



STORMS CAN MAKE YOU OR BREAK YOU

Week 1—Philippians Overview

Read It | *Take turns reading the paragraphs.*

Life is oftentimes smooth-sailing, but, it's also **stormy**. Sometimes we get muddy as we splash our way through difficult relationships with friends, parents, teachers or coaches. Sometimes, **storms** rock us just from being ridiculed or by being excluded from the popular crowd because we are trying to live to please God. Of course, after the storm, the calm returns. The calm represents a time when all aspects of our lives seem to be going well; but, then, out of the clear blue sky a **lightning** bolt hits and sorrow, pain, fear or disappointment strikes, leaving us feeling hopeless or confused.

If you have not been through that kind of painful **lightning** bolt experience, know that all of us, sooner or later, will face **stormy** times. Storms will come and waters will rise around you. With whatever strength you can muster, you will begin to paddle your lifeboat in attempts to stay afloat!

Natural Storms

Remember that you do not cause the natural **storms** of life. They result from circumstances beyond your control and may include the illness or death of a loved one, being falsely accused of something you did not do, or your parents' decision to divorce.

Storms of Your Own Making

Sometimes the **storms** you face are not just because life is hard. You may find yourself lost in the middle of a turbulent sea because you are in a **storm** of your own making. *For example:* Your parents ask you to get a job. You refuse. You now have no money. Later, you drive over the speed limit and get a ticket. It costs you \$120. Oops, since you didn't get a job, you don't have the money. Therefore, you "accidentally forget" to pay the fine and are assigned a court date. But, alas, this time you actually do forget and you miss your court date. Two months later, the mail carrier brings you a gift—a warrant for your arrest! You see how it works. All the while you believe that none of it is really your "fault." But, is it?

Jonah found himself caught in a "**storm** of his own making." We find his story in the book of Jonah, located in the Old Testament. Jonah chose to disobey God. Jonah thought he could run from God and flee the city by hopping a ride on a fishing vessel. God, out of His great love for Jonah, created a **literal storm** so large that all the fishermen feared for their lives! They believed that the "gods" were very angry with one of them. So, Jonah 'fessed up. He admitted that he was running from God, and if they threw him off the boat, the **storm** would subside. Sure enough, Jonah went overboard and the sea became calm.

But just to make sure that He had Jonah's attention, God sent a big fish to swallow Jonah! The Lord allowed Jonah to live three days inside that dark, stinky, slimy creature until Jonah decided that God's way was the absolute best! Then God commanded the fish to spit out Jonah! Jonah was indeed delivered—tossed out onto the beach, covered in the filthy contents of a fish's belly! But as you know, sin leaves us all dirty, and that's no "fish story."

I can do everything through Him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13



Here's the Good News:

It doesn't matter whether you find yourself "struck by lightning" from a natural **storm** of life, or whether (as Jonah) your **lightning** bolt moment results from a **storm** of your own making. As a Christian, you have a Deliverer who is able to navigate you through the **storms** of life! His name is Jesus and He's always ready to answer your cry for help.

Your goal, however, should NOT be just to get through life's rough waters, but, rather to praise God and surge through each good and not-so-good moment with power, peace, purpose and **joy!**

Wow, that's one tough assignment! And, on your own, it's pretty impossible!

The Bible is filled with examples of how God empowered His people to **surge through life's storms**. He allows difficulties so you develop Christ-like character and recognize your deep need for Him. When you rely on Christ to meet your needs, your life journey is filled with supernatural **joy!**

In the Old Testament, we see this kind of victorious living not only in Jonah's life, but also in the lives of Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Esther, David and Job, just to name a few.

However, in the New Testament, no one stands out more than the Apostle Paul when it comes to **surviving life's storms with joy**. It is here, with Paul, that we begin our investigation of **joyful** living.

Here's the reason this study of Philippians is called Overboard - Surviving Storms with JOY: God allowed Paul to **be blinded** by a bolt of **light** to get his attention, knock him "overboard" from the direction he was "sailing," and set him on the right course! Paul's **lightning** bolt moment led him to write the book of Philippians, which teaches us how to have **joy** no matter what.

Facts About Joy



☀ **Joy**, unlike happiness, is not based on external circumstances. Rather, **joy** is a choice we make because as Christians, "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." (*Romans 8:28*).

☀ **Joy**, which is internal, can't be complete in us unless our **joy** contagiously points others to Christ.

– Talk About It –

1. **Share** about a "natural **storm**" you've experienced that brought you great sorrow, pain, fear, or hopelessness.
2. Sometimes your lifeboat severely rocks and begins to capsize because of a "**storm** of your own making." You've made a sinful choice and now the consequences are kicking in. **Share** about one of those times.
3. Great News! Galatians 5:22 lists **joy** as one of the nine traits we receive from the Holy Spirit. **Read** aloud the definition of **joy** in the corner below. **Tell** about when you were able to experience true **joy** during a heart-breaking time.

Joy is cheerfulness, calm delight and heartfelt gladness from knowing and trusting the Lord. Unlike happiness, joy focuses on the source of life (God) rather than the circumstances of life (which change).

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