



Shiloh Messenger

October 2008

Growth Through Adversity

“And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7)

Life along the Texas Gulf Coast was a roller coaster ride during the month of September. I went through my first hurricane – WOW!! This hurricane trip was really over the top. Shiloh is recovering from the direct hit on our area of Hurricane Ike and several tornados he spun off. Before Ike hit, we watched him on the weather maps as he tracked into the Gulf and perfected his aim at Houston and our community. When a hurricane is coming, you are helpless to do anything but watch it grow and watch the Highs and Lows on the weather maps as they channel it one way or another. As the week of September 7th began, we were praying for Corpus Christi and the areas on the South Texas coast because Ike appeared to be heading towards them. Pretty soon into the week however, Ike began to turn North/East and aim his wrath toward Galveston and Houston. We are North/East of Houston. Shiloh made preparations for a direct hit. Before I came here, I saw news reports of hurricanes hitting Florida and Louisiana, but I never understood what a helpless situation the people are in when one of these things targets your home. Coming from Oregon, I never understood the catastrophe weather has wrought on the lives of people who live in the hurricane zones.

Our regular scheduled classes (and our air condition and about everything else) were disrupted by loss of electricity for nearly two weeks. The dormitory got lambasted with water and winds that stripped the roof and left the carpet and ceilings soaked and ruined. Roofs on the other Shiloh buildings were also trashed. All of the men have had to move into another building while we are repairing our dormitory. We have all been working dawn to dusk helping other people who live near Shiloh repair their damaged homes and tree strewn yards and also making Shiloh repairs. In spite of the property damage, God protected us. We are not undone. It has been a real test though to try actually practicing and living out the lessons we receive in our classroom. I now have a better perspective of the saying, “when a person is squeezed, whatever comes out is the real person.” Anyone can be cooperative and pleasant when things are smooth and unchallenged, but a major disruption like the one we have just gone through has left us all uneasy. The spirit of cooperation and pleasantness that was sometimes a bit tenuous among the men I live with has been tested. Pastor Rocky reminds us that how we deal with each of the daily situations we face is a clear reflection of our growth.

For over two weeks now, the men have been sleeping on the floor in our classroom because of the water damage in our dormitory. Community living in close living quarters has become tighter than ever. Fortunately, we have tried to focus on the bits of comic relief through all of this. One of the guys woke up one night soaked in water that had come into the building somehow during the night wondering exactly how he got all wet. Another is always trying to start a conversation while he is asleep and then there are the two guys who can suck the paint off of the wall with their snoring! Funny things like these remind me that even in the storms of life we can still have the joy of the Lord especially if we are in close fellowship with his people. The Bible tells us to, “Count it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.” (James 1:2)

For the most part, my brothers and I are trying our best to learn from this experience so we may take with us tools to use in our future. In addition to learning spiritual truths, I am learning very practical things such as how to work a chain saw, how to keep a fuel powered generator running, how to rip out and lay carpeting, how to put a roof on a building, and how to hang drywall. Although I do not really know what I will do with these skills in the future, I never thought I would acquire these skills while attending an addiction deliverance program. I am learning how rewarding hard work is when it is channeled to helping others with desperate needs. Our Teachers tell us that life is a classroom and the Lord has a plan for and can use each thing we learn and each of our experiences. We are to stay in student posture from now until eternity. We can grow bitter or better through the trials of life. We can become selfish or we can choose to be givers. As people have responded to the devastation of Hurricane Ike, I witnessed some who gave in spite of their own difficulties and then others who clinched their fists tightly in fear and greed. I have learned to pray to God that He will deliver me from myopia, the nearsightedness that distorts vision and keeps me self-centered. He continues to strengthen me so that I am able to leave my past behind and experience a renewed and restored mind.

As I ponder all that September blew in, I ask God “Where am I in my growth?” I receive a vision of how catered my life is. I am quick to realize just how spoiled I am as an American. There are people in most other parts of the world that do not have any of the temporal luxuries such as running water, electricity, TV, air conditioning, washers, dryers, hot meals, etc., that we take for granted. All of these things seemed so minimal to me ...but living without them for a couple of weeks shocks the psyche! When these things all disappear, and I cannot do anything to bring them back – talk about a reality check! I struggle to master not just enduring through, but actually embracing life’s trials.

I would be remiss if I did not say there have been times through this ordeal I just wanted to go home to Oregon. I know there is comfort in Portland and I miss my family, but quitting is no longer an option. I understand that I have a charge on my life and if I am going to fulfill it, I first have to finish the six months I still have to go at Shiloh. I am committed to finishing strong. I must hold firm during this difficult time. As I experienced the Lord’s protection sitting here in Liberty, Texas throughout the night while the massive hurricane passed directly over us, and then I observed that I and those around me had escaped unharmed through no act of our own, I felt immediately and forever humbled. I have seen how God’s people face adversity and share generously with others. I see the stark difference between a life with God acting in it and the desolate selfish life I had before I came here. God is still God in the midst of all life hands me and I yearn to know Him more.

Shiloh Ministry Team. Earlier installments of this fictional story about Cecil Armstrong are on our website at www.shilohmensministries.com



Shiloh Ministries gives the LORD honor and praise for lives that have been delivered from a life of slavery. We celebrate Kingdom Life here at Shiloh. All of our supporters make a tremendous contribution towards lives that forever are destined for eternity with God. We ask and encourage everyone to give financially to help with the cost of restoring lives. It cost approximately \$500.00 a month to house one man. The LORDS Ministry at Shiloh is free to the men who seek restoration. It is a walk of faith for our financial needs to be met every month. Would you please consider being a monthly supporter? God always speaks to those He has asked to give. We believe that His people will respond out of a heart of gratitude for what He has done & continues to do for them. Thank you, for your generosity in giving & co-laboring with us in the LORDS Ministry at Shiloh. (Shiloh Ministries is recognized by the IRS as a 501C3 Charitable Organization)

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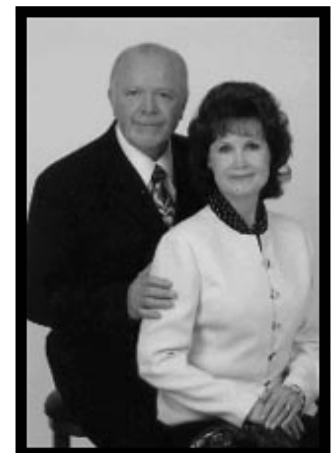
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