

Elements of the Storm

Where is God When I'm Afraid, pt 5

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(HOOK)

Every week, my girlfriend Tiara and I make it a priority to have a date. It can be as simple as talking in the park or some kind of elaborate adventure of my own design. One of our favorite places to eat is at The Cheesecake Factory in Cherry Hill. The joy of good food and amazing dessert gets my mouth watering.

This past week I had promised Tiara that we would eat cheesecake for our date. I had no clue how I was going to pull it off because I've had a career change and some financial challenges to overcome with the process. But the day I promised her The Cheesecake Factory was the same day I was expecting to get a paycheck. As fate would have it, that didn't go as planned. The accountant who does the payroll went on vacation and the person who was supposed to submit the payroll, did not. Every employee had to wait until after the weekend for our checks

After paying a few bills, I was at zero dollars and some change. But that didn't stop me. I finally came to terms with not getting paid. The next morning, before leaving my house, I prayed that God would provide.

Tiara and I went about our errands and at the last stop before we were to eat, I remember having a knot in the pit of my stomach because I had made a promise and I did not want to go back on it. I just prayed again and again, and got to the point where I said "God, I'm done, you've got this!" I truly decided to let it go. I made up my mind that we are going to The Cheesecake Factory and I'd have money when we got there.

Within two minutes, I got a text message. Three weeks before this I had sold my newer laptop for very little money because I wanted to get Tiara something for her birthday. I sold it because I was out of cash. The person who bought it said they would have more money to give me in a few days if they liked the laptop. They had not reached out about it since that first day.

Now three weeks later, as I'm depending on God to provide, the guy texted me saying, "Hey, I have \$100 for you for the laptop. I absolutely love it! Come get it when you can."

There was no reason why he should have texted me that day. The last conversation we had about it was three weeks before that.

THAT WAS GOD!

Of course we ate at The Cheesecake Factory and had a great day together. I share that simple and fun story because these are the little miracles that God provides to us. Honestly, it wouldn't have killed us not to eat out. We could have done anything and not spent money. But I made a promise that was important to me, and God honored my request because I showed faith in Him when I didn't see evidence of getting what I wanted. If He does the little things, He WILL do the big things.

It would have been easy to allow my circumstances to deter me from following through with my promise. How often do we allow our circumstances to determine our actions? When did faith become a construct that's fun to say but impossible to execute? How can we flick a light switch and not even wonder the light will turn on, but still question if God is with us? Do we put more faith in a light switch than in the Creator of all the universe and beyond?

(BOOK)

We aren't the only ones who fell for the trap of circumstance. Let's take a look at one of my favorite stories in the Bible. Let's turn to *Matthew 14:22*

Allow me to paint the picture of what we're walking into. Jesus and his disciples were touring the region and sharing the Gospel. The woman with the blood issue was healed, a blind man was healed, a mute spoke, Jesus told a TON of parables, and He had just fed the 5000.

Now let's read the verse. (Let's all stand and read together.)

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

(LOOK)

Why did Peter begin to drown? Because Jesus let him? No. Look at *Matthew 14:30*.

But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Peter SAW the wind and waves were boisterous.

This is more than sight. It is a 100% shift in focus. Where focus goes, our mental energy flows. The shift in focus was from Jesus to Peter's circumstances That can feel like a legitimate circumstance. If I were in the middle of the sea with winds and waves crashing violently, I'd be very afraid too. As Peter lost focus on what was important, he began to sink.

What's causing you to sink? What are your circumstances? You've stepped out of the boat walking toward Jesus and you look around and see what?

- Your financial situation?
- Sickness?
- Disease?
- Bad habits?
- Comparison?
- Depression?
- Anxiety?

When the world tells you to be something that God has not called you to be, you've lost focus. And you know what? I don't even think it's just the fact that Peter was focused on the wind and the waves, but that he was concerned about what would happen to him. Self-centeredness doesn't always look like **"I think I'm all that and a bag of chips!"**. Self-centeredness these days, sounds more like, **"I'm scared to act because of what could possibly happen to me."** The constant worrying about you is what's got you beat. The world says, "Self-care, take care of #1" but God says in **Matthew 6:33**, But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.

Christians are funny because we like to box things up. We give our little situations to God but we keep the big situations to ourselves. We want to be in control. I watched a TikTok where a young lady was rebuking the spirit of anxiety and in the comments, a bunch of Christians condemned her. It was as if anxiety was a real problem and prayer wasn't enough. We can easily give God our trust when we need money, but when it comes to our mental health it's as if it's not that simple. People say to normalize having Jesus and a therapist. There's absolutely nothing wrong with having a therapist or getting professional help. But we need to remember what Paul warned us about in **2 Timothy chapter 3:**

There will be those who deny His POWER. Light switch...God! Who do we trust more? These are the circumstances that we must not focus on, and turn to Jesus.

(TOOK)

Christianity is NOT a spectator sport.

This month's sermon series is "Where is God When I am Afraid?". You know what? I think that's the wrong question. Looking at the Bible, Peter doubted. He began to drown. Jesus didn't go anywhere. In fact, Jesus said only three things in this entire story:

The real question is NOT "Where is God When I am Afraid?". The REAL question is "Where am I when I'm Afraid?"

Where are you when you are afraid? Are you at the bar or the club? Are you scrolling through Instagram mindlessly? Are you filling your mind with trash music? Are you seeking the advice of people with no trace of Jesus in them? Are you opening your browser and looking at things you shouldn't be for comfort and familiarity? Are you calling an ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend asking them to come over to give you comfort in the wrong ways? Are you allowing bad thoughts to rule your mind? Are you at Target trying to fill your hurt with things? Are you in front of the TV smacking down some chalupas and Doritos?

Or are you on your knees in your prayer closet? Are you praising God through it all? Are you seeking the counsel of those who love God and want the best for you? Are you reading His Word? Are you filling yourself with what God says about you?

Jesus is right there asking you to come out of the boat and focus on Him.

Growing up, my parents made sure my sisters and I memorized one chapter **of the Bible** **and** that is Psalms 91:

That is forever my Hope.

Invitation: The ABC's

