



September 2017

Dear friends,

You don't know me and I don't know you, so how is it that I'm able to call you "friend?" Well, because we probably have a lot in common even though we have never met. If I were to pull up a chair next to you and we started a conversation, I'm sure it would be small talk at first, but eventually we may begin to open up a little more about our lives. We all have a story. We've all experienced some sort of disappointment, hard times, loss or difficult situation. No one is immune to facing challenges and troubles in life. I sometimes refer to those times as "storms."

Now that we've established that we're friends, I guess it will be okay if I tell you about a couple of my storms. Six and a half years ago, I was pregnant and my OBGYN gave me devastating news. Due to a surgery I'd had a couple years before, there wasn't much of a lining to the uterus for the baby to grow. The fact that I had even become pregnant was a miracle, but there wasn't a good probability that the baby would live. Even more of a blow was that MY life was also in danger. I was shell-shocked. I remember my cousin texting me, "First, we will thank God for the beautiful baby growing inside of you, then we will go from there." I thought "Okay, I can do that. Thankful first and take everything else one step at a time." Sure, this storm was overwhelming, but that approach carried me through this difficult time. Today is my daughter's sixth birthday. Her name means "miracle of God."

Another devastating storm that I had to face three years ago was hearing that my 12-year-old son had taken his own life. My mind raced, my hands trembled, I was in utter disbelief. Enduring that storm is one of the hardest things I have ever experienced. I remember hearing someone say, "Thank you God for the 12 years we did have with him." That immediately changed my mindset and helped remind me to look for glimmers of sunshine in a very dark time.

So, what did I learn through weathering these storms? I'd like to share a few things:

Perspective

When those tough times hit, it's easy to want to give up, get angry, or find someone/something to blame. That won't help. Being able to find something to be grateful for will. It changes the way you view the situation. "First, we will thank God and then go from there."

"I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak his praises. I will boast only in the Lord; let all who are helpless take heart. Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness; let us exalt his name together." Psalms 34:1-3

Hope

God didn't bring you this far to leave you. Just think about all the other times in your life where everything worked out in the end. God loves you. He has not, and will not abandon you.

"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:6

In fact, He is always right there, willing and able to comfort, strengthen and give us peace when we call upon Him.

“My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.” Psalm 121:2

Purpose in the pain?

Why would a loving God allow us to endure heartbreaking situations in life? Could it be that there is something positive that comes out of those experiences?

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:2-4

I don’t know about you, but that gives me a little different outlook. I don’t want to lack anything, so if by enduring tough times I can be made more complete, so be it.

God is worthy to be praised on the sunny days, as well as during the storms.

Throughout everything I have experienced, I’ve learned that God is good in all circumstances and worthy to be praised. In the good times and bad times, He is there. Once we get to that place to rely on Him as our source of strength, we can see the good things to be grateful for a lot more clearly and weather the hard times a lot more easily. We then are able to be more understanding and compassionate when others face troubles. We are better equipped to help show love and encourage people during their “storms.”

So, my friends, be of good cheer! God has a plan for your life AND your storm. Will you allow Him access to your situation and your pain so that He can get glory?

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

You are so loved.

Your friend,

Joy Hulsey

*And do not forget to do good and to share with others,
for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:16*