



Ice Breakers

- What is the toughest time you have ever had?
- How did it affect you? Does it still affect you?
- Why does God allow tough times?
- Is God sovereign? Is He in control? Does he shelter us from troubled times?

Read John 16:33

³³ "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."

- What did Jesus say about trouble?

Read James 1:2-4

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

- What does James say about trials/trouble?
- What is the end result of trials?

Read John 15:1-2

¹ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

- What does Jesus say about prunings (tough times)?
- Why are they needed?

NOTE: Life is full of unpleasant, difficult, sometimes tragic situations. But God doesn't cause them to happen! But, He will allow them to happen so we can mature and be more fruitful!

5 Ways to Prepare for Tough Times

- Are we ever fully prepared for tough times?

1. Release your grief!

- Tough times can cause us to grieve. Do you allow yourself to grieve?

Read Matthew 5:4

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

- What did Jesus say here about mourning?
- How do you normally grieve something?
- Why is grieving important?

2. Receive help from others!

- If you are going through a tough time, do you let people know it? Do you hide it? Would you let someone help you?

Read Galatians 6:2

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

- How does this verse speak to us about letting people help us?
- Do you look to carry others' burdens?

3. Refuse to be bitter. Instead, choose to be better.

- Tough times can cause bitterness in our lives. Why is bitterness dangerous?
- Where does bitterness come from?
- Ever been bitter toward someone or God?

Read Luke 11:4

⁴ Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation

- Could bitterness step out of unforgiveness in our lives?

NOTE: With the same forgiveness Christ has shown to you, you need to extend to others!

4. Remember what's important!

- When tough times hit, it is easy to get our focus off of the important things in life.
- Ask yourself "How are my relationships? What relationships, if any, have been affected by this tough time?"
- Is my tough time making me positive or negative?
- Is it easy to focus on the negative in the tough times?
- How does it affect us and others if we remain positive in the storm?

Read Philippians 1:3-4

³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy

NOTE: Paul wrote this to the entire church. Undoubtedly, there were some that did not like Paul or see eye to eye with him. Yet, he is thanking God for "all of them!"

- Was Paul choosing to be positive or negative?

5. Rely on Christ!

- Did God create us to be dependent or independent creatures?
- Do you think God wanted us facing tough times on our own?

Read Luke 8:22-25

²² One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. ²³ As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. ²⁴ The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. ²⁵ "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

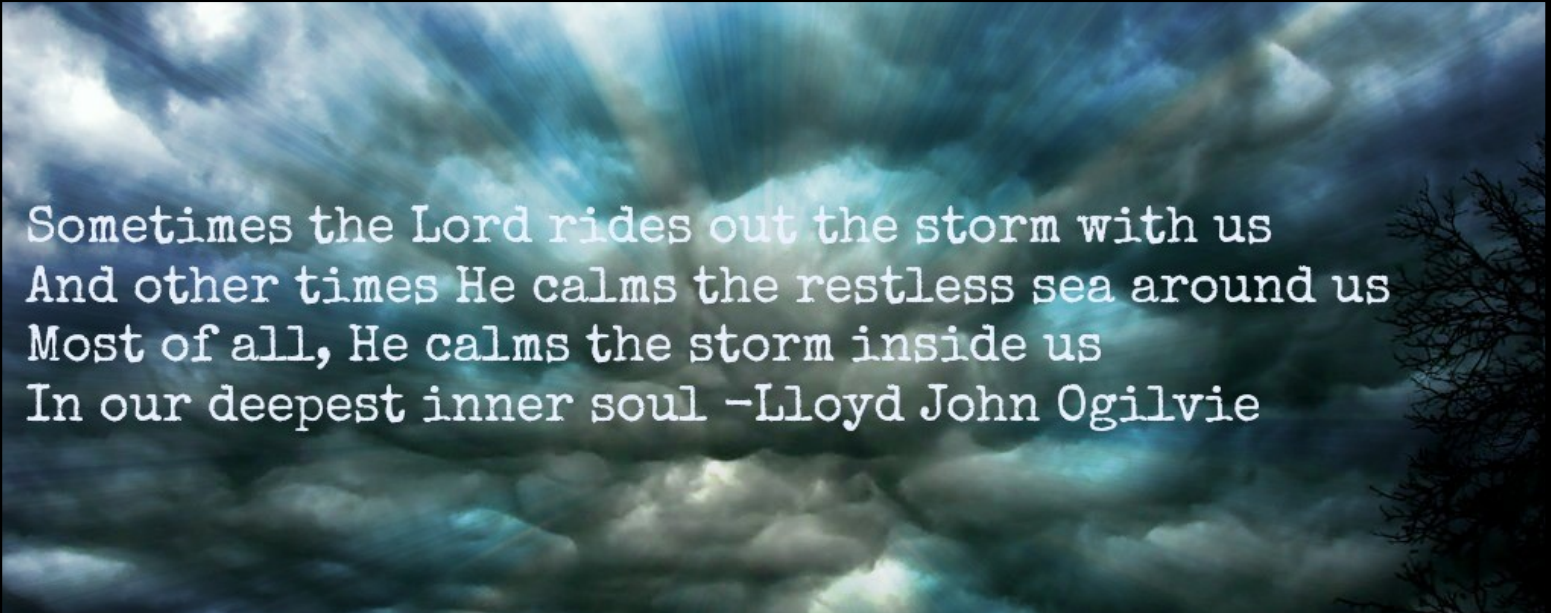
What happens in verse 24?

Is there any story too big for God to calm?

Do you have any storms you need Him to calm?

Application

- Ask Him to calm you and give you peace in the middle of your storm. He can calm the storm in You!



Sometimes the Lord rides out the storm with us
And other times He calms the restless sea around us
Most of all, He calms the storm inside us
In our deepest inner soul -Lloyd John Ogilvie