1 John 4:18 reminds us that "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear". Jesus, perfect love personified, drove out the storm simply by speaking to it. He went from peace in the storm to peace over the storm. From love in the storm to love that outlasted the storm. He did it to show the US how to do it today. He was modeling for the disciples that they have, with Him, authority in the storm and over the storm. He was showing them the authority and power He carries so that later they can do the works He has done and even more! He was demonstrating His faithfulness and commitment to them then, just like He still does for us now.



WHAT IS JESUS ASKING YOU

Once Jesus stilled the winds and the waves, with one sentence, He turned and asked His disciples two questions.

"Why are you afraid?" "Do you still have no faith and confidence in me?"

Ooomph. That'll convict any of us. If Jesus is who He says He is, and if He's doing what He said He would do, then why do we fear?

When we get to the root of it, why are we afraid of the storm? Are we scared that God won't come through for us this one time, even though we've seen Him be faithful to us before? Are we afraid that, somehow, we've found the one circumstance that's more powerful than our God? Are we scared that God might not take care of us this time, even though He's taken care of us in the past? Are we afraid that this is the one circumstance that's outside of His love? It's essential to get to the root of what causes us to be afraid when we're aware that we are in a storm. I guess it comes down to two issues:

- 1. We've forgotten who God truly is
- 2. We've forgotten who we are in Christ Jesus

Jesus addresses both root causes—that the disciples had forgotten who He was and who they were TO Him, in his second question. I don't know about you, but when the Lord has asked me in the past, "Do you still have no faith and confidence in me?" it has brought me to my knees in repentance. Because it's the type of question that divides soul and spirit. I don't want Him to have to ask me that question repeatedly. I want to face the storms and come back to what I know is true about God and about who I am in Christ.

For me, fear creeps up whenever I put my faith in the wrong place. Have we placed our faith in ourselves or another person rather than in God alone? Have I forgotten who is on the throne right now at this very moment? The disciples couldn't calm the wind and the waves in their strength. They couldn't steer the boat out of the storm. Only Jesus would silence this storm- once He

had their desperate surrender and full attention. Jesus was, even at this moment, showing them that He is the Way, He is the Truth, and He is the Life. He wasn't saying those words. He was living those words. You see, the disciples couldn't look for the way until the way appeared to be obscured. The disciples didn't have to search for the Truth until they faced the lie of the storm. And the disciples couldn't discover where life truly lived without facing the threat of death.

Our God is so strategic. He does not bring the storms, but He does sometimes allow them. And if He has allowed one, He will not waste it. He loves us too much for that. Remembering this helps us take our eyes off the current circumstances or even the outcome and put them back on God. When we view any storm in our life through that perspective, it puts God back on the throne.

Where are we floundering so much that we have forgotten to let the Lord speak "Peace, be still" to our lives? It's essential to step back and ask ourselves if we are trying to do something that only God can do.

I'm going to challenge all of us in the activation segment at the end of this to lean into the question or questions, that the Lord is asking. These will be different for everyone, but go ahead and start thinking about it. These questions could be things like:

"Do you not know how much you are loved?"

"Have you forgotten that you are called, chosen, anointed, appointed, and redeemed?"

"Have you forgotten that you were created for such a time as this?"

"Do you not know who I AM?"



THE FINAL QUESTION

Now, it's time to dive into the final question posed in this story of Mark 4. It's from the disciples, and honestly, it's one of my favorite questions in the Bible. In Mark 4:41, the disciples are filled with awe and ask each other, "Who is this, that even the wind and the waves obey Him?"

I've read this section of Scripture, as I'm sure you have, many times. And yet, what I felt that the Lord revealed to me recently was something I had managed to miss until now. There are times, and I'm not saying this is the case with every storm in our lives, but there are definitely times when the Lord allows us to go through a terrifying storm SO THAT we can, like the disciples, get to the end of it and say "Who is this that the wind and the waves obey Him?" "Who is this that every circumstance of my life bows before Him?" "Who is this that calms the raging sea inside of, and all around, me?"

There are times when the storm will be used to reveal to us a new aspect of the nature of God. And, as in the case of the disciples, it will be used to call our faith higher. It will bring our trust in the Lord higher and raise our expectations of what He can do. It will cause us to say, "Who is this?" because as much as we may have walked with the Lord or seen the Lord do, we haven't seen Him do this thing before.

I am convinced that God is very concerned with us knowing Him as much as we possibly can here on Earth to give Him as much glory as our lives can. The more we know God—not intellectually, but by experiencing Him, the more we trust Him. The more we trust Him, the more we can let ourselves receive His love in every situation, and the more we can rest with Him, even when storms arise. The more we receive His love, the more we can pour out of love and a place of rest, again, even amid the storms in our own lives.

I believe that the Lord loves the "Who is This?" question because it brings us back to the awe of God and fear of the Lord. And the fear of the Lord, not our circumstances or storms, is fundamental to us walking in victory, authority, and His purposes for us. The "Who is This?" question is what spurs up our testimonies! Obviously, the disciples were telling the testimony of Jesus stilling the

storm repeatedly because that story made it into the Bible in both Luke's and Mark's accounts.

I want to share with you one of my latest "Who is This?" moments in the hopes that it will stir up your faith in what the Lord can and wants to do.

I was in Mexico recently for a mission trip. I had prayed before I left about whether the Lord wanted me to continue stewarding a specific project that had launched several months before. It was in seed form, and while it's been a blessing, I wanted to help people on a larger scale. I told the Lord that I hadn't had time to apply for grants this year (He already knew that, but I told Him these things anyway). I laid it all before Him. I said that if he wanted me to continue with it, I would need Him to finance it and that if He didn't, that was ok too. I would set it aside if that's what He wanted. I put it on the altar and went on the mission trip. And then, a couple of days later, sitting at breakfast in Tijuana, Mexico, I got a text message from an executive at a global Foundation asking for my project's information. He stated that the Foundation was going to send me a \$10,000 check!

My initial response was, "Are you sure?" I had no frame of reference for this. I had not asked for this. I did not apply for this. This was utterly the favor and grace of the Lord. This was a crazy yet direct answer to my prayer. When I had placed everything before the Lord, there really was no way forward. It had looked impossible, and I had no idea what the answer would be. But I knew who held the answer. And I believed that God loved me and would give me an answer one way or the other. I never imagined the answer would be this! This was, for me, one of those "Who is this?" moments. A moment where my faith was expanded in a new way because it was such a wild turn of events. I am believing and praying for the Lord to show such moments to all of you too.







When life throws me for a loop, I must be gentle with my heart and get quiet before the Lord. That means quieting down both my external environment (limiting TV, calls, texts, emails, and internet use) and my internal environment. That means calming a racing mind or emotions that might be screaming. This is a conscious decision that I must make to hear God's voice louder than the circumstances around me. And it's hard. But learning to find peace in the midst of life's storms is worth it. Somehow, it always leads me back to "what do I know for sure?" or sometimes, "What do I know to be true, right now, in this moment?"

Once I'm able to answer those questions, I will begin to declare those truths over myself—speaking them out loud so that I hear the statements in my own voice. I will come back to a place where I can admit that even if I'm not sure of much, "of THIS, I am sure."

Here are some of the declarations that I have been speaking out lately:

- I know that God is good.
- I am sure that God has good for me.
- I know that God has been faithful to me in the past.
- I am sure that God will be faithful to me in the future.
- I know that I am God's daughter, and He loves me outrageously.
- I am sure that this is just a storm, and storms don't last forever.
- I know that God sees this situation, the actions of the other people involved, and my heart right now, in this exact moment.
- I know that I hear the voice of God, and I CAN listen to His voice in this.
- I know that God is not surprised or caught off guard by any of this, even though I have been.

- I am sure that God has not forgotten about or abandoned the promises He spoke to me.
- I know that (one day) I will get to the other side of the sea.
- I know that God will not let this storm or my pain, be wasted.
- I am sure that God sees more than I can see, knows more than I can know, and understands more than I can attempt to understand.
- I know that God cares about this storm's effects on me even more than I do.
- Drawing closer to Jesus will bring me closer to the peace I need.
- I know that Jesus outlasts every storm.
- I know that God did not, and does not, lie.
- I am sure that God is not done.

I know that someday I will say, "Who is this that all the circumstances of my life obey Him?" Of this, I am sure.



ACTIVATIONS

It's time to put all of this into practice. The following steps can all be completed individually. I've added a discussion segment in case you want to discuss it with others afterward.

Individually:

- 1. List the top two or three storms that come to mind in your life right now.
- 2. Now ask the Holy Spirit what question(s) He's trying to ask you in the middle of these storms.
- 3. On a separate sheet of paper, list out 10 "Of this, I am sure" statements. These can be about the Lord Himself, about what God is doing or has done, or about who you are in relation to God.

In a small group discussion setting:

- 1. Go around and discuss each person's top one or two storms and what the Holy Spirit might be saying.
- 2. Share as many "Of this, I am sure" statements as you have time for. These will encourage all members of the group.
- 3. Pray over the storms and needs of the group.
- 4. Check-in with group members throughout the week for any updates or ways that the Lord may be moving.

I hope these pages and activations you've read and worked through have been a blessing and help to you. I always like to close in prayer, and that's what I'd be doing with you now if we were sitting with one another talking through this. So, that's what we'll do.

Lord, thank you for being the author and perfecter of our lives. Thank you for never changing, even when our circumstances do. Thank you for using these words to remind us that there is peace to be found in every storm and that you hold the keys to it. You are the miracle worker. You are the voice that quiets the wind and the waves. Please help us to speak in faith instead of fear, to keep our eyes fixed on you, and to walk in the authority that you died to give us. May we view the storms of life as areas that you can use to increase our understanding of how magnificent and holy you are? May we, like the disciples, not only make it to the other side of the storm but find ourselves also saying, "who is this that the wind and the waves obey Him?" Show us what you want us to become sure of in this season of our lives- both of you and of ourselves in you. May this transformation in our lives draw others to you and you alone, in Jesus's name. Amen.



