

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

August 6, 2023 "How to survive a storm. In the storm"

I Intro.

We're winding down summer but still battling the heat. Things are starting to crank back up and we want you to be a part of this great community. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Sunday.

We finished Galatians. A huge thanks to Dr Kristen Hill and George Gilbert for giving us great insight and closing out Galatians so well. We're fortunate to have so many talented people in our midst. And now, a series for ALL of us. **"How to survive a storm"**. Let's talk about actual weather storms first. I'm sure all of us have been through some actual storms. A tornado may have passed nearby, a severe thunderstorm did some damage to your house. Some of us have even been through a hurricane. We know storms are destructive, and disorienting. If you've ever had actual damage done, you know there's a process of stages you have to go through to rebuild. We're unfortunately discovering that the hard way at NCC as we recover from the storms that came through at the end of March. Real storms can be devastating, and a lot of work to come back from.

In the same way a storm can wreck our life, there are life storms (divorces, job loss, financial hits, broken relationships and more) that can devastate us. They can leave us reeling, disoriented, sitting in the rubble of our lives, just trying to figure out what to do next. We all can think of some event or situation that was so damaging that our lives went in a completely different direction afterwards.

That's what this series is going to be about. How to handle those storms in our lives, and the stages (not really steps) to rebuild. So, some questions first.

What was an event (storm) that changed your life forever?

How did it affect you?

What did it take for you to rebuild and get your life back on track?

To begin this conversation about surviving a storm, we're going to look at getting through the storm. Asking; **What is the most important thing to do when the storm hits?** During this series we'll be looking at four different characters from the Old Testament, to help give us some insight, wisdom, and guidance in surviving a storm. This first Sunday we're talking about being in the actual storm. And we're looking to the person of Elijah to help us with this first stage. A brief background on our passage. Elijah had just had an incredible victory and positive moment in his life. He was riding high. And then immediately after that 'win', out of nowhere comes this storm. And it wipes Elijah out. Read **1 Kings 19:1-10** and we'll pull out some helpful truths.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What do you feel Elijah was wrestling with?

Did you pull anything out that speaks to surviving a storm?

Elijah just had a big win in his life, and then this threat absolutely devastated him. It came out of nowhere. He was probably already exhausted, and simply didn't have the energy or resources to have to deal with something else. Jezebel was his storm. And it was so bad in the passage we read Elijah say; *"I have had enough."* Ever been there? If you've been through a storm you've been in that place. The primary truth from this story about Elijah is when you're in the midst of the storm you have to take care of yourself. And that's what we saw God do for Elijah. But there are also some specifics we can pull from this story that can help us in the middle of our own storms.

1. There's nothing wrong with you if the storm makes you question good things.

Sometimes we feel guilty for our reaction, like we're overreacting to one thing. Everything else in our life is, or has been, going pretty well. But then this one thing, sometimes it only takes one thing, throws us off track. And it doesn't always have to be a big one thing. It doesn't matter if all your stuff is okay. When that storm hits it changes everything. Don't let anyone negate what your experience feels like in the moment. Later you'll be able to look back and revisit your feelings, and how you reacted. Be responsible and respectful to others when the storm hits you. But allow yourself to feel it.

2. Sometimes you just need to hunker down (get to a safe place).

Some storms you cannot out battle. You may have to isolate yourself for a time. When I got let go from my previous church, my first few days were just curling up in a ball and rocking back and forth. This is how I read Psalm 23. Elijah knew things could get really bad, and he did the wiser thing in the moment. There was no judgment or condemnation in Elijah finding a hiding place. In the later, more well known part of the story, God asked Elijah why he's there. But again there's still no judgment or condemnation. When a hurricane is approaching or you hear the tornado sirens go off, you get to a safe place, and ride it out. We often see unwise people throw hurricane parties or people who say they can stay close to the shore. These are also the people who were partying at the top of the building in *"Independence Day"*. Don't overestimate your ability to fight in the middle of a storm. And also don't underestimate your ability to recover and rebuild after a storm. Find safe, understanding people. Find an accepting loving community of people who will let you ride out your storm.

3. Say out loud, to another person, what you lost, what happened.

This is hard, and it'll be different for each of us. Personally, I cannot understand parents, or siblings, who can get on TV and talk about a loved one who just was killed or disappeared. Every situation is so complicated, and different. And I'm sure there are a hundred reasons why they're doing this. But my guess is at some level it feels good to talk about it. Elijah twice talked about what was happening and his feelings around it. Why do we need to do this? Because if we talk about it then we can't go back to the way things were before. It forces us to accept reality and look towards moving forward. Here's a little reality check. After a storm things aren't going back to the way they were anyway. Not talking about it just hides that stark truth from you. Not talking about things does not make it better or make what happened go away. **Cultivate and grow the ability and comfort with saying the hard things out loud.**

4. In those first days just take care of yourself. Don't try to fix everything at once.

Sometimes you just need to do what it takes to survive the storm. Don't try to fix anything, rebuild anything, or anything-anything. For how long? For as long as you need to. God didn't send Elijah back to face his threat. He had him take care of some less threatening things, including the anointing of the next prophet. He would face his threat at some point. But this wasn't the time. After a storm, sometimes there's this rush to try to return everything back to normal as fast as you can. Because we all like, crave some semblance of normalcy. This is why the push to go back to the way things were during COVID was so intense. That's our default when something big knocks us down. If you notice, we're not back to the way things were before. Because there is no; 'the way things were before'. What we need to be doing is waiting, praying, sensing the direction of God, after you go through a storm. This is what Elijah did. And after this specific passage is Elijah meeting God in the silence. Which is what we all need in the midst of the storm.

III Challenge.

So, this was a lot for the first Sunday of this series. But we wanted to make a compelling case for giving yourself the freedom to just lay low, and take care of yourself, when your personal storm hits. We have a westernized tendency to run around and try to fix things in the middle of our crisis. And sometimes the best thing we can do for ourselves, or someone else going through a difficult time, is exactly what Elijah did. Find a safe place, safe people, a supportive community, and ride out the initial part. No real question to ask after this. Just grow the discipline of being quiet, leaning into God, and taking care of yourself until you're able to begin the process of rebuilding.