

Finding God in the Hard Times

Karen May

Hello everyone. I'm Karen May. And today we're going to talk about, finding our calm in the storm. If you are looking for peace, if you are trying to find your footing, if you are unsettled or overwhelmed, I am here to tell you that this is the place for you. Let us begin in prayer.

Opening Prayer

In The Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit. Amen. Heavenly Father, I thank you so much, for this time that we have, to rest, help each person who is here today, to put down their burdens, to find you in the storm, to hear your voice, to see your face. Help them Lord, to find their calm. We ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. In the name of The Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Spirit.

Peter's Faith

So, if you are here, you may be feeling like you are quite alone, and I want to tell you that in so many ways you are not. There are lots of other people who are here, and Jesus has never left you. And I'm going to give you three ways that we're going to help you to see Jesus, to find Him in this storm, to find your peace and to be able to walk through. Even if the storm doesn't go away, to be able to walk through with peace and with confidence. We're going to do that by stepping up, by suiting up and by looking up.

And we're going to start with Peter, who is one of my favorite people in the gospels. He tries so hard, and he wants so very much, to do the right thing, to love Jesus, as much as he can, and he just gets it wrong over and over and over again. And Peter gives me hope, because I want so badly, to do things right. I want so badly, to love Jesus more. And I don't do it right over and over and over again. So, we're going to start, when Peter is on the water.

So, Jesus and the disciples have been, across the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus sent everybody over across the sea, without Him. He said, I'll catch up and how He was going to do that, He wasn't real clear. But the disciples are in the middle of the Sea of Galilee, in a boat, in a storm, in the middle of the night. And they see somebody walking on the water and they are terrified. They say, you know, this is a ghost, like what is happening, but Peter responds a little differently.

Matthew 14:27-33

So, let's see what it has to say. We're going to look in Matthew 14, verses 27 through 33.

"At once Jesus spoke to them, take courage it is I, do not be afraid. Peter said to Him in reply, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water' He said, 'come.' Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how strong the wind was,

he became frightened and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me.' Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him and said to him, 'Oh, you of little faith. Why did you doubt?' After they got into the boat, the wind died down."

A Statement on Peter's Faith

So what do you see in this story? There's so many things that help us to see that we are called to step up. Now, Jesus is walking on the water and Peter's response is, you know what, if you can do that, I know that you can help me do that. So, ask me to come out on the water and I'll do it.

Now right here, Peter and I part ways, because I would not be stepping out on that water. I'll do a smaller miracle. Like Lord, give me a milkshake because I know there's no milkshake machine out here in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. That would be enough proof for me, to know that you are Jesus. But Peter's like, you know what, I'm going to do exactly as you do. So, ask me to do it. And as Jesus says "come", Peter goes. He steps out of the boat; he walks on the water and then he looks around and he sees these waves are really big. This wind is really strong, and I can't do this and he's right. He can't do this without Jesus.

And he starts to sink, but I want you to pay attention to what he does. He doesn't swim back to the boat. He calls out, Lord save me. And he reaches for Jesus. And at that moment, Jesus grabs his hand and brings him back into the boat. And I used to hear these words that Jesus said as just another point of disappointment. That ugh Peter, again? Like really? Why did you doubt? You of little faith.

But when I looked a little closer, I saw that this actually, is a statement about his faith because Peter, again, did not swim back to the boat. He reached for Jesus. He had, a little faith. And that's the thing. Jesus can do a lot with our little. And if you are here thinking, I have no faith, I want to tell you that you have just a little, that being here is reaching out for Jesus. And when you reach out your hand, He can grab your hand. He can bring you into the boat.

The thing is, with a lot of faith, Peter could have walked on those waves. He could have walked all the way to shore, having a nice conversation with Jesus. But he didn't have a lot of faith after a little bit. He did at first. That's why he stepped out. I didn't, that's why I'm with my milkshake. But he had just a little bit, and that was all Jesus needed. So, if you are here, you are reaching. Allow Jesus to catch you and bring you back into the boat. Either way, Peter got to shore.

1 Samuel 17:32-50

Now, you may be saying, you know, that sounds great. I feel like I'm called to step up. I've been thrown out into the waves. I'm in the middle of it, but I'm just not feeling the courage. I'm back here with you and my milkshake. I don't want to get out of the boat. So how am I supposed to do this?

Well, our second thing, is suiting up. And we're going to go to the story of David and Goliath. In first Samuel 17 verses 32 through 50. And this story is going to help us to see, the kind of armor that we need as we go into our battles. As we fight these fights that we were called to fight. And

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what happens here before our story begins, is that the Israelites and the Philistines are fighting. The Israelites are on one side of a valley and the Philistines are on the other. And for 40 days, this giant Goliath has come down and challenged the Israelites and said, send your best man to fight and whoever loses will be the slave of the other. This will be the deciding factor of this war. And none of the Israelites are coming. 40 days over and over and over again, and no one in the army has been brave enough to go down.

Well David's brothers are in this army and he has been sent by his father to bring them lunch. He's young, he's still watching the sheep. And as he goes in and he can't believe what he sees. He's thinking, you of little faith, why do you doubt? God has given us this battle, and we need to go in faith, knowing that it has been given to us. Why are you not doing that? So he goes to the king and he says this.

"Then David spoke to Saul, 'my Lord should not lose heart. Let your servant go and fight this Philistine.' But Saul answered David, 'you can not go up against this Philistine and fight with him for you are only a youth,' while he has been a warrior from his youth. David continued, 'the same Lord who delivered me from the claws of the lion and the bear, will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.' Saul answered David, 'Go, the Lord will be with you.'

Then Saul dressed David, in his own tunic, putting a bronze helmet on his head and arming him with a coat of mail. David also fastened Saul's sword over the tunic. He walked with difficulty however, since he had never worn armor before. He said to Saul, 'I can not go in these, because I'm not used to them.' So he took them off. Then staff and hand, David selected five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in the pocket of his Shepherd's bag. With his sling in hand, he approached the Philistine. David answered him, 'You come against me, with sword and spear and scimitar, but I come against you, in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have insulted.'

The Philistine then moved to meet David at close quarters, while David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. David put his hand into the bag and took out a stone, hurled it with the sling and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone embedded itself in his brow, and he fell on his face to the ground. Thus, David triumphed, over the Philistine with sling and stone. He struck the Philistine dead and did it without a sword in his hand."

What do you see? I see so much. I see that David is not a warrior. He's bringing lunch. He's the Uber Eats guy. He has no warrior experience, but he goes in, with this faith in God and this knowing of God's promise. And he says, I will go. And when he puts on the king's armor, it doesn't fit. It's too burdensome. It's too heavy. He can't move. This is the armor of fear. This armor is protective against an attack that is coming. And David says, I don't need this. He has the armor of faith. And this armor is light. It is freeing. It brings courage and hope. And David runs toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. He runs to it. He doesn't just walk. He isn't full of trepidation. He's going, to the battle line, ready to fight.

This is the kind of armor that we need. This armor filled with peace. Knowing that God is with us. Knowing that he will help us in the battle and trusting that. And then David pulls five stones

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out of the river bed, out of the creek bed. And he brings them all into battle. But how many does he need? He just needs the one. And we have our own stones that we can collect that help us to fight the battles. What are those for you? Maybe it is prayer and adoration. Maybe it is the rosary. Maybe it is scripture reading or listening to scripture or religious music. Maybe it's friends that help you to really focus and see what's important or what God is saying to you or how you were supposed to be living this life that He's called you to. Collect pockets full of those stones and pull them out as you need them. You may need just one. You may need five. It's okay to have a lot of stones. The Lord gives us so many.

Ephesians 6:13-17

Now you may be thinking, okay, this armor sounds great. How do I get it? Well, we get that, from Ephesians six, verses 13 through 17. And we're going to look again, and see what God says to us.

"Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and having done everything to hold your ground. So, stand fast, with your loins guarded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate and your feet shot in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God."

This is our armor. This is the armor of faith. It is not aggressive. It is not defensive. It is a gospel of peace. It is power. It is confidence. It is courage. When you have righteousness as a breastplate, this covers you and protects you in such an intimate way. And the thing that I love the best about this, is the faith as a shield. When you hold your faith as a shield, it quenches the flaming arrows of the evil one.

And that's the thing. We aren't standing there wounded but surviving. The power of the arrows have been taken away. The power of the waves is gone. When we are walking with Jesus, and when we are walking in faith, the power of the forces against us, are gone. They may not stop. As I said earlier, Peter could have walked on the waves. Jesus, didn't calm the storm. He allowed Peter to walk in it. These arrows aren't going to stop coming, but their power is completely gone because faith is our shield. And this allows us to walk into the battles with confidence and with peace.

This is the kind of thing that Saint John Paul the second, lived. He went into his papacy saying, be not afraid. And he lived that way. He went into the iron curtain. He went into his home country, Poland and simply had a mass. And that mass changed the world and brought down that iron curtain, in a way that nothing else could have. He had this faith to step into the battle in peace and confidence. He had this bloodless revolution, that made no sense, given all of the things that had been leading up to it, but it made perfect sense.

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If you were Pope Saint John Paul the second, and you lived, be not afraid. And you lived in faith, with your armor of faith and stepping up into the storm, knowing that Jesus could do anything with it. And so now we know, that we have this armor. We can suit up, when we're called to step up.

But maybe we're still a little nervous. Maybe there's just not, you know, you're sitting here with my, with me, with my milkshake, like, okay, still not ready to go. How do I do this? And we do this by looking up. And our story for that, we go back to Genesis, and we look at Abraham and God, when God has called Abraham and said, I need you to go, out of your land into a new land and I will give you children and descendants, and I will make you bless the world. So, Abraham has left, but he has no children. And it's been a while.

Genesis 15:1-12

So, when we enter our story in Genesis chapter 15, verses one through 12, if you'd like to follow along, God comes to Abraham and they start to have a conversation.

"Sometime afterward, the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision, 'Do not fear Abraham. I am your shield. I will make your reward, very great.' But Abraham said, 'Lord God, what can you give me if I die childless and have only a servant of my household, Eliezer of Damascus?' Abraham continued. Look, you have given me no offspring so a servant of my household will be my heir.' Then the word of the Lord came to him. 'No, that one will not be your heir. Your own offspring will be your heir.'"

He took him outside and said, 'look up at the sky and count the stars if you can.' Just so, he added, 'will your descendants be.' Abraham, put his faith in the Lord who attributed it to him as righteousness. He then said to him, 'I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land as a possession.' 'Lord God, he asked how will I know that I will possess it?' 'He answered him, bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three old ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon.' He brought Him all these, split them in two, and placed each half, opposite the other, but the birds, he did not cut up. Birds of price swooped down on the carcasses, but Abraham scared them away. As the sun was about to set, a deep sleep fell upon Abraham and a great dark dreads descended upon him."

A Conversation with God

There's so many things in here, that I think will help us, as we're going to stepping up, as we're suiting up, and as we're going into these storms, trying to find our calm. The first, is prayer. Abraham hears the voice of God. Now we think so often that, the voice of God is this big, booming voice coming out from the clouds or from the mountains and thunderous. But that's not what this says here. Just the word of God came to Abraham. It could have been something just in his heart or in his mind, that he just had this understanding that this is God speaking to me.

And then Abraham responds. Isn't that what prayer is? It's a conversation. And Abraham responds so honestly. He's frustrated. I've been waiting and there's no children. So, what does it

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matter if you give me something, if my servant is my heir? And then he even says it again. So, in case you're not clear, the servant is going to be my heir - there's no children here.

And then he does something that I think so many of us, don't do. And we forget to do. I forget so often. I come and I lay out my problems or I lay out the things that I'm concerned about or worried about or angry about and then I say, Amen and I leave. But Abraham listens and expects a response. Do we give God that space? Do we create that space of silence and allow him to speak to our hearts. And when we have that silence, maybe we don't hear something right away, but I will tell you that every time you create that space, God will respond. You will start to hear it. Maybe throughout the rest of your day. When you create that space, God will enter in. And here he does. He says, no, no, no, no, no. My promise is my promise, and you will have your own offspring. And let me show you, go outside and look at the stars.

A Promise

Now here, is where for so long, I had it wrong. And maybe you do too. When I thought of him going out and looking at the stars, I'm thinking the milky way, you know, there's no light pollution. He's going to see all of it. It's going to be great. But if we go to the last sentence of this, we see that that's not the case. Because *"as the sun was about to set, a deep sleep, fell upon Abraham."*

It was the middle of the day when he went outside, he didn't see stars, he saw the sun. Now me and my milkshake over here, would be thinking, again, no stars, no children. What are you talking about? That conversation would have gone, very differently than it did with Abraham.

But that's not what Abraham saw. And I know, Abraham would not have known that there are stars behind the sun and that light has been covering them up or that the sun is a star in itself. That's not what he saw. He knew that the stars were coming. He couldn't see them now, but in a while, one would come, and then another, and then another, and then the sky would be so full of stars that you wouldn't be able to count them. This was not a promise of immediate gratification. It was a promise of future fulfillment and Abraham trusted and rested and waited. And he had to wait quite a while, but he believed in God's promise.

He knew that God was still with him and that I invite you to do as well. Speak to God, speak your heart. He already knows your heart. But when you tell Him your heart, then He can respond to you. He can comfort you. He can answer you. He can challenge you. He can guide you.

And Saint Teresa of Calcutta is such a beautiful Saint to help us with this. I love how she had this vision of Christ on the cross and He told her, I thirst. And she spent her whole life, trying to bring Him souls to quench His thirst. But she had this darkness, where she couldn't feel Him. She couldn't see Him.

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And when she looked up, she saw the promise and the absence of the stars, because she knew that he was there, even if she couldn't feel Him. And she saw His face, in the distressing disguise of the poor. She never, never gave up. She trusted in the faithfulness of God and we've all seen the fruits of that trust.

Matthew 28:20

And so when we are in darkness, when we have these challenges, we need to look up, we need to see that Jesus never leaves us. We need to see the Jesus on the cross shows us that we are worth dying for. We need to see the stars in the sky or the absence of them and know the faithfulness of God. And remember, as Jesus says in Matthew 28, 20, *"I am with you always."*

And when we find our way, we look out of ourselves, because when we were afraid, when we are overwhelmed, we tend to look down into our problems and into ourselves. And when we look up, we start to see all of the blessings and the help that God is sending to us. The friends that are coming to walk with us on the way. The doors that are opening to help us get to where we need. And so, don't miss this journey. As you find your calm in the storm, as you step up, as you suit up in the armor of faith, and as you look up to see where God is calling you to go, enjoy this journey and receive all of the graces that come through it. Don't wait until the end, because that's not where they are. They are right here in the middle.

And so, as you go through these times, and as more storms come, because they will, remember to step up, as God is calling you. To suit up, in the armor of faith and to look up, and see the God who loves you. Let us pray.

Closing Prayer

In the name of The Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Spirit, Amen. Sweet Jesus, I thank you so much for the ways that you support us, that you walk with us, that you encourage us and that you comfort us. I ask your blessing Lord on each person watching this today. That you bring them peace and calm, that you help them walk with confidence and peace, through any storm that you have brought to them. That you guide them and help them to find their way. Amen. In the name of The Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Spirit, Amen.

May God bless you and bring you peace.