

Storms of Life

Facilitator's Guide

By Sherry Carter

Welcome!

Thank you for the commitment you've made to facilitate *Storms of Life*. I pray you will be blessed as you lead the women who join you in this study.

Many women in our society, and in our churches, are struggling with difficult situations—financial problems, divorce, rebellious teens, aging parents...the list goes on and on. For some women, their struggle is in the past but they are still burdened with the pain and it robs them of their joy.

Storms of Life seeks to minister to these women through the truths of God's Word, truths that provide strength and encouragement during difficult times. This is not, however, an easy, "feel-good" study. You and your class members will be encouraged to examine times of suffering in light of God's truth and His purposes. Each member will be challenged to actively cooperate with God as she begins to trust Him for her past, present, and future.

As you facilitate the discussions each week, be open to God's voice and encourage your students to seek Him and to look for His healing hand on their lives. Be sensitive to the circumstances your students share and always point them to Him as the only answer to the struggles they face.

From the very beginning, my prayer has been and continues to be that God will use my words to bring lost women to a saving relationship with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. No true peace and healing can happen outside of Him. If you have the joy of seeing a class member become a child of God, please let me know so my joy will be complete (John 16:24).

If you have any questions or comments about *Storms of Life* or this facilitator's guide, please contact me. There's always room for improvement! Email me at sherryjcarter@gmail.com or visit my website at www.sherrycarter.com.

Blessings,

Sherry Carter

Storms of Life

Guidelines for Discussion Groups

You will notice that I call this a facilitator's guide. This Bible study differs from many others in that it is not built on teaching but on sharing. You won't be expected to stand in front of the class and teach the lesson each week. Your job is to create an atmosphere where the members of your discussion group feel safe to share the situations they face and their emotions. As the weeks go by, the lessons will become more intense. Trust and confidentiality are critical to ensure that the groups become places for fellowship, intimacy, encouragement, and prayer support.

God will use this study to minister to you and to your ladies if you remember these important thoughts:



- First and foremost, your heart should be tender toward the struggles your ladies experience. Be careful to treat them with respect and with love. Do not pass judgment on them as they share their past or present situations. Remember the time-tested proverb: There but for the grace of God go I.
- Be committed to study the lesson each week. It's important that you study the lessons in advance so you will be fully prepared to guide the discussion.
- Remember, the situations and emotions shared in the discussion group are to be held in confidence. Let the ladies in your group know they can trust you.
- Pray for your class members each week. It will be a joy to watch God answer your prayers as He works in each lady's life.
- Remember you are part of the group too and it's permissible for you to share. In fact, it might be necessary for the first few classes to help your ladies overcome a hesitancy to share.
- Be open to the Holy Spirit. Don't allow the time you spend in preparation rob you of the specific blessings God has for you. Above all, you are a student at Jesus's feet.

Week 1: Introductory Class

Note: If books have been provided to the members before the first class meeting, this introductory session may be skipped and the lesson on Chapter 1: Focus on Faith can be done immediately. This will reduce the number of class weeks to eight total. The key points outlined in the guide for the Introductory Class should still be covered

Before the Introductory Session

Here are some suggestions to prepare for the introductory session:

- If possible, conduct advance registration for the study. Use this to decide how many study books to order, remembering to allow for walk-ins. This will also allow you to enlist enough facilitators to ensure small discussion groups of 10 ladies or less.
- Make nametags for each lady who pre-registered, or have blank ones available. Have a few extras for walk-ins. Nametags ease shyness and promote fellowship. If your class will break into small groups, using symbols on the nametags is a good way to ensure groups will be approximately the same size.
- Consider the time available for class each week. To fully discuss each chapter, the small-group discussion time requires 60 to 90 minutes. If this much time isn't available, the application questions in each lesson will cover the heart of the material. 
- The questions marked with a  encourage the student to read a selection of Scripture that emphasize a truth covered in the previous paragraphs. If there is time to discuss these also, they add depth to the study.
- Encourage the facilitators to meet before class for prayer, each week if possible. Pray for God's wisdom and for Him to guide the discussion in each group.
- Arrive early to arrange the rooms so everything is ready when the ladies arrive. In rooms where small groups meet, arrange the chairs in a circle. If you're using symbols to divide the group, put a picture of the symbol by the door of the appropriate room.
- If desired, prepare a class roster and a roster for each discussion group using the names of those who have pre-registered. Use blank sheets if there is no pre-registration. Consider asking for telephone numbers and email address on the group rosters.

Opening Time

- Ask one of the facilitators to meet the ladies as they come in to give them name tags and books.
- Open with prayer
- Be sure every lady has a nametag and a copy of *Storms of Life*.
- Pass around the attendance sheet, if desired.
- Express excitement that everyone's here and your eagerness to see what God will do in our lives over the next 8 weeks.
- Begin with a brief introduction to the study. Note that all of us have experienced difficult times. Sometimes we let hardship weaken our faith and allow the pain to impact our lives for a long time. Explain that the goals of this study are twofold: 1) to offer us an open, honest process that will help us draw closer to God and deepen our faith during difficult times and, 2) to help us discover how God uses our past or present hardships to fulfill His purposes for our lives.

- Explain how the study will use the analogy of a storm to describe our journey through a time of suffering: The gathering thunder clouds that signal trouble on the horizon; the increasing wind and rain as the crisis unfolds; the fierce storm that batters our lives when everything seems to fall apart; and the struggles we face as we try to recover when the storm is behind us.
- Draw attention to the Table of Contents.
 - The first 3 chapters build a foundation of faith, showing us that Jesus can be trusted to walk with us through hardship, and helping us to understand the types of storms we face in our lives.
 - Chapters 4-7 will introduce us to several men and women in Scripture who faced difficulties in their lives and use God's Word to give us the tools we need to brave the storm and to emerge with a stronger faith.
 - In Chapter 8, we'll apply these lessons to the story of the death and resurrection of Lazarus in John 11 and then to apply them to a specific situation in our own lives.
- If applicable, note that we'll divide up into small discussion groups. Introduce the facilitators.
- Before the class divides up, make these points (note that we'll discuss these more in our groups).
 - All of us are busy and it might be hard to make time each day for study. Ask God to give you time to study every day. God's blessings will be even greater if we study through the week instead of trying to do the chapter all at one time.
 - This study uses a lot of Scripture. Don't worry, you won't have to spend time looking the verses up. All the Scripture used in the study is included in the text. There are additional verses referenced if you want a deeper understanding.
 - We encourage you to share with your discussion groups what the Lord has taught you each week. God will use you to bless the others in your group more than you can ever imagine. While you're in your groups, you'll talk about the importance of confidentiality.
 - For the rest of the study, we won't meet for an opening time. When you come in, go straight to your discussion groups. Please remember to be on time so we can make the most out of the time we have.
 - We're ready to go to discussion groups now. Check the symbol on your nametag to see which group to attend. The rooms are marked with matching symbols.

Discussion Time


- Welcome the ladies and introduce yourself again.
- Make sure everyone has a nametag and a study book.
- Pass around the group roster sheet.
- Before you get started, consider an "icebreaker" game to help the group members learn a little more about each other. Use a familiar one or use this idea: ask each lady to locate an item in her purse and describe how that item represents something about her personality.
- Express excitement about the next 8 weeks. Note that we all have trouble keeping our eyes on Jesus during times of struggle but this study will help us to grow in faith and to see these times from God's perspective.
- Note that the first three chapters lay the foundation for the weeks ahead. Encourage them to study *Chapter 1: Focus on Faith* in the coming week. Explain that the questions they

answer as they study will be discussed next week. (Note to facilitator: Although this seems obvious, I've occasionally encountered a student who was new to Bible study and didn't understand the concept of group study!)

- Share briefly how God blessed you in studying Chapter 1 and tell them that you're excited to hear what God teaches them when they return next week. Encourage them to spend time with God every day and assure them that He will bless them for their faithfulness.
- Before ending the class, discuss the ground rules for group discussion.
 - It's very important that what's said in this room stays in this room. Everything shared here is in utmost confidence. Our blessings will be so much greater when God teaches us through each other. In the next few weeks, I know the Holy Spirit will build trust and fellowship between us.
 - If your situation involves a family or church member, be sensitive in what you say. Be careful not to attack or belittle them. If possible, don't name names. Even if it's obvious who you're talking about, try to be respectful.
 - Because the questions are personal, I won't call upon anyone to share. You only have to share when you are comfortable. Let the Holy Spirit guide you in when and how much you share.
 - I know God will use this group to minister to each other. But during class time, it's important that we keep the discussion moving. If you feel led to talk further with someone or pray with them, step out of the group for a minute or arrange to meet at a time outside of class. We don't want to interfere with the work of the Holy Spirit but we don't want to miss the blessings from the rest of the lesson.
- Remind them of the starting time for class and urge them to be on time. If possible, collect up the nametags to be handed out next week.
- Close the session in prayer, asking the Lord to bless the ladies as they study and to bring them next week, ready to share what He has revealed to them.

Ready to Begin

Here are some guidelines for the next few weeks:

- In the lessons that follow, a goal statement for each chapter and a brief summary for each day of the chapter are suggested. These will be useful to introduce the chapter and to transition to the discussion as you move through the daily lessons. You may use those statements or compose your own. Consider writing these statements by the title of each chapter/day in your book for easy access during discussion time.
- This guide will only consider the application and  questions. Please know that these are marked for your convenience. Be sensitive to God as each week passes. If He reveals to you other questions that will minister specifically to your group of ladies, always follow His guidance.
- Be aware the ladies in your small group might vary widely in the depth of their Biblical knowledge. The first three chapters lay important groundwork to bring the class to a common understanding of the faith in Christ we all share and to demonstrate that Jesus, as our High Priest, is worthy of our trust. If a general-knowledge question arises that could dominate the discussion, please suggest that it would be better to discuss this topic at another time.

Week 2: Chapter 1 *Focus on Faith*

Before Class:

- Arrive early and set the rooms up for discussion time.
- Have nametags out, with blank nametags and extra books available for newcomers. Use symbols on the blank tags to assign the newcomers to discussion groups.
- Have the class roster available or rely solely on the discussion-group rosters.

(Note: The ladies should go straight into the rooms for Discussion Time)

Discussion Time:

- Pass around group roster sheet, if desired.
- Open with prayer.
- Remind the group of the importance of confidentiality and that no one will be called upon to share.
- *Goal, Chapter 1* (page 1): To focus our hearts and minds on faith, to understand how Jesus builds our faith, and to discover what faith can mean in our lives.
- *Summary statement, Day 1* (page 2): We gained an understanding of what faith is and that God is a Rock we can build our lives on.
 - 📖 How do the promises listed on page 2-3 give you confidence in God? Has there been a time when you doubted any of these?
 - 📖 (page 3) When times are hard, is there a promise in Scripture that is especially precious to you?
 - 📖 (page 4) God's work in our lives is undeniable. What evidence of His work would you describe to an unbelieving friend or family member?
- *Summary statement, Day 2* (page 5): We learned that we can't build a strong faith on our own. Hebrews teaches us that Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith.
 - 📖 (page 5) Hebrews 12:2 tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus. Why is it important to do this as we go through our daily lives?
 - 📖 (page 6) What does it mean to you to know that Jesus uses the Holy Spirit to create and sustain your faith?
- *Summary statement, Day 3* (page 8): We learned that we can trust God to strengthen our faith and to equip us to bear fruit in our lives.
 - 📖 (page 8) Nothing erases our joy faster than a feeling of insecurity. How has God given you assurance of your salvation?
 - 📖 (page 10) When we are confident of God's presence with us, the Holy Spirit can transform us into women who will bear fruit. How does your life reflect the fruit of love and peace?
- *Summary statement, Day 4* (page 11): It's difficult to live out our faith when a storm invades our lives. We seem to always want our prayers answered now.
 - 📖 (page 13) How has God ministered to you during a difficult time when He delayed His actions?
 - 📖 (page 14) How have the lessons you learned during a time of waiting helped you as you faced later challenges?
- *Summary statement, Day 5* (page 15): Our faith is built on the changeless character of God and we can trust His plan, even during the storm.



(page 16) All of us have lived through storms. How has God used these storms to transform you into the person you are now?

- If there is time, ask if there's anything else someone might like to share from Chapter 1.
- Encourage members as they approach *Chapter 2: Jesus is Trustworthy* in the coming week. Point out that they'll be looking at the role of Jesus as our High Priest.
- Close with prayer and collect the nametags.
- Because Chapter 1 concludes with the plan of salvation, end by encouraging anyone who might have prayed to accept Jesus as their Savior to please talk to a facilitator, a close Christian friend, their pastor or one of the church staff. Express how you rejoice with them in their decision.

Week 3: Chapter 2 *Jesus is Trustworthy*

Before Class:

- Arrive early and set the rooms up for discussion time.
- Have nametags out, with blank nametags and extra books available for newcomers. Use symbols on the blank tags to assign the newcomers to discussion groups.
- Have the class roster available or rely solely on the discussion-group rosters.

(Note: The ladies should go straight into the rooms for Discussion Time)

Discussion Time:

- Pass around group roster sheet, if desired.
- Open with prayer.
- *Goal, Chapter 2* (page 19): To know that Jesus is trustworthy to guide us through a storm because He experienced life in all its fullness.
- *Summary statement, Day 1* (page 20): We looked at the first phrase in Hebrews 4:14 – Jesus is our “*great high priest*.”



(page 22) As our perfect high priest, Jesus' sacrifice is eternal – we are now able to approach God with confidence. What joy does it give you to know that you can come to God at any time for forgiveness?

- *Summary statement, Day 2* (page 23): We learned that Jesus experienced all of the weaknesses we face as humans. We can trust Him to guide us through physical and emotional exhaustion—He's been there!



(page 24) Jesus faced all the day-to-day struggles we face. (Read Psalm 23) As you think about this passage, how does God meet your needs?







(page 25) As a young man, Jesus faced many disappointments and difficulties. Are some of His struggles similar to yours? How does this knowledge change your view of Him as your High Priest?

- *Summary statement, Day 3* (page 26): Because Jesus faced every kind of temptation and defeated each one, He can guide us through Satan's minefield.



(page 28) In the desert, Jesus was tempted by Satan. First, Satan tried to take advantage of Jesus' hunger to cause Him to meet His own needs rather than trust God. We often allow our desires to control our lives. How has God given you victory?

-  (page 30) Sometimes it is easier to compromise instead of obeying God. When have you faced the temptation to compromise? What happened?
- *Summary statement, Day 4* (page 30): We learned that Jesus is our Good Shepherd. He knows our names and He guards our lives.
 -  (page 32) Jesus stands at the gate of our lives and measures every storm that approaches. How you encouraged knowing that He only allows a storm to enter if it will glorify God and mature your faith?
 - (page 33) Scripture list. Have you ever gotten tired of waiting for God and tried to take matters into your own hands? Even when it causes a mess, God still loves us and is there to take care of us. Of the verses listed on the bottom of page 33 and the top of page 34, is there one that makes you feel secure in God's love?
- *Summary statement, Day 5* (page 34): Throughout this week we have seen that, because He experienced human life, He is trustworthy.
 -  (page 35) We must remember that Jesus was man but He is also God. (Read Isaiah 9:6) What characteristic of Jesus' glory is most important to you?
 -  (page 36) Jesus was rejected by men and familiar with suffering. He was victorious over all His struggles and He walks by our side to bring us victory. How does God's presence give you strength and courage during a storm?
- If there is time, ask if there is anything else someone would like to share from Chapter 2.
- Encourage members as they approach the study of *Chapter 3: Life's Storms* this week. Point out that they will be identifying the different types of storms that invade our lives and gain the assurance that God is sovereign over all.
- Close with prayer and collect the nametags.

Week 4: Chapter 3 *Life's Storms*

Note: It's recommended that no new members join the class after this week because Chapter 4 begins the heart of the study.











Before Class:

- Arrive early and set the rooms up for discussion time.
- Have nametags out. Have blank nametags and extra books available for newcomers. Use symbols on the blank tags to assign the newcomers to discussion groups.
- Have the class roster available or rely solely on the discussion-group rosters.

(Note: The ladies should go straight into the rooms for Discussion Time)

Discussion Time:

- Pass around group roster sheet, if desired.
- Open with prayer.
- *Goal, Chapter 3* (page 39): To identify the types of storms that disrupt our lives and to recognize the ways God reveals Himself through each one.
- *Summary statement, Day 1* (page 40): We read about the different types of storm we face: common storms, consequences of our own sin or that of another, and Satan's attacks.

-  (page 41) Most of us have experienced all of these struggles at one time or another. What one time of suffering stands out in your mind?
 -  (page 42) It's hard to understand how suffering can be part of God's plan. If you look back at the hard times you've experienced, you see ways in which God has revealed Himself to you. How has He used past storms to transform you?
- *Summary statement, Day 2* (page 42): We looked at many storms that are common to everyone—they're just part of life!
 -  (page 45) Sometimes we feel like we are the only ones going through a particular storm. Yet, if we look around we can see that everyone is struggling—some are suffering more than we are. When have you been blessed by helping someone impacted worse than you were?
- *Summary statement, Day 3* (page 46): As we look around, we can see the devastating consequences of sin—both in society and in our individual lives.
 -  (page 46) We are so clever at rationalizing our choices, even when we know we are disobeying God. When you have used this tactic, what did the consequences teach you about God?
 -  (page 48) Satan always uses the same bag of tricks. He causes us to doubt God's Word and encourages us to put our desires before God's truth. How have you been affected when you chose to reject God's Word and to put your will before His?
- *Summary statement, Day 4* (page 49): Life just isn't fair! Why does God allow us to be hurt by someone else's sin? Why does He let our lives fall apart when we make a commitment to Him? But God can use in these situations to strengthen our faith.
 -  (page 50) How has God deepened your faith when you've suffered because of another person's sin?
 -  (page 52) When has a commitment to God been followed by one hardship after another?
- *Summary statement, Day 5* (page 53): Don't you just want some peace and quiet? The disciples understood that feeling. In Mark 4, the disciples panicked when their boat was tossed around by a storm. Amazingly, Jesus slept—and He can bring us peace in the midst of our storms.
 -  How do the Scriptures on page 54 rest your mind and allow you to sleep?
 -  (page 55) When Jesus heard the disciples cry out, He immediately quieted the storm. The disciples were amazed. When was the last time you were amazed at God's power over your circumstances?
 -  (page 56) When a storm strikes, we are often afraid and confused. But if we trust Jesus, use the storm to bring His glory and victory into our lives. When have you experienced this?
- If there is time, ask if there is anything else someone would like to share from Chapter 3. Encourage members as they approach the study of *Chapter 4: Dark Clouds Gather* this week. Point out that we are now entering the heart of the study. In Chapter 4, we will learn from Jesus as He responds to dark clouds gathering on the His horizon.
- Close with prayer and collect the nametags.

Week 5: Chapter 4 *Dark Clouds Gather*






Note: It's recommended that no new members be accepted to the class this week.

Before Class:

- Arrive early and set the rooms up for discussion time.
- Have nametags out.
- Have the class roster available or rely solely on the discussion-group rosters.

(Note: The ladies should go straight into the rooms for Discussion Time)

Discussion Time:

- Pass around group roster sheet, if desired.
- Open with prayer.
- *Goal, Chapter 4* (page 59): Learn from Jesus as He drew near to His Father to gain the strength to face the dark clouds gathering on the horizon.
- *Summary statement, Day 1 and 2:* Perhaps it easy for us to ignore the dark clouds hovering in our view but, at some point, we must face them. On Day 2 (page 62), Jesus shows us that God's Word and the support of our Christian friends can strengthen us for the days ahead. (There are no application questions on Day 1)
 -  (page 62) The story of God's deliverance on the day of the first Passover calmed Jesus' heart. Do you have a favorite passage of Scripture that calms you when you are distressed?
 -  (page 63) Jesus seemed so eager to celebrate Passover with His disciples. Why do you think Jesus needed His friends that night?
- *Summary statement, Day 3* (page 64): Even as Jesus withdrew to pray, He needed the support and presence of His closest friends.
 -  (page 65) When there are no words to calm us, how has the presence of a friend eased your emotions?
- *Summary statement, Day 4* (page 66): We can go to our "Daddy God" with our fear and despair and we find peace knowing that He is in control of our lives.
 -  (page 67) For some of us, "Daddy" isn't a positive word because of our experiences with our earthly fathers. What does it mean to you that the Lord of the universe is your *Abba*?
- *Summary statement, Day 5* (page 68): Like Jesus, we can be honest with God about our feelings and desires. But, like Jesus, we must surrender to God's will.
 -  (page 71) How has this discussion changed your perspective of God's sovereignty in difficult times that approach your life?
- If there is time, ask if there is anything else someone would like to share from Chapter 4.
- Encourage members as they approach the study of *Chapter 5: When the Storm Strikes Dark Clouds Gather* this week. In Chapter 5, we will meet Gideon and learn that God is always with us and empowering us to have victory in the storm.
- Close with prayer and collect the nametags.






Week 6: Chapter 5 *When the Storm Strikes*

Before Class:

- Arrive early and set the rooms up for discussion time.
- Have nametags out.
- Have the class roster available or rely solely on the discussion-group rosters.

(Note: The ladies should go straight into the rooms for Discussion Time)

Discussion Time:

- Pass around group roster sheet, if desired.
- Open with prayer.
- *Goal, Chapter 5* (page 73): We gained the assurance that God is with us, even as the storm rages around us.
- *Summary statement, Day 1* (page 74): We learned that, even though our faith is shaken during the early days of a storm, God will calm our emotions and give us the strength to trust in Him.
 (page 76) As the storm intensifies, it's so easy to hide in fear and wallow in self-pity. How does God minister to you when you are buried in self-pity?
- *Summary statement, Day 2* (page 76): We tend to focus on our weaknesses but God sees us as we can be, not as we are.
 (page 78) How does the Lord's view of you compare to your view of yourself?
- *Summary statement, Day 3* (page 79): We often feel alone and abandoned but, when we seek His face, He is always there.
 (page 81) How has God's face shone upon you as you struggled through hardship?
- *Summary statement, Day 4* (page 82): In spite of our doubt, we can trust God to strengthen us and to bring victory into our circumstances.
 (page 84) When have you experienced God's victory, one that the eyes of the world would never recognize?
- *Summary statement, Day 5* (page 84): Even when our circumstances seem hopeless, Jesus can calm our fears and bring us peace.
 (page 86) How has Jesus calmed your emotions and brought you peace when your mind was in turmoil?
- If there is time, ask if there is anything else someone would like to share from Chapter 5.
- Encourage members as they approach the study of *Chapter 6: One Step at a Time* this week. In Chapter 6, we will follow God step by step as we travel through the storm.
- Make sure everyone has a **Faith Focus** card. The template for the card is included at the end of this guide. The template for the card is also available on my website at www.sherrycarter.com/books.html
- Close with prayer and collect the nametags.










Week 7: Chapter 6 *One Step at a Time*

Before Class:

- Arrive early and set the rooms up for discussion time.
- Have nametags out.
- Have the class roster available or rely solely on the discussion-group rosters.

(Note: The ladies should go straight into the rooms for Discussion Time)

Discussion Time:

- Pass around group roster sheet, if desired.
- Open with prayer.
- *Goal, Chapter 6* (page 89): We discovered steps we can take that will guide us through the storm.
- *Summary statement, Day 1* (page 90): We can take a step of faith because we know God will use our storms to stretch us and mature us.
 -  (page 91) How has God stretched your faith as you've walked through difficult times?
- *Summary statement, Day 2* (page 92): We can take a step out of anger and frustration into faith because we know we are able to talk to God openly and honestly.
 -  (page 93) Did you choose a verse encouraging you to stay in touch with God during difficult times?
- *Summary statement, Day 3* (page 94): We can take a step out of hopelessness into faith because we can trust that God is in control and sovereign over every moment of our lives.
 -  (page 95) Did you choose a verse that affirms to your heart that God's in control?
 -  (page 96) Did you choose a verse assuring you that God has a plan for every even in your life?
- *Summary statement, Day 4* (page 97): We can take a step out of doubt into faith when we keep our eyes on Him in praise, in thanksgiving, and in the strength we find through our Christian friends and family.
 -  (page 97) How has praise brought the light of God's presence into your darkness?
 -  (page 98) What joys and victories come to mind when you look back over your life?
 -  (page 99) Did you find a verse that lifts your heart to praise and thanksgiving?
 -  (page 100) When has knowing you're being prayed for strengthened you?
- *Summary statement, Day 5* (page 100): We can take a step out of confusion because we know that God's Word is timeless, changeless, and true.
 - As you read the Scriptures on page 102, were any especially comforting to you?
 -  (page 102) Did you choose a promise from God's Word that encourages and strengthens you?
- If there is time, ask if there is anything else someone would like to share from Chapter 6.

- Encourage members as they approach the study of *Chapter 7: It Came to Pass* this week. In Chapter 7, we will discover choices we must make if we are to move out of the pain of a past storm into a stronger faith.
- Close with prayer and collect the nametags.






Week 8: Chapter 7 *It Came to Pass*

Before Class:

- Arrive early and set the rooms up for discussion time.
- Have nametags out.
- Have the class roster available or rely solely on the discussion-group rosters.

(Note: The ladies should go straight into the rooms for Discussion Time)

Discussion Time:

- Pass around group roster sheet, if desired.
- Open with prayer.
- *Goal, Chapter 7* (page 105): After the storm passes, God will help us make choices that allow Him to renew and restore our lives.
- *Summary statement, Day 1* (page 106): Before God can begin to heal us, we must choose to allow Him.
 -  (page 106) Read Habakkuk 1:5. Look at the blank in this verse on page 104. Imagine God were to speak that verse in your life—what would you want Him to say?
 -  (page 108) There are several choices before us. Will we allow Him to move us past the pain? To become content in the path He has chosen for us? To learn the lessons He longs to teach us? To seek His perspective on our circumstances? As you consider the choices before you, which one might be the hardest to make?
- *Summary statement, Day 2* (page 108): Though the storm has passed, the journey might still be painful. If God is going to heal us, we must be willing to ask Him to help us move beyond the pain and anger we feel now.
 -  (page 111) God is eager to heal you. What wounds do you have that need His healing touch? Can you share a verse that describes the healing power you need?
- *Summary statement, Day 3* (page 112): Only God can provide the strength we need to be content in our difficult circumstances.
 -  We looked at several verses on page 113 describing building blocks of contentment. How has God given you peace and contentment in a difficult situation? If not, which one of these building blocks might help you?
- *Summary statement, Day 4* (page 114): God longs to use our storms to teach us avoid making the same mistakes over and over again. But we must choose to learn.
 -  (page 115) Do your trials often seem to involve the same type of struggle or behavior pattern? If so, what lesson might God be trying to teach you?



(page 117) Will you share a verse that describes how God teaches you during difficult times?

Summary statement, Day 5 (page 118): Looking at our past trials through the lens of God’s truth helps us to see His perspective.



(page 118) What difficult event in your past has become a blessing when seen with God’s perspective?



Read Jeremiah 29:11 (page 119) As we thought about the phrase “*I know the plans I have for you,*” we looked at several verses. How do they support the truth that our lives have meaning and purpose?



(page 121) God promises that He holds us in His hands and protects us from Satan’s evil attack. Although our eyes are fixed on the here and now, God is preparing us for eternity with Him. How do the verses on page 119 encourage you to keep your eyes fixed on the “there and forever”?

- If there is time, ask if there is anything else someone would like to share from Chapter 7.
- Encourage members as they approach the study of *Chapter 8: The Journey* this week. In Chapter 8, we will study the story of the resurrection of Lazarus, found in John 11. We will also have an opportunity to apply the lessons of the past few chapters to circumstances in our own lives.
- Close with prayer and collect the nametags.

Note: Next week is the last class of what has probably been an emotional journey. Your group members might have developed very strong bonds. If desired, discuss if the group would like to do anything special for the last class.

Week 9: Chapter 8 *The Journey*

Before Class:

- Arrive early and set the rooms up for discussion time.
- Have nametags out.
- Have the class roster available or rely solely on the discussion-group rosters.

(Note: The ladies should go straight into the rooms for Discussion Time)

Discussion Time:

- Pass around group roster sheet, if desired.
- Open with prayer.
- *Goal, Chapter 8* (page 123): To see that the truths we have learned in the past few weeks are applicable to our lives.
- *Summary statement, Day 1* (page 124): Mary and Martha trusted Jesus even though the future was uncertain.



(page 127) What have you learned about Jesus that allows you to place your uncertain future in His hands?

- *Summary statement, Day 2* (page 127): In spite of their prayers, Jesus didn’t come and Lazarus died. Mary’s and Martha’s faith began to stumble because Jesus’ words seemed to make no sense in their situation.



(page 129) Over the past few weeks, how have you come to trust God, even when He seems to be so far away?



Sometimes, we're afraid that our circumstances are beyond God's power to overcome. As you read the verses on page 130, how do they proclaim God's greatness in every situation?

- *Summary statement, Day 3* (page 132): Martha and Mary carried their grief and confusion to Jesus.



(page 132) Even though Jesus knew the miracle that would happen in a few days, I'm sure He grieved at the sorrow Mary and Martha were feeling. How have the past few weeks changed your view of God's heart toward you in times of suffering?



(page 134) When Martha came to Jesus, she expressed her faith in His power to bring Lazarus back to life. When you look at the verses you've written on your Faith Focus card, what truth do you cling to in the midst of the storm?



(page 134) How has this study increased your faith in Jesus and your trust in Him as you face life's storms?



(page 135) How have you found Biblical truth that enables you to stand when God's words don't seem to match your reality?

- *Summary statement, Day 4* (page 137): As they stood in front of the tomb, Jesus called Mary and Martha to make a choice of faith.



(page 138) As you look at the choices discussed in Chapter 7, what obstacles prevent you from choosing God's blessings?

- *Summary statement, Day 5* (page 139): We were able to apply the lessons we've learned during this study to a specific situation in our lives.



Day 5 is very personal, so remember all sharing is voluntary. Every question in this section involves application so we will step through each one of them.

- If there is time, ask if there is one truth that has stood out over the past several weeks.
- Express what a great blessing this study has been and what a privilege it's been to share your life with them.
- Close with prayer.

Format for Faith Focus cards

These cards make use of a 5" X 8" unlined index card. The guide below gives the format of the front and back sides of the card.

Front side

5"

8"

Storms of Life Faith Focus Card	
Name _____	Date _____
Prayer	
Sovereignty	
God's Plan	
Praise	
Strength	

Faith Focus Card

Back

Encouragement
Confidence
Healing
Contentment
Learn
Understand