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## Overcoming The Storms Of Life

### *“Overcoming The Storms From Our Mistakes”*

(Part 4)

**Intro:** Do you ever feel as if you are your own worst enemy? As if life wasn't tough enough, we make decisions that cause it to be even tougher? We make decisions that make things even worse? We make mistakes that create storms. They are self-inflicted storms. I've done this relationally – marriage / kids. I've done this financially - debt / I've done this in ministry / There are times when I find myself in a storm of my own creation. What do I do?

- Let me give you 4 truths for God's word to help navigate through it.

#### **I. Know When Your Storms Are Self-Inflicted**

A. Some storms are the result of our poor choices

*Hosea 8:7 “They have planted the wind and will harvest the whirlwind.” (NLT)*

*Gal. 6:7 “Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant.” (NLT)*

1. Some storms we encounter in this life are the result of living in an evil fallen world. At other times, the storms we experience are self-inflicted...created by our own wrong choices.
  2. God's word is very clear that there are consequences for the choices we make in this life. Obedience may = blessing...But, wrong choices lead to storms. Whatever we plant, we will harvest. Every choice we make is a planting of something that will produce a consequence somewhere. (positive or negative)
  3. God set in motion this cause and effect principal. We all have the freedom to make choices that will produce blessing or make choices that can create devastating storms. It all depends upon what you plant.
- If you choose to drink excessively / Gamble away your money / Have an affair / Be a workaholic / Over eat or eat unhealthy / We created all these consequences.
  - Story: Kicking Handyman jack – sprained foot. - consequence
4. If you've been planting seeds of bitterness / selfishness / pride / unforgiveness / harsh angry words / unloving attitudes and actions / and all your relationships are lousy, it's your own fault. These are the seeds you planted!
  5. There comes a time when you are in the midst of the storm and you have to look in the mirror and tell yourself that YOU created it! I brought this storm on myself! I planted the wind and now I'm in a whirlwind...I'm harvesting a tornado.

- What consequences are you experiencing today that are self-inflicted? Embracing this is not about laying a guilt trip on anyone. But recognizing where the storm came from is part of the recovery process. Knowing where it comes from is knowing what to do!

#### B. Some storms are the result of God's loving discipline

*Heb. 12:10-11 "For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way."* (NLT)

*Is. 38:16 "Lord, your discipline is good, for it leads to life and health..."* (NLT)

1. Here's a topic that you probably won't hear in too many churches today, but it certainly needs to be understood. God loves us too much to not discipline us when we stray.
  2. Just as loving parents will discipline their own children because it is good for them, so God disciplines us because it is good for us. God's discipline leads to holiness / right living / life and health / it transforms our character. / NOT condemnation.
  3. Are you telling me that if I don't walk with God in obedience, He's going to punish me? What ever happened to the loving merciful God you always talk about? I didn't come here to hear about God's wrath!
  4. Discipline is not about God's wrath...it is all about God's love and mercy for you. If God didn't love you, He'd just ignore you and let you destroy your life. BUT because of His great love for you, He tries to get your attention before you destroy yourself! (This is what we do as parents – explain – “Don't touch the stove!”)
  5. As a parent, discipline should happen over willful disobedience not childish immaturity. Sometimes are kids just don't do the right thing because they're kids – spill their milk at dinner / forget their homework at school / left their bike behind the car and you back over it / their rooms are messy.
  6. At other times, you ask them to follow something very specific and they deliberately disobey. They purposely cross the line. THIS, is what discipline is for and we should never disappoint them.
  7. If we know what God wants us to do and we purposely tell Him NO and do the exact opposite, we can expect consequences. Consequences from our own hands and also from the hand of God. Why? Because He loves you!
- If you're in the midst of a self-inflicted storm, could it be that God is trying to get your attention because He loves you...because He has something better for you than the way you're living. If so, then here's the next step.

## II. Seek Forgiveness Rather Than Excuses

### A. Seek forgiveness in our relationship with God

*Ps. 32:5-6 "Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the LORD. And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone. Therefore, let all the godly pray to you while there is still time, that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment." (NLT)*

1. See, our actions create storms...drowning in the floodwaters. Maybe this is how you feel today? Often these floodwaters have been created by choices that we have been making. What do we do? (Try another scheme / offer another excuse / blame somebody else?)
2. We need to stop making excuses and run back to God. We come before Him and confess our sin. We embrace the fact that many of these circumstances we're experiencing are because we created them...We chose a path away from God / away from His path of blessing / We thought we knew better than He did about our lives...and now we're in a storm.
3. God waiting for you to turn back to Him. He is wanting to grant you forgiveness. It is His desire for you to experience His mercy and healing and lift you out of the floodwaters that are drowning you.

*James 4:10 "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up..." (NLT)*

4. It takes humility to admit you've been wrong. It takes humility to ask God to forgive you for doing your own thing...but this is what unleashes God's intervention upon your life. He is waiting to lift you up.
5. Are the floodwaters rising in your marriage / with your kids / in your finances / at work / have you contributed to the flood? Will you stop pointing the finger at everyone else and confess your sin before the Lord? "Lord, please forgive me for these choices I've been making." "This storm is my fault." I've created this mess I'm in. Please forgive me."
6. If we will just do this, the answer is ALWAYS YES! Now that we're reconnected relationally with God, He begins to show us how to navigate out of it.

**B. Seek forgiveness in our relationships with others**

*Matt 5:23-24 "This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back...." (Message)*

- We not only need to make things right with God, we need to make things right with each other. We have to get past making excuses for how we have affected others.
  1. If we are in a storm that has been created by the choices we've been making, I guarantee you that the storm has affected other people. Our poor decisions have hurt others / wounded others / disappointed people / There is relational damage.
  2. True humility will play itself out before God and others. It is demonstrated vertically and horizontally. An inability to admit wrong and reconcile relationally is evidence that true humility has not yet taken hold of our hearts. AND the storm will continue.

Pride always increases the storm. (Hurricane hitting the warm waters of the Gulf.)

3. Ask God who you need to go and make things right with? Who has been impacted by the storm that you created? Who has been offended / wounded / where has trust been lost because of your choices?
  4. Go to these people privately and say, “I know that my actions have hurt you. I was wrong in what I did / or didn’t do / what I said / Will you please forgive me.” No matter what their response, you have done your part. You are NOT responsible for how they respond. That is between them and God. Just be obedient!
  5. I know this sounds scary, but it is less scary than drowning in a storm that our choices have created!
- If the storm you’re in is self-inflicted, maybe today it is time to just humble yourself and seek forgiveness. Your pride is just intensifying the storm.

### III. Understand God Does Not Remove All The Consequences

#### A. Forgiveness is real but consequences are an earthly reality

*Prov. 6:30-31 “Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving. Yet if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold, though it costs him all the wealth of his house.” (NIV)* We understand the human need, but there are still consequences.

*Gal. 6:7 “...You will always **harvest** what you plant.” (NLT)* Once the seed has been planted (good or bad), it’s in the ground and it will grow.

1. Forgiveness shuts off the flow of the negative consequences, but doesn’t remove what’s already been poured out. **Illustrate:** Glass and Pitcher
2. There is this false belief that if we are forgiven, God removes all the negative consequences from our choices. It’s as if God gives us a “Get Out of Jail Free” card.
3. The truth of the matter is that when God forgives us, He removes our sin as far as the east is from the west / He remembers it no more / will never bring it up again / we will not be judged because of it in eternity. Glorious!!!
4. BUT, just because we are forgiven in eternity doesn’t mean negative consequences do not continue to play out in our lives here on earth. If bad seed has been planted, it is going to produce a negative harvest.
5. This is so important to understand so that after you make things right with God and others, you don’t have the expectation that the storm will immediately stop. Sometimes, we have planted so much bad seed for such a long time that it takes years to start seeing a good harvest. You have to keep planting good seed.
6. Some people just give up too soon. They think because they’ve planted bad seed for 20 years that 6 months of good seed makes up for it. Then when they don’t see immediate results, they quit.
7. I don’t say this to discourage you, but this is a reality that must be understood as God helps us navigate out of the storms.

#### B. Forgiveness must be embraced but so must the consequences

*Rom. 8:1* “So now there is no **condemnation** for those who belong to Christ Jesus.” (NLT) This is one of the most liberating verses I know!

1. Embracing God’s forgiveness helps us unload our guilt and shame. It gives us the hope to keep moving forward. God doesn’t want us living under the cloud of guilt...under the weight of shame / believing there is no hope.
  2. There are just too many believers out there still beating themselves up over past mistakes because they have never personalized the forgiveness granted to them in Jesus.
  3. Maybe this is how you feel today. You’re still stuck in the guilt that you feel over the devastation your choices have created. You’re trapped in a spirit of condemnation. Everyday living with the weight of regret instead of the freedom of forgiveness.
  4. God wants you to know that it is time to forgive yourself. It’s time to apply His forgiveness to your own life. It’s time to be free. WHY? Because God will never be able to restore you until you do. WHY? Because you won’t let Him. You will always continue to punish yourself instead of receiving His goodness.
  - You can’t move on until you do. Today could be that day! BUT, moving on also requires you to embrace the consequences.
    5. Embracing the consequences simply means that I accept the results from my actions. I don’t feel that I am being unjustly treated by God or life. I resign myself to experience the harvest from my behavior; yet without guilt or shame.
    - If you get a speeding ticket for doing 60mph in a 25, stop complaining! Pay the fine!
- Ps. 51:4* “Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just.” (NLT)
6. “God, I embrace your forgiveness upon my life and I accept the consequences from my behavior.” This attitude sets the stage for the most exciting part of all this.

#### IV. Let God’s Grace Overcome Your Mistakes

- Principals 1-3 unleash God’s grace upon our lives even in our mistakes!
  - A. God walks with us through our self-inflicted storms
- There is this belief that God abandons us in the self-inflicted storms of life. Not so!

*Ps. 94:14* “The LORD will not reject his people; he will not abandon his special possession.” (NLT) Even when we fail! You are HIS special possession.

*Rom. 8: 35* “Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?” (NLT) OR if I make stupid mistakes? NO!

  1. God is not going to abandon you even in a storm that you created.
  2. **Illustrate:** My kids have grown up around water – warning them to stay away from the edge of the pool – Didn’t and fell in – I go over and pull them out. I didn’t ignore the fact that they fell in! “What did daddy say?” “Wasn’t fun was it?”

3. God doesn't ignore you either when you fall in and the flood waters rise. It just usually our pride that refuses to take His outstretched hand as we flail around. No matter how bad your storm is, He's right there with you.

B. God restores the damage that our storms have created

*Ps. 119:71 My suffering was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees.” (NLT)*

*Ps. 71:20 “You have allowed me to suffer much hardship, but you will **restore** me to life again and lift me up from the depths of the earth.” (NLT)*

1. Even the storms from our mistakes God uses to teach us His ways...the path that brings blessing. Some of you know the distinct contrast between God's way and your way. You've lived it. You've tasted the difference between the two. God uses pain to teach us.
2. BUT, He does more than that...He actually restores us. He takes our damaged, storm devastated lives and rebuilds them into something that brings Him glory. He begins to remove the debris from the storms and builds us a brand new life. Some of you are a testimony of God's restoration work. You are a testimony of God's grace.
3. Today, we have one such person with us. She has experienced the pain and heartache from her own storms, only to see God begin to rebuild her life. Please welcome Dixie St.Clair.

- **Dixie Testimony**

- Are you in the midst of a self-inflicted storm? Can you embrace the fact that you created it / Seek Forgiveness / Understand there are still consequences / Let God restore your life. His Grace is enough.