

Volume 4
Navigating
Life's
Storms

Daily
Strength
for the
Battle®

You,
God's Word,
5 minutes

By Scott & Judy McChrystal

Daily Strength for the Battle:

Navigating Life's Storms

By Scott & Judy McChrystal

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This devotional is dedicated to the courageous men, women, and families of our military community. They understand that living on planet earth poses many hardships and challenges, yet they bravely navigate through life's tight places. Their sacrifices on a daily basis enable our nation, under God, to remain as the "land of the free and home of the brave."

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Endorsements

Scott McChrystal's Strength for the Battle is a compact and inspiring volume. It connects the precious promises and truths of God's Word with the real world. This is straightforward talk from a soldier who has been in the heat of battle. But it is also the heart of a chaplain's message: encouragement and empowerment from God's unfailing love in Jesus Christ.

— Chaplain (Major General) Kermit D. Johnson, USA (Ret.)

Chaplain Scott McChrystal is a combat veteran and Spiritual Warrior who has captured the essence of winning the daily fight against mankind's' spiritual enemy. This is a good field manual for every Christian who wants to be prepared for battle”

— LTG Jerry Boykin, USA (RET)- former Commander of Delta Force and Commander of USASOC

Chaplain Scott McChrystal served as one of the most beloved chaplains ever at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Standing behind Chaplain McChrystal is a plethora of experiences in touching the lives of thousands of America's magnificent warriors. My personal experience with Chaplain McChrystal at West Point and during other opportunities verifies my confidence, for I have seen the excellence of his ministry in operation.”

— Rev. Dave Roever, Decorated Vietnam veteran; military speaker

Every man, particularly a warrior, needs time every day with his King. Focused, purposeful, gripping time. And if he's a busy man (know any warrior who's not?), the punch of that time is served well by a directed devotional book like this one offered by my friend, Scott McChrystal, who is himself a tested warrior. And a busy, focused, and purposeful man. Enjoy the journey with him. Drive on!

— Stu Weber- Former Special Forces Officer and Viet Nam veteran, author, international speaker, Pastor of Good Shepherd Church in Boring, Oregon

Introduction

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.
(2 Corinthians 1:3,4)

Do you find that life today seems to have more trouble and difficulties than just a few years ago? I do, and I don't believe it's my imagination. Even as I write this introduction, I have family and friends who are trying to navigate through some kind of a storm. I imagine you can say the same.

These storms are impacting us in ways that are not always easy to spot, at least initially. Increasingly, people across our country are manifesting signs that stress has invaded their lives in harmful ways. This stress is not so much in response to physical threats like that produced by hurricanes, tornadoes, or flooding.

Contemporary stress results more from psychological threats stemming from a rapidly changing culture. These stressors tend to be more pervasive, persistent and difficult to recognize. For example, think about the area of communications. Cell phones and computers have boosted our ability to stay in touch, but consider the down side. We all know people, maybe family members, whose lives have been hijacked by various addictions: video games, pornography, gambling, and even social media. And it's not slowing down.

Since 9/11, the military community has experienced stress on steroids. In addition to the contemporary threats mentioned above, we've had a protracted war to fight, war that has demanded far more from the military than any segment of our society. In a negative sense, our warriors and families have been 'double dipping' from the ocean of stressors that are part of life in the 21st Century.

The number one stressor by far is work, but several others contribute significantly to challenges we are experiencing: increased crime and violence, social isolation and loneliness, negative peer pressure, declining morals, and eroding family and religious values. And of course economic problems are on everyone's minds these days. Finally, the pace of life for most is just plain hectic, if not frantic.

You don't need me to tell you about more problems or to convince you that stress is picking up speed. You want answers and solutions. You want to know that there is hope, and that the future is not all darkness and gloom. And as the title of this devotional suggests, you want to know that there is a way to navigate through the storms of your life.

BLUF (Bottom line up front): yes! There are answers and solutions. There is hope. You do have a future—a good one. And the best news of all is that God is for you— not against you. Not only can He help you navigate through your storms, but He will go with you and even guide your ship if you will let Him.

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But you must choose. God will not force you.

Participation in the storms of this life is not optional. But some seem to navigate through them with less damage and more resiliency.

In his teaching Jesus never shied from the hard truth. Shortly before his crucifixion he spoke to his disciples: I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

Notice in this verse that Jesus tells his disciples that this world is full of trouble. The word trouble comes from the Greek word *thlipsis*. The word carries with it the idea of being crushed, squeezed, hemmed in, or put under great pressure.

Jesus can help you. And He will help, but it's not automatic. We must decide believe, trust and obey.

A good starting point comes when we realize that the Christian life is not without storms. Problems, troubles, and stress don't disappear when we decide to follow Jesus. I never cease to be amazed at the misconceptions that many people, even Christians, have about what Christian living is supposed to look like. Below are three of the commonly held mistaken beliefs about Christianity:

- Christians should not have any problems: From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is consistent.

Mankind has problems. The New Testament writers, particularly those who wrote letters, spent much of their time addressing problems. Time and again they warned fellow Christians not to be surprised at the troubles they would face. Jesus had trials and let his disciples know that they would face them as well.

- All troubles happen due to sin or to a lack of faith: Sin does cause problems, and so can a lack of faith. But by no means are those the only two reasons for problems. We have an adversary, the devil, who has made it his goal to destroy the work of God and all who choose to follow Him. Additionally, the Lord many times uses troubles to test us, to develop us, and to glorify Himself. And, sometimes, troubles simply happen and we may never know why.
- If we pray to God, He will remove all of our troubles: Many times in Scripture we see people who prayed, but their problems didn't just disappear. In the case of martyrs, they went to their death, and obviously God didn't remove their problems. The Christian life simply doesn't work this way. We serve an all-powerful, sovereign God who can certainly remove any trouble, and sometimes He does. More often, though, He gives us a way to stand up under the pressure. He allows the trouble because it advances His purposes.

Introduction

Jesus' point in talking with his disciples is not to dwell on their problems, but rather to encourage them with the good news that He has overcome the world. He will help his followers handle their troubles. How? Through His Word, our prayers, and the power and presence of His Holy Spirit.

Let me close by making reference to the words the Apostle Paul penned to the church in Corinth: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3,4). These verses contain three powerful truths that I trust will encourage you during your own struggles.

- God is compassionate: He has the capability to show compassion and bring comfort to us in any situation.
- God knows what we're experiencing: He understands our struggles and hurts, and will help us.
- Our comfort enables us to comfort others. God doesn't provide his comfort for our sake alone. The verse tells us that as He comforts us, we will be able to comfort others.

Every devotion in this volume is anchored to a Scripture verse in an effort to apply God's truth to some

kind of stress, storm, or trouble we encounter in daily life. I've tried to select issues common for people in the military community. If you read and apply God's truth to your own life, I'm confident you'll improve in the way you handle problems. God's Word is powerful

Would you join me in a brief prayer?

Lord, I pray that each person who reads this devotional will turn to you in his or her time of trouble. As they do, may you grant them the wisdom, courage, and comfort they need to handle the stress in ways that honor you. And, Lord, as they gain support from you, I pray that you will enable them to supply others with the same comfort you have provided to them. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

— Scott McChrystal

Note: Judy and I have collaborated extensively in writing this devotional. All references to 'I' or 'we' represent our collective efforts and opinions. ■

Maximizing Your Minutes

Christian growth and maturity require consistent effort. If you make this book part of your spiritual fitness plan, you will find it is most useful when read each day. Each daily devotion should take about five minutes to read.

Each volume of *Daily Strength for the Battle*:

- Contains seven weeks of devotions, one devotion per day.
- Each week relates to one theme.
- Each weekly theme begins with a practical illustration designed to demonstrate the relevance and importance of each theme.
- All daily devotions incorporate topics related to the weekly theme.
- All daily devotions begin with a Bible verse related to the topic.

A suggested way to approach your devotional time could include the following:

- Prayer: ask the Lord to open your heart and mind to the truth of His Word.
- Read the verse at the beginning of the devotion and then paraphrase it in your own words.
- Read the devotional.
- Try to answer the following questions:

What biblical truth does this devotion talk about?

How is the truth applied in the devotion?

*Do I believe this truth could be important for my own life?
How can I apply this truth to my own life?*

- Close in prayer: ask God to help you integrate this truth into your own life.

Five minutes a day may not seem like much, but you can experience wonderful growth in your Christian life by consistently using these short devotions. The Lord will honor your efforts to honor Him.

Also In This Volume:

- Scripture To Help You When You Feel...
When troubles come our way, it's tempting to follow our feelings and emotions. More often than not, they lead us in a wrong direction. God's Word is a sure guide, a reliable compass that can help us navigate through life's storms. ■

Storms Will Come

A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"
(Mark 4:37,38)

Storms happen in life. Many of them hit suddenly, and with much more force than we ever expect.

The United States has experienced some incredible storms and natural disasters over the past several years. Perhaps the one most vividly etched in people's minds is Hurricane Katrina.

On the morning of August 5, 2005, the National Weather Service issued an ominous-sounding alert that would affect the large port city of New Orleans. Hurricane Katrina, previously listed as a category 1 level storm, had suddenly morphed into a category 5 hurricane heading straight for New Orleans. The prediction went on to include extensive damage to homes and commercial buildings, power outages, and widespread flooding. Water shortages were anticipated as well. All in all, the people of New Orleans could expect a prolonged time of suffering.

By daybreak of August 6, the cable news coverage revealed that Katrina was in fact the most damaging

hurricane in U.S. history. Worst yet, the physical damage was not the only challenge. Looting, crime, rape, and sniper fire all join the mix. Most Americans will never forget the scenes on television. The residents of New Orleans certainly won't.

But know what? Six years later, New Orleans is still on the map. The New Orleans Saints won a Super Bowl and the residents of New Orleans have continued to demonstrate amazing resiliency. Granted, there is much left to do, but the city continues to move forward. Katrina may have been one of the worst disasters in the last hundred years, but that still isn't enough to keep the courageous people of New Orleans down.

Katrina provides us with valuable lessons. One is that life's storms often hit quickly with little or no notice. Another is that the damage from a storm can be worse than predicted. No one expected the 17th Street Canal or other structures controlling water flow in the city to disintegrate causing massive flooding.

But the critical teaching point is this: What happens to us is not the key issue. What matters most is our response. Though we don't have much control over circumstances. However, we get to choose how we will behave in light of the situation.

Talking about storms, let's briefly examine one night in the life of the disciples. They never anticipated what was coming. Earlier in the evening Jesus had told them to get into some boats and head to the other side of the Lake of Galilee. No biggee- they had done this many times. In fact, some of the disciples were professional fisherman who had spent their entire lives fishing in this water.

Soon after setting out, a windstorm arose- a big one. The geography surrounding the Sea of Galilee includes mountains. Sometimes winds can whip up suddenly from the eastern mountains and make the water appear as though it is boiling in a caldron. This storm was a nasty one, and apparently life-threatening. Surely the fisherman in the group like Peter and John had weathered many a storm on this lake. But tonight, the situation was simply terrifying, enough so that the disciples feared for their lives.

Yes, the storms of life will come. They will come suddenly, and there is usually nothing we can do to change it. It's not about being a good or bad person. It happens to all of us. The only thing we can do is respond. My mind flashes back to dozens of times I have been with people who have just been hit by a storm. Some reacted well, some panicked, and others remained in denial.

One particular situation sticks out in my mind. LTC John Luther was an outstanding Army officer. We were stationed together at West Point in the late 1990's. He

was a special staff officer to the Superintendent; I was the senior chaplain. One day John got the news he had liver cancer, and it was well advanced.

Over the next three to four months I spent considerable time with him, and some with his wife, Susan, and son, Caleb. They were Christians, but I totally underestimated the depth of their faith. Sometimes I would accompany John to the doctor to help him through getting fluids drained from his stomach. The surgeon would numb the area, painful enough in itself. Then he would insert a six-inch needle into John's abdomen and drain off as much as a quart of fluid. And never so much as a peep from John. He was a warrior. Braveheart had nothing on him.

The weeks went by, and John's condition worsened rapidly. Only a miracle could save him. It never came. I remember the funeral service and burial well. It was a privilege to talk about his strong faith.

The outcomes from life's storms don't always go the way we want. But even in situations like the Luther family experienced, the Lord worked many things about those circumstances for good. Caleb, though still young, has strong faith in God as he moves ahead with his life.

