

Finding peace – through the storms:

You've probably heard that you really know who your true friends are when the going gets tough. I believe there is a lot of truth to that statement. We have all experienced a scenario or two when we have been going through a painful situation only to discover who actually has the time for us. . . our tears, our problems, our endless hours of whining and self-discovery. The people in our lives who we thought would be there, faithfully -- no matter what, through thick or thin -- wind up being, what we called in second grade, "fair-weathered friends."

As you know, a fair-weathered friend is someone who is only your friend when things are going good. When the weather is nice. When things look bright and sunny or when they need YOU. As long as the atmosphere is pleasant, you have a friend for life but let a storm start to brew in your neighborhood and they are nowhere to be found.

I wrote an acronym when I was in elementary school for the word "friend" that I think holds a very true meaning of what a real friend should be.

F.R.I.E.N.D. = Found Reaching In Every Needed Direction.

You see, it shouldn't matter what the climate is in your world as to whether your friends stand with you during times that are stormy or sunny. It is usually the times of adversity that draw our faithful friends to us and then we become closer and more personally bonded with them -- building longer lasting, closer relationships.

I have discovered it is the same way with Jesus. We will never really know Him in a personal way until we allow Him to help us in our adversity. In fact, Jesus tells us in John 16:33 that we WILL have adversity in our lives. It is inevitable. "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." How awesome it is to know that with the troubles, we will also have peace as well.

Currently undergoing the most difficult time in my life, I have relied on my family and friends more now than ever. And I have come to the realization which friends are my "fair-weathered" and which are faithful. My family and friends have been a blessing to me and I have been uplifted with cards, emails, text messages, Music CD's, sermons, books, and simple notes of encouragement. They have gotten me through days I could not muster enough strength to get out of bed. Others are nowhere in sight. Perhaps they are dealing with their own storms.

But beyond the generous love and support of family and friends, I have dug deep into my faith. A faith I've always carried with me boldly, always relied on and needed. However, through this particular adversity, I met my faithful friend Jesus in a more personal way.

I got a profound message that dissected Psalm 91 and taught me how to pitch my tent there and set up my camp as a reminder to me each and every day that "He is my place for safety and protection. My God in whom I trust" (vs2). That "under his wings I can hide" (vs4) "nothing bad will happen to me... He will put His angels in charge of me to watch over me wherever I go" (vs11) "I can call on Him and He will answer. He will be with me when I am I trouble and rescue me." (vs15). I have prayed Psalm 91 daily and made it personal for me. It has sustained me.

My aunt sent me a little book called Words of Comfort with a card where she had written Psalm 34 in big letters. I looked up that scripture. Psalm 35:4 says: "I asked the Lord for help, and He answered me He saved me from all that I feared." I found such comfort in those words. I do not consider it a coincidence that she sent me that scripture on that day. How could she know that specific day I was filled with fear? My faithful friend Jesus must have told her.

So, while I'm waiting for the storm to pass. Perhaps you are weathering a storm in your life as well. I know the waiting is the hardest part. Rest assured in knowing there is a silver lining. Nothing is hopeless. Nothing. Every hurt can become a treasure. Every ending is the beginning of a fresh start. Every tear is the watering of new growth. And the only moment that truly lasts forever is the one where we say yes. Yes, Lord, you are my faithful friend -- my God in whom I trust.

So hold on. Hold tight. Read Psalm 91 daily. Yes, others will fail you but your friend (found reaching in every needed direction of your life) wants you to have peace -- peace through the storm.

~ c. michelle bryant is a freelance writer and the author of the devotional God, are you listening?