

## Lessons from a Storm



Adapted from “*Maintaining Resilience in the Face of Loss*”

Colonel William Harfoot

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**(Editor’s note:** In this publication of *Caring*, Colonel William Harfoot, chief secretary in the U.S. Western Territory, writes an article about the experience of loss. While the magazine focuses on international disasters of various types, Colonel Harfoot’s article reminds us that all of us have probably had the experience of loss in some form, and the need for practical service during these times is a great ministry that is presented to us.)

“No one escapes experiencing loss. It comes in many forms and due to many causes, sometimes the result of circumstances out of our control or even our influence. Around the world, people experience natural disasters of many types, including fires, tornados, hurricanes, floods and earthquakes.

Other losses are the natural consequences of our own behavior or the actions of others. People suffer losses that result from war and crime. Some experience the loss of a failed marriage, loss of a job from economic change. We all come to know the loss that results in the death of loved ones. Others have lost freedom and independence. Whatever the nature and cause of the experience of disaster, be it personal or shared with many others, we each face the challenge of responding and moving forward following loss.

### Lessons from a storm

One of my favorite stories of Jesus is found in Mark 4; 35-41. Jesus slept in a boat when a *furious squall* came and the boat was *nearly swamped*. Storms come and go on a sea or large lake just like they do in our lives. Each type of storm can be followed by disastrous consequences.

In the midst of the storm, the disciples wake Jesus from his sleep and demand an answer: *Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?* This question at the center of the story is one of three key questions that arise in the soul of anyone facing serious loss.

First, the disciples were anxious in the face of disaster and wanted assurance that Jesus—their leader— did not abandon them. Remember, to be alone is the first experience of creation that was declared *not good* (Genesis 2: 18) by the Creator. Loneliness, a sense of abandonment, is a great enemy of the human soul. In Mark’s story, Jesus was asleep in the boat. It is tempting to believe that God is asleep when tragedy threatens and we experience a major loss; yet, God has not forgotten us.

In a moment of loss, we need to know that we are not alone. It is important to be comforted in tragedy by the presence and care of a friend.

The question, *Teacher, don’t you care?* is the second significant question of the three. When disaster comes to our lives, the first great concern is if God knows our circumstance. As Tommy Walker composed: “He knows my name; He knows my every thought; He sees each tear that falls and hears me when I call.”

In this story, it's clear that just because Jesus was asleep did not mean that he didn't know of the storm. We should not assume that God does not know our situation.

Mark's story addresses a third human concern: "Is God able to help?" Jesus responded to the disciples' fear with action. Actions so often speak more meaningfully than words. Love must be shown, as well as spoken. In times of disaster, tragedy or loss, love and care must be expressed in practical service....

### **Divine Call**

When disaster strikes and we lose something or someone, we can discover once again a future that includes a fresh sense of joy and hope. We can survive and be renewed even when we lose something valuable in a disastrous experience. The process of renewal following a significant loss is certainly helped by those who come alongside with care."

*(Editor's Note: How does your Women's Ministry group care for the hurting? What are you doing to minister to those who have experienced loss? Or perhaps you are the one in need of care. Are you reaching out to those around you to receive support during difficult days? May we all experience the sense of joy and hope that comes from knowing that others walk alongside us.)*

