

4/20/06

Encouragement for Today

“All Sunshine + No Clouds = Dry Desert”

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Key Verse:

Luke 8:23-25, “...and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger. They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, ‘Master, Master, we are perishing!’ And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm. And He said to them, ‘Where is your faith?’ They were fearful and amazed...” (NASB)

Devotion:

I recently traveled to New Mexico where the stark terrain and foreboding drought reminded me that all sunshine with no rain makes for a very dry desert. For miles I saw rocks, sand, craggy hills rising from barren flats, some low lying shrubs, and very few “trees”. While taking in the wide open spaces, I couldn’t help but compare the hard-to-ignore meteorological facts with life in general. Surveying the landscape and realizing the scarcity of water I compared life to the desert. My conclusion? Life void of clouds, rain, and yes, even storms, becomes dry.

Speaking with locals I learned early on during my visit that rain was desperately needed. Clouds were a welcome sight. A good old-fashioned gully washer would be greeted with great joy!

For sure, a few rainy days would bring much-needed moisture to trickling streams, dry yards and withering crops. I understood why the locals were praying for rain. I wondered, though, are there times in my life when I need to be open and even welcome an emotional storm or two? Could I learn to live anticipating challenging clouds that arrive before life’s storms, instead of living in fear and dread of the next ‘tempest’? It didn’t take me a minute to resolve that issue. I answered with a definite, “No way!” In fact, I praise God for days that are free from trials. I thank Him in my prayers for all my blessings. I worry over the fact that life has been too good recently and it is about time for a challenging rain that might flood my emotional stamina. The truth is I work myself up over what might be stirring over the horizon of my life!

However, as I compare a life of cushy days and lots of happy experiences, I can’t help but accept the truth that the little strength and confidence I have is a result of the emotional and spiritual storms that threatened to drown me.

I am also very aware that I take my prayer requests, deep troubles and challenging trials to those whose lives have been ‘freshened’ by the ‘downpours’ of life. These are the friends whose wells are full of sweet and living springs. Their lives run deep as a result of the rain that has fallen on their paradises. I can go to my girlfriends whose spirits have been dampened. Their experience with life’s trials has turned them into inviting oases. I go to them for comfort and spiritual refreshment.

The obvious fact for me is that individuals with deep character, women who walk calmly through life, and friends who come knowingly to others’ aid do so with hearts full of ‘living water’. It is called living water because it brings life to a dry and empty soul. It is living because the rain in the storm changed the life of the person upon whom it fell. The recipient of the ‘rising waters’ sees life from a new perspective. Every season of life has its storms, but where it doesn’t rain there is no growth. Where there is no moisture there is no maturing.

Next time I find myself fearing the future for what it might bring, I believe I will perform a rain dance. Walking in the desert taught me a lesson. I need spiritual rain in the form of floods and storms if I want to survive. Downpours bring springs of living water, a necessary ingredient for an

abundant and purposeful life. Storms develop strength, confidence and faith, important traits for spiritual over comers. Floods create perseverance and trust, two qualities that offer support and credibility to a struggling sufferer.

Next time I find myself dreading the gathering clouds that precede a crises or a disaster I hope I can stand strong with my face to the wind. If I want to be a confident woman I must realize that the thrashing waves seeking to throw me off balance may do just that – land me in a heap. And there in that heap I might hover for a season, but life goes on. God shows up. He reaches out to lift me. He sends His children to put me back together. I brush myself off and, standing taller and straighter, I smile at the new day. I survived. I am an overcomer! The storm has passed and brought its reward: the fresh scent of rain on the grass, the shimmering clean leaves on the tree, and the dancing waters in the babbling brook.

My Prayer for Today:

Father God, Creator of everything, Help me to appreciate the storms in my life. You don't mean them for destruction. You allow them for development. Teach me to desire the tests instead of forever living in dread of the trouble. I ask these things in the Name of Your Son Jesus, Amen.

Application Steps:

Read about Paul's trials in 2 Corinthians 11:16-31. Storms at sea caused him to be shipwrecked three times! He even spent a day and a night floating in the water. (verse 25). Obviously the storms in his life developed his character. I admire Paul. I want to be strong, confident and able to nourish others as he did.

Reflection Points:

Name some people you know who have experienced a few 'storms' throughout their lives. Aren't these the people with character and depth that you admire?

During troubling times who would you rather turn to for wise direction and warm comfort? I seek out those whose faith has been tried and tested in the same areas where I am struggling.

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 addresses suffering and comforting. It is a good thing to know that God will use my trials, the storms in my life, to help others journey through life's struggles.

Power Verses:

Job 23:10, "But He knows the way that I take. When He has tried me, I will come out as gold." (NLV)

Matthew 7:25, "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock." (ESV)

Romans 5:3-5, "...we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." (NIV)

2 Corinthians 4:8, "We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed and broken. We are perplexed, but we don't give up and quit." (NLT)

Additional Resources:

Getting Over the Blues, by Leslie Vernick

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_gettingOver.htm

Good to Me, by LaTonya Mason

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_goodToMe.htm

What Happens When Women Walk in Faith, by Lysa TerKeurst
http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_whatHappens.htm