

# Learning for L.I.F.E. Bible Studies

God's Story or God's Word gives us LIFE (John 6:63)! His Word is more than enough (Psalm 62:5). And just as He speaks to me, He can and will speak to You (John 10:27-28, Jeremiah 33:3). As a matter of fact, He desires to commune with you (Psalm 149:4)!

These series of Bible Studies will help you experience LIFE more abundantly (John 10:10); fully equipped, enlightened and empowered so that you may better love, know, reflect and serve God (Hebrews 13:21).

It is my prayer, that God's Story and its impact on My Story, will serve to transform Your Story so that you too can experience greater knowledge, understanding, wisdom, renewal and a desire to then share the good news with others!

God can and will speak to YOU! God's Word can be alive and active for YOU! YOU can receive revelation! YOU can obtain discernment! You can possess Godly wisdom! And through the light of GOD'S story, YOUR story can be transformed!

Learning for Your  
Liberation Inspiration Fortification Edification

## HOW TO BENEFIT FROM THE LIFE LESSONS

The LIFE Bible Studies seek to arrive at the heart of the Bible for women of color, which is to develop a deeper, more intimate relationship with God.

To that end, all of the Bible Studies are organized under four major categories: LOVE GOD, KNOW GOD, REFLECT GOD and SERVE GOD. And within each of these categories you will find activities, devotionals, and reflective prompts and questions designed to equip, enlighten and empower you.

The Format for the LIFE Bible Studies is as follows:

**Be Equipped** - Each series begins with an opportunity for you to explore and make meaning of God's Word for yourself. This section is designed to get you in the Word. It is designed to support a greater understanding of God's Word and to provide space for you to receive revelations and insights regarding God's Word as led by the Holy Spirit.

**The format of the "Be Equipped" section is as follows:**

- **Receive:** You will be prompted to pray, asking God to prepare your heart and mind to receive the right message as you read His Word.
- **Read:** Excerpts from The Bible are provided. These texts or passages of scripture have been selected as a representation of the particular theme or topic being explored. You will then be asked to engage in some way with the text, using one of the Study Approaches described in the Resources section of [mauriministries.org](http://mauriministries.org)
- **Reflect:** This time of reflection provides questions and prompts to encourage the passage(s) to speak to you, to become alive for you (Hebrews 4:12).
- **Record observations and application:** You are encouraged to record your insights and questions as well as the ways you will apply what you've learned to your life.

**Be Enlightened** - Each series contains several LIFE Lessons in which I share My Story or my journey through God's Word. The LIFE Lessons are designed to provide an example of how I've come to make sense of God's Word through prayer, through the study of His Word, through music, through reflection, through the guidance of others, and through living (or attempting to live) His Word. It is my desire that my experiences and insights support to deepen your understanding and application of God's Word along your life's journey. I invite you to experience My Story as a reflection of God's working in my life.

**The format for the LIFE Lessons is as follows:**

- **Introduction** – This section provides the context in which the LIFE Lesson was written and identifies the themes or concepts to be addressed.
- **Scripture** – This serves as the foundational text for the Lesson. It can also serve as a text for your memorization as you seek to hide God's Word in your heart (Psalm 119:11).
- **Lessons Learned** – This section provides insights, understandings, and revelations that I've received from the Word of God.
- **Lessons Lived** – This section provides practical and actionable practices you can employ to support not only the understanding of God's Word but the living of His Word (Luke 11:28).
- **Reflections** – This time of reflection provides questions and prompts to encourage the passage(s) to speak to you. The following questions are included in every LIFE Lesson with additional questions provided that speak directly to the theme or concept being addressed.

- How does the [identified scripture] speak to you?
- What are your personal LIFE Lessons?
  - **Liberation:** What new insights have you gained that have freed you from past thoughts and/or practices?
  - **Inspiration:** In what ways have you been spiritually, emotionally and/or mentally motivated to live for Christ?
  - **Fortification:** What additional scriptural texts, passages or stories can serve to reinforce and strengthen you against the attacks of the enemy?
  - **Edification:** How might you share your story in order to edify others and bring glory to God?
- **Playlist** – Here I provide songs that have served to encourage me. The songs selected are deemed relevant to the theme or concept being addressed and it is my desire that they encourage you as you process, digest, and apply what's been shared. I encourage you to listen, and let the music infiltrate your soul. And I also encourage you to read the lyrics and obtain a message from the music.
- **Prayer** – I close every LIFE Lesson with a prayer, and I encourage you to pray it as well.

**Be Empowered** – Here's the exciting part! Each series ends with an opportunity for you to practice crafting and sharing your story. I know, I know, this might be scary for some, but in this section, I provide various activities and reflective exercises to support the writing, re-writing and/or sharing of Your Story. This section provides you the opportunity and platform to practice and practice will only make for better practice as we're all a work in progress. Let's learn and grow together!

### How to Use the LIFE Lessons

To get the most benefit from this journey, I recommend the following:

- **Begin in prayer always.** Pray for God's guidance as He leads you to greater understanding of His Word.
- **Read God's Story first, before reading the LIFE Lessons.** Allow God's Word to speak to you without the bias of my thoughts or the thoughts and opinions of others.
- **Engage with The LIFE Lessons.** Contemplate the reflection questions and let the selected songs for each study fill you as you commit to living the principle(s) being addressed.
- **Share your experience, your questions, your thoughts, etc.** with me and other women committed to this journey via the comment section or on other social media venues such as Twitter and Facebook.
- **End in prayer always.** Pray without ceasing (I Thessalonians 5:17). Ask God to guide your journey as you commit to a life surrendered to Him.

May God bless you as you seek to know Him more completely and intimately!

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***LEARNING FOR LIFE: BIBLE STUDY***  
***My Journey of Faith: Rock the Boat, Don't Rock the***  
***Boat Jesus***

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# Love God — Rock the Boat, Don't Rock the Boat Jesus

## Introduction

Welcome to the epicenter of my mid-life crisis. Totally unexpected and unlike anything I'd ever heard about, read about, or knew what to do about!

My literal mid-life crisis and encounter with God took place on a cruise ship headed to Antarctica. What should have been the celebration of a lifetime turned into the nightmare of all time. This nightmare took place in March 2020, when I turned 50. This cruise was supposed to signify my zest and zeal for the next half of my life. Serving as a metaphor for me being ready to master my own ship, take the helm, and navigate the seas of life as I set sail for horizons unknown. I was poised to "get out of the boat" and walk on water.

But this cruise, the one that was to be my Fantastic Voyage? Yeah, this cruise literally took the wind out of my sails and turned my life upside down. And it's only now, two years later, that I can finally share my (our) story, and see beyond my crisis, tragedy, unfulfilled dreams, and disappointment. This series of LIFE Studies are a result of being found at sea, sustained and comforted by the waves of God's love, as well as the lessons I learned to "not be affected by each puff of wind that blows ill but to sail serenely on, in a calm sea or a great tempest" (George Washington).

I finally understand the meaning of the quote, "They that go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters; these men see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep." — Book of Common Prayer

I had a lot of time to think out there on that boat. Lots of time to reflect and ponder. And one of the amazing miracles was the up-close, personal and living experience that I had with the Word of God. See, heretofore, I had been "reading" and "studying" the Bible as if it were a great historical work of art or a beautifully written love story. But it was out there on that boat where God's Word became alive and active (Hebrews 4:12) in my life. It was where Proverbs 16:9 – A woman's heart plans her way, but the Lord directs her steps – took on a whole new meaning.

I pray that My Story, in the light of God's Story, will serve as a catalyst to transform Your Story.

From my heart to yours,

Davenia 

# Be Equipped

1. **Receive: Ask God to prepare your heart and mind to receive the right message as you read His Word. Pray this prayer as you examine God's Word.**

*Dear Heavenly Father, I ask that Your Holy Spirit guide me in all truth as I begin to study Your Word. Cause the obscure and confusing things to become clear. Give me deeper levels of insight and application in my daily living. Let this insight and understanding of Your Word multiply my hunger, thirst and delight for Your Spirit and Your Word in the deepest places of my soul. Bless me with the courage and strength that I need to heed Your Word and to follow it faithfully. In the most holy and precious name of Jesus, I pray, AMEN.*

2. **Read:** Read the following passage, **Acts 27:13-38**. Then conduct a word study on the word “peace.” Engage in the following:

- **Identify the definitions and meanings of the word peace:**
    - Identify the English meaning of the word
    - Seek to identify the original definition or meaning of the Word (i.e., Hebrew or Greek translations and meanings of words or context, the language of varying translations, etc.)
    - **Determine how the word is used in the Biblical and the secular sense**
  - **Identify where the word peace is used in the Bible and note the following:**
    - Where does the word first appear?
    - How often does it appear?
    - In which books of the Bible is it found? In which books is it used most?
    - Which writers or characters use the word?
    - In what contexts is it used?
    - How does each writer or character define or describe the word?
  - **Look for how the word peace evolves**
  - **from its origin to its conclusion throughout the Bible.**
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After having read the passages above, journal your response to the following:

3. **Reflect on the following:**
  - Summarize the main lessons learned.
  - How does what you've learned about the concept of peace differ from what you previously knew or had been taught?
  - How does what you've learned impact your understanding of the Bible?
  - How does what you've learned about the concept of peace expand your understanding of Who God Is?
  - How can what you've learned be applied to your daily life?
  - How will you apply what you've learned to your study of the Bible going forward?
4. **Record observations and application:** Record your insights and questions as well as the ways you will apply what you've learned to your life.

From Pastor Damein Johnson, <https://seabrooksda.org/about-us/>

## Be Enlightened — Rock the Boat

Rock the Boat, Don't Rock the Boat Baby ([Hues Corporation — Rock the Boat](#)). Oh, the wonderful memories this song brings back. Memories from the '80s, when I was young, footloose and fancy-free. What a fun song to bop my head to, do the rock to and just chill to with my cousins and friends.

I had absolutely no idea this song would take on a new meaning for me while stranded on Holland America's Zaandam cruise ship in March 2020. One of the things I did to fight boredom during our quarantine was to search for and listen to boat-related songs, like Fantastic Voyage ([Lakeside — Fantastic Voyage \(Official Music Video\)](#)) and Sail On ([Commodores — Sail On](#)). I would rock it out in our little cabin in an attempt to stay sane while simultaneously annoying my husband. But when I played Rock the Boat, something happened. I heard from God (I'm not kidding), and He asked me a question, mid-rock: "Isn't this song just like you? You want me to rock the boat (i.e., answer your prayers, give you a blessing, move mountains, perform miracles), but if the answer isn't just as you envisioned, in the timeframe you determined, you begin to backtrack. All of a sudden, your "Rock My boat" becomes, cries of "Never mind! Don't rock the boat, Jesus!"

Talk about an "Aha Moment" (or maybe an OUCH Moment)! You see, I desperately wanted this trip. I wanted to celebrate my 50th birthday in style. I wanted to do something big. I wanted to check another thing off of my bucket list. I had a plan and a vision. And I even shared it with God. I just needed His stamp of approval.

But little did I know that this trip would be the antithesis of all my planning and visioning. And while it didn't turn out to be the answered prayer I wanted, it answered so many other prayers prayed and long forgotten. God's plan and purpose turned out to be so much more impactful, meaningful and miraculous than anything I could ever have hoped for or imagined.

I pray that my testimony inspires you and that the lessons I learned and the miracles I experienced on "the boat" will encourage you during your "Rock the boat, don't rock the boat Jesus" moments. And in case you're thinking, "I haven't had a "stranded on the boat, lost at sea moment" so how could this possibly relate to me?" Believe me, I get it. I'm sure that your "boat" may not be anything like mine. Most likely, it's not a boat at all. But truth be told, while few will experience being quarantined on an actual boat, we all have had or will have our "boat experiences." No, you may not have had the experience of being lost at sea for a month, but I bet you can relate to that feeling of being lost with no view of hope on the shoreline. Or what about the experience of weathering crashing waves and raging storms? You know that experience when you're having financial challenges, and just as soon as you've figured out how to pay the light bill, the air conditioning goes out, only for you to discover that your spouse has Cancer right on the heels of bailing your child out of jail. Wave after wave after wave, with no chance to catch your breath. Or maybe you're desperately trying to figure out how to get out of the boat you're in and experience the miracle of walking on water. You have a dream of starting your own business, or you want to launch your singing career or write a book. You know you need to get out of the boat, but the waters seem a bit scary. Or maybe you like your boat, but you need to throw some people overboard so they can learn to swim for themselves. Maybe you need to discover that you can't save them, and if you're not careful, their weight may just pull you down and threaten to drown you both. Or perhaps you just need to learn to ride the waves. Lay back and float for a while.

Whatever your boat experience may be, I hope you'll join me on this journey as I share the many lessons learned from my month-long COVID-19 adventure aboard the Holland America Zaandam and Rotterdam Cruise ships, from March 6th to April 4th, 2020. Let's rock it out together, discovering what God has in store for you and me!

### Scripture

Isaiah 55:8-9 – For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

### Reflection

- How does Isaiah 55:8-9 speak to you?
- Think about the boat you're in right now. Is it the boat you want to be in? Is it headed in the direction you want to be going? If not, what's preventing you from getting off the boat or from setting sail in a different direction?
- Reflect upon a time when you prayed desperately for something, that something was granted, and then you discovered that it was not in alignment with God's plans and purposes for you. How might you have prayed differently?
- How might understanding the character of God contribute to understanding the plans and purposes He has for you?
- What are your personal LIFE Lessons?
  - **Liberation:** What new insights have you gained that have freed you from past thoughts or practices?
  - **Inspiration:** In what ways have you been spiritually, emotionally or mentally motivated to live for Christ?
  - **Fortification:** What additional scriptural texts, passages or stories can reinforce and strengthen you against the attacks of the enemy?
  - **Edification:** How might you share your story to edify others and bring glory to God?

### Playlist

As you process, digest, and apply what's been shared, here are a couple of songs from my "Got Me Through on the Boat" Playlist. Listen. Let the music infiltrate your soul. Read the lyrics and let the words encourage you. And I pray that you'll be blessed as I was.

Rock The Boat — The Hues Corporation — [Hues Corporation — Rock the Boat](#)

In The Eye of the Storm — Ryan Stevenson — [Ryan Stevenson | Eye of the Storm \(feat. GabeReal\) \[Radio Version\] {Official Lyric Video}](#)

### Prayer

Father, Thank You for Your love, hope, and salvation. I know that these are turbulent times in which we're living, but despite this, thank you for the reminder that I am not alone. Thank You for being my ultimate life preserver; I cling to the promise that because You created the winds and the waves, with just a word, You can also calm them. I invite peace to reign in my heart even while I'm in the midst of a storm. Thank you for your faithfulness, and I give You all of my praise, honor, and glory. In Your name I pray, Jesus, Amen.



# Be Enlightened — The Captain of The Ship

Thank you so much for continuing with me along my adventure aboard the Zaandam and Rotterdam cruise ships, from March 6th to April 4th, 2020. This is a continuation of the lessons learned during my quarantine and of God's interventions, His revelations, His sustaining power, as well as the miracles He performed during my voyage.

So imagine, if you will, the thing you've dreamed of, planned for, and desired above all else is finally happening. You're planning to celebrate a monumental accomplishment, and everything has seemingly gone off without a hitch. Time off from work. Check. Enough money saved up. Check. Buy-in from your loved one. Check. It appears that all systems are a go.

I was so elated! The dream trip to Antarctica, item #17 on my bucket list, and the mega celebration of my 50th birthday was becoming a reality. Sure, we were hesitant at first. After all, the Coronavirus pandemic was just gaining momentum in China and Italy. The Princess Cruise ship out of Japan had been hit hard by the infiltration of the virus and had been docked and quarantined in San Francisco. I had some major projects coming due at work. My brother-in-law was beginning to round the corner past his triple bypass surgery. The start of allergy season was approaching, which always meant more wheezing, coughing and sneezing for me. And finally, I had just begun feeling whole after fighting some parasitic virus likely acquired from my international travel before this.

But we were able to explain away every obstacle. I told myself that the pandemic was *over there* in those countries, not where we were headed. And our travel agent assured us that measures had been taken to guarantee our safety. They told us to relax and that we'd be fine. Check. My health was finally improving as I had just started some new meds that seemed to have been working, and I hadn't had an asthma attack in a couple of months. Check. I had my laptop and we paid for onboard Wi-Fi so that we could work on the boat. Check. And my mother-in-law came back from Rwanda to help with the care of my brother-in-law, so we knew he'd be in excellent hands. Check. Check. Check. No more problems. Everything was handled. We had it all under control.

So we set sail on March 6<sup>th</sup>, and during Week One, there was nothing but blue skies, leaping orcas, and smooth sailing. The food was great. Our room was bigger than we thought it would be. We met some nice folk. Dwayne and Rene, from Australia. Ed and Elaine, from Florida. Adrian, the coolest basketball-playing, sneaker-collecting server from the Philippines and Roberta, the spa specialist, from South Africa. We visited some amazing places like Buenos Aires, Argentina, the Falkland Islands and Puntas Arenas, Chile. We watched some really good movies like Harriet, Tolkien, 55 Steps, and A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood. We relaxed. We got comfortable. We became complacent. We settled into a nice routine, and we stopped waiting for the other shoe to drop. We were lulled into believing that everything was in fact okay and that all of our planning had paid off.

To Be Continued...

## Scripture

Proverbs 19:21 – There are many plans in a man or woman's hearts. Nevertheless, the Lord's counsel will stand.

## Lessons Learned

Let's look at Proverbs 19:21. "There are many plans in a man or woman's hearts. Nevertheless, the Lord's counsel will stand."

Before the "boat experience," I interpreted this passage of scripture to mean simply run my plans by God, and if I didn't hear any booming voice from heaven telling me no, go back, don't do it, and if the coast seemed clear, then surely my plans and God's plans were one in the same.

Looking back, I understand just how arrogant and wrong I was. I understand that there shouldn't have been and should never be Davenia's plans. I should not be sitting around dreaming, planning, scheming, and orchestrating. Instead, I should be spending time in prayer. I should be meditating on God's Word night and day (Joshua 1:8). I should be seeking God's counsel and waiting for Him to give me my marching orders (Psalm 119:105). And because God knows my heart, He knows all about my passions and my desires, and He knows where my strengths lie and what my talents are. Therefore, there should be no reason for me to lean on my own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). I mean, God created me, for goodness sake. So my response should be to trust Him. Trust that He'll give me the desires of my heart (Psalm 37:4). Trust that He'll maximize and use my talents (Matthew 22:37-40). Trust that He will bless me exceedingly abundantly beyond anything I could ever imagine or plan (Ephesians 3:20). Trust that as I commit my will and work to Him, my plans—or should I say, God's plans for me—will succeed (Proverbs 16:3).

So I'm shredding my bucket list. I have no clue what's gonna happen tomorrow. I don't know if the blessing He has in store for me will be in Antarctica or Africa.

Does this mean I've stopped dreaming? Absolutely not. Does this mean I've given up or that I'm running scared? No. But what it does mean is that I'm walking in a freedom I've never experienced before. I'm no longer ruled by my wishes, wants, or ways. I now allow and welcome God to direct my path.

What does this look like, you ask? Great question. Let me give you an example. My plan was to write an entire series of books. And the time on the boat was for finishing #2 in the series. I had a title, an outline, and a plot. I knew what readers of the first book liked, I'd learned how to be less wordy, and how to be more inclusive and less "preachy" in hopes of reaching a broader audience. New characters had been developed, and some of the favorite friends from the first book were to be included. I was set. My plans were firm.

But while on the boat, the writing stopped when the shift from me-focused to God-focused occurred. God wasn't telling me to give up the dream; instead, He was saying the dream wasn't for right then. It's like God was saying to me, "You need to experience some things first. You need to spend more time in the Word before sharing it. I have some molding, reshaping, and transforming to complete in you. And I have another message that I need you to share. My people are hurting. They're feeling discouraged.

They're adrift without a shore to call home, just like you. I need you to share *this* message. We'll get back to the book later. But right now, this is the path I have for you."

### Lessons Lived

I prayed over this new path. I searched God's Word for confirmation, and I'm striving every day to be obedient and walk as He leads.

This process of praying and obeying looks something like this:

**Commit** — I commit my hopes, dreams, desires, needs, wants, concerns, fears, and all of my ways to God. I give it to Him, trusting that He loves me more than anything and His plans are only to prosper me. So whether "prospering" me means going a different way than what I had planned, or experiencing some bumps and bruises as He prepares me, or having to wait or fail a few times, lose friends, offend someone along the way — it doesn't matter — I'm committed to the ways of my Father.

**Conceive** — I remain open to whatever God has for me. I look out for where He's working. I journal or document the ideas or visions that come to me.

**Confirm** — When God gives me a dream or a vision, or when he nudges me, or I get that feeling that this is what I'm supposed to do, I seek confirmation through the reading of God's Word and prayer.

**Carry It Out** — I obey. It's scary at times, but I trust and obey. If the path seems steep or rocky or long, I trust and obey. I may fall and get bloodied and bruised, but I trust and obey. And all the while, I remain connected to the path maker, the dream giver, my life sustainer.

God has a new path for me. And maybe, just maybe, what God has in store for you is far greater than what you've dreamed or imagined. Maybe, just maybe, God's plans will be the very ones that stretch you, strengthen you or save you. I am learning to be a girl "outta control," trusting God as the captain of my ship. Won't you let Him lead you today too!

### Reflections

- How does Proverbs 19:21 speak to you?
- What would happen if you ripped up your bucket list?
- What dreams or visions has God given you? Apply the three C's over the next week:
  - **Committing** your ways to God
  - **Conceiving** whatever plan or dream He has in store for you
  - **Confirming** that dream or plan through prayer and the study of God's word
- Now that you have a dream or vision, what do you need to do to get it done or **carry it out**? Where can you start right now? And then take the first step. I double—dog dare you. And when you do, I guarantee that your life will never be the same
- What are your personal LIFE Lessons?
  - **Liberation:** What new insights have you gained that have freed you from past thoughts or practices?
  - **Inspiration:** In what ways have you been spiritually, emotionally or mentally motivated to live for Christ?
  - **Fortification:** What additional scriptural texts, passages or stories can reinforce and strengthen you against the attacks of the enemy?
  - **Edification:** How might you share your story to edify others and bring glory to God?

## Playlist

As you process, digest, and apply what's been shared, here are a couple of songs from my "Got Me Through on the Boat" Playlist. Listen, Let the music infiltrate your soul. Read the lyrics and let the words encourage you. And I pray that you'll be blessed as I was.

Jonathan McReynolds — God is good — [Jonathan McReynolds — God Is Good \(Live\)](#)

Laura Story — Blessings — [Blessings — Laura Story \(with lyrics\)](#)

## Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I come before You today full of fear and uncertainty. I've been in control, or at least I thought I've been in control, for so long and the very idea of surrendering all to You is terrifying. But I'm coming to You in faith, although it's the faith of a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20), it's in faith nevertheless that I believe that a surrendered life to You is far more satisfying than anything this world could ever offer (Romans 12:2). In Your word, You said that if I follow You and deny myself, I will be saved (Matthew 16:24- 27). So today, I will trust You with all my heart, knowing that my own understanding is faulty (Proverbs 3:5-6). Today I commit myself to You as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). Help me be like Peter, leaving everything behind and follow You (Mark 10:28). Help me live a life "outta control" and in Your hands. In Your most holy name Jesus, I pray, Amen.

# Be Enlightened — Unexpected Sea Swells

Thanks so much for continuing with me along my adventure aboard the Zaandam and Rotterdam cruise ships, from March 7th to April 4th, 2020. This is a continuation of the lessons learned during my quarantine and of God's interventions, revelations, sustaining power, as well as the miracles He performed during my voyage.

In the previous LIFE study, I'm In Control, I talked about how I'd become comfortable because I assumed I was in control. I was no longer concerned about "the other shoe dropping" because the cruise was going as planned. Well, let me tell you, the shoe certainly did drop, and I quickly learned that I was not in control.

At the end of the first week, things began to change. The ship management began taking more cautionary measures like eliminating the self-serve food stations in the dining rooms and positioning hand sanitizer dispensers at every entrance and throughout the gym. Then we got word that all excursions had been canceled due to countries responding to the COVID-19 crisis. Disappointing, yes, but we were still scheduled to continue our journey and would at least sail through Glacier Alley. We still had access to all of the onboard amenities like the gym, the spa, the shows, and the dining rooms. So, while we would miss out on some of the cool sites, things weren't that bad — workouts continued, eating well continued, hanging out with people we'd met continued, and life aboard the Zaandam went on.

We looked forward to experiencing the glaciers. But the very morning we thought we'd awaken to the majestic hanging glaciers sprawled across the snow-capped Darwin Range, we learned that we, in fact, had turned around and were back in Puntas Arenas, Chile, the place we began our journey. The captain informed us that overnight, things had changed quickly. He had gotten word that countries were closing their ports, and if we were to have any chance at all of flying out and getting back home, he had to turn around to get back to Puntas Arenas before 8:00 am, the time for Chile's's official lockdown.

To Be Continued...

## **Scripture**

Isaiah 26:3-4 tells us that God will keep us in perfect peace as we trust Him and keep our minds steadfast on Him.

## **Lessons Learned**

It has been said that "The only constant in life is change (Heraclitus)." And while intellectually we may get it, in reality, we dislike and are resistant to change. We like things mapped out, spelled out, and planned out. We like orderly and predictable. Let me pause right here for a bit.

To better understand the irony of this situation, you need to understand more about who we are, or at least who Derrick, my husband, is. Derrick is a retired Deputy Fire Department Chief who currently works in disaster relief. So his frame of mind is that you always have an emergency preparedness plan, and, more specifically, you're always ready to act when crisis strikes. He always has a plan, and he is always in control.

So as panic set in for others, Derrick and I jumped into “fix-it mode,” as we're prone to do. We spent hours on the phone trying to get flights back home out of Puntas Arenas. We spent hours trying to cancel previously booked flights. We sought answers from everyone we ran into, asking, "Did you get a flight?, How about a refund? Who's your connection? Who do we know who can help get us off this boat?"

We spent lots of time, energy, and resources trying to respond to the unexpected. Trying to fix it and make it right. And guess what? It was all to no avail because the authorities of Puntas Arenas later informed us, "Oh, we're sorry. Did we say our port was closing at 8:00 am? Ooops. We closed our ports at midnight, so you won't be docking here."

My Aha moment from this experience: my plans are not God's plans and my "get er done" mentality should not be my first response to the unexpected. I'm not advocating that you throw out your emergency preparedness plans or discount what you know about crisis intervention. But what I realized at that moment was that my first response should have been to pray and seek God's guidance. And who knows, maybe I still would have done all of the planning and preparing that I did, but how much better would it have been if I was doing it with a more peaceful heart. Maybe I would have been less anxious and worried. Maybe I could have been a voice of calm and reassurance to others who were stressed out instead of adding to the confusion and chaos.

### **Lessons Lived**

What I realized, my friends, is that shift happens. Always has, always will. And when it does, we need to have a spiritual preparedness plan.

In the world of disaster relief, we're told that you can't begin planning for a crisis during the crisis. Just as we're directed to have an emergency preparedness plan, we should also have a spiritual preparedness plan that is our default response when the sea swells.

President J.F. Kennedy once remarked that "when written in Chinese, the word "crisis" is composed of two characters. One represents danger, and the other represents opportunity." What if we viewed our crisis as an opportunity for God to show up and show out? Think of the unexpected as an opportunity to exercise your trust in God. Think of it as an opportunity to testify about God's goodness and sovereignty.

So the next time the unexpected happens, pause. Take a minute to share your concern with God, ask for His peace, and then ask Him what it is that He would have you learn from this unexpected crisis. How would He have you act? To whom would He have you minister? How would He have you grow?

And when panic begins to consume you, have those default scriptures already hidden in your heart so that you can readily recite them over and over and over, reminding yourself of the God You serve (Deuteronomy 10:17, Nehemiah 9:6). Reminding yourself that you are not alone (Joshua 1:5). Reminding yourself of all the prayers previously answered (Luke 8:39). Reminding yourself that God is in control (Jeremiah 29:11).

## Reflections

- How does Isaiah 26:3-4 speak to you?
- What is your default response when a crisis strikes? How is it working for you? How might you improve it?
- What Bible texts of comfort, hope, and peace can you hide in your heart to steady you the next time crisis strikes?
- What are your personal LIFE Lessons?
  - **Liberation:** What new insights have you gained that have freed you from past thoughts or practices?
  - **Inspiration:** In what ways have you been spiritually, emotionally or mentally motivated to live for Christ?
  - **Fortification:** What additional scriptural texts, passages or stories can reinforce and strengthen you against the attacks of the enemy?
  - **Edification:** How might you share your story to edify others and bring glory to God?

## Playlist

As you process, digest, and apply what's been shared, here are a couple of songs from my "Got Me Through on the Boat" Playlist. Listen and allow the music infiltrate your soul. Read the lyrics and let the words encourage you. And I pray that you'll be blessed as I was.

Jonathan McReynolds — Situation — [Jonathan McReynolds — Situation \(MUSIC VIDEO\)](#)

Lauren Daigle — Trust In You — [Lauren Daigle — Trust In You \(Live\)](#)

## Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank You so much for being my sovereign God who loves me, who has a plan for me, and who has promised never to leave me or forsake me. So much is going on around the world, Dear Father. So many events have taken me by surprise. And often, I panic. I jump into fix-it or worry mode. But I'm asking that You fortify me and remind me that if I only ask, a peace that surpasses all understanding will be mine. The circumstances may not change. The storm may continue to rage, but I can be assured that with You I can weather the storm. Thank You for Your love and Your peace. In Your name, I pray. Amen.

# Be Enlightened — Unclean, Unclean

Thanks so much for continuing with me along my adventure aboard the Zaandam and Rotterdam cruise ships, from March 7th to April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This is a continuation of the lessons learned and of God's interventions, His revelations, His sustaining power, as well as the miracles He performed during my voyage.

In the previous LIFE study, Unexpected Sea Swells, I shared how we had to unexpectedly turn around and make a mad dash back to Puntas Arenas, Chile, because borders were closing (and this was the only port open for us to dock and fly home). Talk about disappointment! Not only was our visit to Antarctica not going to happen, but we would not cruise Glacier Alley either. So we did what we did best, and we jumped into planning mode, trying to rearrange flights, get refunds, and communicate with family and friends.

Well, as the adage goes, "the best-laid plans of mice and men will surely go asunder." And asunder did our plans go! We did, in fact, make it back to Puntas Arenas, Chile, well before the time given. We were able to change our flights, and although it would mean travel through three different countries, which would take us two days and three layovers, getting home was possible.

We began packing our bags, reaching out to family, and fortifying ourselves for the journey home. And then we heard that familiar voice, "Good morning. This is your captain speaking. I am sorry to inform you of another bit of bad news." Just as plans for disembarkation were underway, Puntas Arenas informed our captain that the deadline had been changed from 8 am to midnight, and as a result, we could not dock, and no one was permitted to leave the ship.

"WAAAAAAAAA!" Yep, I had a full-fledged temper tantrum. And guess what? It didn't matter. It didn't change anything, and there we sat, stranded at sea. And as we were nearing the end of week two, the realization set in that we were running low on food and supplies. Our captain begged the authorities to at least let us dock to restock. But by this time, the fear of COVID was running rampant worldwide, and they weren't willing to chance the virus being brought onshore.

The authorities sympathized with our plight and made arrangements for small boats to bring the food and supplies out to our ship, resulting in a two-day process of unloading the supplies.

To Be Continued...

## Scripture

Leviticus 13:45-46 — "Now the leper on whom the sore *is*, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!' <sup>46</sup>He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He *is* unclean, and he shall <sup>1a</sup>dwelt alone; his dwelling *shall be* outside the camp.

II Kings 7:3-4 — Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, "Why are we sitting here until we die? If we say, 'We will enter the city,' the famine *is* in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now, therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die."



## **Lessons Learned**

We were officially classified as "UNCLEAN, UNCLEAN!" When workers from Puntas Arenas were loading the supplies and the food onto our ship, they were dressed in full hazmat suits. They stayed as far away from our ship as possible, meaning that our food and supplies were often swinging in the wind over the ocean, causing gasps and prayers that they would land on our ship and not in the water.

The fear of the unknown and contamination caused others to look upon us with fear and disdain. Borders were turning us away left and right. One cough, one tissue being dispensed, or one bead of sweat resulted in hate stares and accusations.

I began to feel unloved and unaccepted, distrustful and disrespected, abandoned and alone. And these feelings then led me to act as one who was unclean. My shoulders slumped forward. My brows furrowed and my frown became permanently fixed.

And for the first time, I could empathize with the lepers of Biblical times. In Biblical times, people suffering from the skin disease of leprosy were treated as outcasts. They had to leave their homes, their families and all that was familiar to live on the outskirts of town with others who were also considered lepers. They couldn't go into town, they couldn't interact with others, and they couldn't even go into the temple or take part in worship. And to make matters worse, they had to ring a bell and shout unclean, unclean if anyone were to approach them.

While in my morose state of "uncleanliness," God reminded me of four leprous men found in II Kings 7:3-4.

Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, "Why are we sitting here until we die? If we say, 'We will enter the city,' the famine *is* in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die."

See, these lepers were already considered outcasts with nothing left to lose. So they reasoned they could either remain in their leprous state of insignificance, doubt, fear, hopelessness, and inevitable death...or they could take a risk and pursue life. And that, my friends, is leper logic.

I learned that being "unclean" is as much a mental and emotional state as it is a physical one. Sure, the lepers had a contagious physical condition. Sure, many were contracting and transmitting the highly contagious COVID-19 virus and experiencing the associated symptoms. But what these lepers taught me was that you don't have to dwell in a mental, emotional or spiritual state of uncleanliness.

My Aha moment from this experience: Life and death and blessings and curses have been set before me. It's up to me to choose (Deuteronomy 30:19). I can choose hopelessness or happiness, defeat or victory, death or life.

## **Lessons Lived**

So, as I watched the loading of supplies onto the deck, I chose to get out of my head and to put things in perspective. Of course, workers would wear hazmat suits. They would have been foolish not to. At that time, so much was unknown about COVID, so taking precautions was wise. Additionally, no one had

actually referred to me as "unclean." It was me who had made assumptions about the thoughts and perceptions of others. And my assumptions weren't based on facts or reality. I got caught up in the angst and anxiety swirling all around me and began to think and act as one who was unclean. So I chose to square my shoulders, stick my chest out, and walk with my head held high. And I chose to shake off the "victimness" vibes and find ways to support, comfort and cheer others. Like the lepers, I purposed to live.

### Reflection

- How does II King 7:3-4 speak to you?
- How might the perceptions of others be impacting your perceptions of yourself?
- How would you describe your mental, emotional, and spiritual state?
- How might your life be different if you were to choose joy, peace, hope and life?
- What are your personal LIFE Lessons?
  - **Liberation:** What new insights have you gained that have freed you from past thoughts or practices?
  - **Inspiration:** In what ways have you been spiritually, emotionally or mentally motivated to live for Christ?
  - **Fortification:** What additional scriptural texts, passages or stories can reinforce and strengthen you against the attacks of the enemy?
  - **Edification:** How might you share your story to edify others and bring glory to God?

### Playlist

As you process, digest, and apply what's been shared, here are a couple of songs from my "Got Me Through on the Boat" Playlist. Listen and allow the music infiltrate your soul. Read the lyrics and let the words encourage you. And I pray that you'll be blessed as I was.

- Create In Me A Clean Heart by Donnie McClurkin — [Donnie McClurkin: Create In Me A Clean Heart](#)

### Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, Show me if I am entertaining anything in my mind, heart, or life that is not of You so I can be free of it. Deliver me from everything that hinders the flow of Your Spirit in me. Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me (Psalm 51:10). In Your most holy name Jesus, I pray, Amen.

## Be Enlightened — Batten Down the Hatches

Thanks so much for continuing with me along my adventure aboard the Zaandam and Rotterdam cruise ships, from March 7th to April 4th, 2020. This is a continuation of the lessons learned and of God's interventions, His revelations, His sustaining power, as well as the miracles He performed during my voyage.

In the previous LIFE study, "Unclean, Unclean," I shared how the port at Puntas Arenas, Chile, denied our request to disembark in their country. We could restock our food supply, but we had no clear direction as to where we would sail or who would allow us entry, nor did we have a clear timeframe of how much longer we would be on the boat.

While disheartening, we still had free reign on the ship — the food, the shows, the spa, the gym —until we didn't. I still remember the moment vividly. We were having lunch, seated by the window, looking out at the breaking of the waves. We had just solidified our dinner plans at the Steakhouse with another couple we'd met, and we were looking forward to a much-needed spa treatment. And then we heard these words: "Good afternoon. This is your captain speaking. I'm afraid I have some bad news. As of this morning, 136 persons have reported COVID-like symptoms. And so, for the safety of everyone, we will be initiating a mandatory quarantine, which means everyone will need to report back to your staterooms and remain there until further notice." They were "battening down the hatches" in preparation for the COVID storm to come.

That very day we should have been completing our cruise full of tales of the breathtaking vistas and encounters with the Gentoo penguins, the Weddel seals and the majestic blue whales. Instead, the day that should have been marked by wonders and nostalgia became the beginning of 14 days in quarantine.

We only had 30 minutes to get prepared. The hard part was not knowing for what exactly we were preparing. So we ran to the gift shop because we were already low on toiletries. We spent \$60 on deodorant (I thought this was important at the time. If we were going to be this close for who knew how long, it'd help if we didn't "stinketh"). We got some Dramamine because Derrick's motion sickness patches had run out. And we got a few snacks because we had no idea how or what we'd be eating. Then we took a walk around the upper deck, savoring the sunshine and the fresh air. And we prayed.

I can't even describe the shock. This was to be our last meal outside of our room. No more gatherings with our new friends. No more walks around the upper deck. No more shows, spa treatments, shopping, Tango dance lessons, sunshine or fresh air.

We were confined to our 183 square foot interior room, minus a window or balcony. What seemed like an adequate amount of space for the amount of time we were planning to spend in the room now suddenly felt like a prison cell. This 13x14 shoebox was to become our home, for better or worse.

To Be Continued...

## Scripture

I Corinthians 16:13 — Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

## Lessons Learned

As I shared earlier, Derrick's background and expertise is in emergency preparedness and disaster relief. And while we would've known what to do in a hurricane, a fire, a tornado, an earthquake or even a mass shooting, we had no idea what to do while lost at sea with a contagious and deadly virus running rampant.

This experience gave me an expanded perspective of what it means to be ready. The Bible affirms our need to be prepared by telling us to "be ye also ready" (Matthew 24:42-44) and to "be alert at all times" (Mark 13:33) and to "watch out for our great enemy, the devil" (I Peter 5:7). Yet, our humanness leads us to interpret these texts to mean plan, do, and control. We tend to focus on "physical preparedness" by gathering supplies, mapping out escape routes, designing alternative shelters, and getting trained in survival techniques. But while the Bible tells us to "be ready," the Bible also tells us we have no idea when Christ will return (Mark 13:32) and that we shouldn't live in a state of fear and anxiety when the tumultuous times come (Luke 12:9).

There is no doubt that a time will come when everything you think you know and can do, when those things that you can touch, see, taste, hear and smell, won't do you a bit of good. So, while physical preparedness is a good thing, I think that God wants us to be ready in another, more vital way. I think that we are being called to spiritual preparedness.

## Lessons Lived

So I ask the question: Are you spiritually prepared for the crises, the devastation, and the drama coming our way? Here are a few ways to become Spiritually Prepared.

1. **Know Who's In Charge** — When the storms of life threaten to wash you away when you feel as if you're drowning and there is no end in sight, you need to hold on tight to something solid, steadfast and sure. We need an anchor to keep us rooted and grounded, and that anchor is Jesus (Hebrews 6:19). While you might not understand why you are going through this, you can trust Who is going through with you. You have to know Who is in your boat.
2. **Have a Plan** — Pray intentionally. Seek God's guidance to understand His plans and purposes (Proverbs 16:9).
3. **Develop a Resource Kit** — Immerse yourself in God's Word daily (Joshua 1:8). Hide his Word in your heart (Psalm 119:11). Everything we need for life and survival can be found in the Word of God.
4. **Enhance Your Survival Skills** — Our survival will be dependent on finding food to sustain us (Luke 4:4 — And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God). We'll have to navigate rough terrain (Psalm 119:105 — Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path).
5. **Signal for Help (Send out an SOS)** — We may become stranded, hurt, or unable to carry the burdens alone. There will be times when we'll need to reach out for help. During those times, we may need to depend on others (Matthew 18:20, Proverbs 11:14, Exodus 18:14-15). But we should remember that we can go to God in our times of trouble, and He will always deliver (Psalm 55:16).

6. **Have a Way of Escape** — Seek shelter in the promises of God. God is our refuge, an ever-present help in the time of trouble (Psalm 27:5). And when we are tempted, He will provide a way out (I Corinthians 10:13).

### Reflections

- How does I Corinthians 16:13 speak to you?
- Are you spiritually prepared to handle the storms of life? If so, how? If not, how can you get ready?
- What are your personal LIFE Lessons?
  - **Liberation:** What new insights have you gained that have freed you from past thoughts or practices?
  - **Inspiration:** In what ways have you been spiritually, emotionally or mentally motivated to live for Christ?
  - **Fortification:** What additional scriptural texts, passages or stories can reinforce and strengthen you against the attacks of the enemy?
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- People Get Ready by Crystal Lewis — [Crystal Lewis — People Get Ready \(Lyrics\)](#)

### Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, Are You not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in Your hand, and no one can withstand You. My God, have You not blessed, kept and sustained me in the past. I have worshipped and served You and have made disciples of many in Your Name, saying, 'If calamity comes — whether I lose my house or my car, whether the cancer returns, or my children go astray, my marriage fails, I never find a true love, or I lose my very life — I will stand in your presence, upholding your Name and Your promises, believing that if I cry out to you in my distress, You will hear me and save me.' But now, Oh God, I need you again. See how the enemy is trying to distract and discourage me and cast doubt upon Your power? My God, will You not judge them? Will You not deal with them? For I have no power to face this crisis alone. I do not know what to do, **but my eyes are on you**. In the most holy name of Jesus, I pray, Amen. **(2 Chronicles 20:6-12)**

# Be Enlightened — The Air I Breathe

Thanks so much for continuing with me along my adventure aboard the Zaandam and Rotterdam cruise ships, from March 7th to April 4th, 2020. This is a continuation of the lessons learned and of God's interventions, His revelations, His sustaining power, as well as the miracles He performed during my voyage.

In the previous LIFE study, *Batten Down the Hatches*, I shared how we had been quarantined to our rooms for an undetermined amount of time. I also shared that our stateroom was a 183 square foot interior room without a window or balcony.

Talk about togetherness. I don't know if Derrick and I could have been any closer. We worked hard to keep a routine for the first couple of days. I would move the furniture (okay, the one little table) around to reconfigure the room, making different spaces. I moved the table against the wall to make our "gym." I would then pull it in front of the couch to make our dining area and then back to the middle of the room to make our study/work/devotional area. I made us shower and dress every day. We watched movies. We critiqued movies. Derrick jogged in place, did planks (he got up to 4 minutes!), and did pushups. I came to love Tabata workout videos with Ranier ([A 30—Minute Tabata Session to Burn Some Serious Calories](#)) and stretching and meditation with Revelation Wellness (<https://www.revelationwellness.org/rwtv/>). I put my courses online. Derrick re-wrote working policies. We occasionally texted family and friends. We slept. We ate. We prayed. Repeat.

By Day Three, we were going crazy. It wasn't so much the limited routine and activity as it was the not knowing how much longer this would go on. And we were becoming claustrophobic. And even worse was inhaling and exhaling of recycled air and the absence of sunshine. I needed my daily dose of vitamin D. I needed the warmth of natural light. I needed to take a deep breath of oxygen. I needed to feel the droplets of ocean mist upon my skin. I needed out!

On Day Five of quarantine, the infamous "this is your captain speaking" rang out and interrupted our movie. But for once, this was a good interruption. Apparently, we weren't the only ones experiencing cabin fever. We were given 30 minutes to walk around the deck for fresh air and sunshine. HALLELUJAH! I don't know if you could've found two happier people. Thirty glorious minutes outside was more than we could stand. Now every floor was assigned a time slot to venture out on deck. And 30 minutes was the limit. So if you missed your time or if you started late, it'd be "so sorry for your luck."

Needless to say, Derrick and I got up early, got dressed, ate lunch, and waited. We were not going to miss our time. We were "standing by the ready," and when the announcement for our floor came, we were the first outdoor and on the deck. And I declare, I burst out in song. "Air glorious air. Precious nitrogen and oxygen. Sun glorious sun. I'm so glad I can get some." (Yes, it was sung to the tune of "Food Glorious Food" from the Broadway play, "Oliver"). And I think I cried. I had never been so energized, appreciative, and overjoyed to be outside. We treasured every step. We savored every inhale and relished every exhale. We basked in the sunshine and counted every single blessing, named them one by one.

## Scripture

Ezekiel 37:5-6 — Thus says the Lord God to these bones: "Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord."

Psalm 34:1 — I will bless the Lord at all times, and His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

## Lessons Learned

My Aha moment: If I could get this excited over 30 minutes outside, how much more excited should I get for the One who created me, the One who sustains me, and the One who put a plan of salvation in place to redeem me.

We cheer and scream for our favorite sports team. We lift our hands and raise our voices at concerts. We celebrate birthdays and holidays. But how do we celebrate, worship and praise our Lord and Savior?

## Lessons Lived

Because God is the very air we breathe, we should exist in a perpetual state of praise, if for no other reason than our existence. Like David, we should be so overcome with gratitude that we dance until our clothes fall off (II Samuel 6:14-22). Like King Jehoshaphat appointed the praise team to march in front of the army, praising God for His power and might and for what they expected He would do, we too should face our battles with praise (II Chronicles 20).

How can we continually offer up a sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15)? Here are a few suggestions.

- **Sing for Joy (Psalm 95:1)** — Music has been a part of worship, beginning with the angels in heaven (Job 38:7), continuing with the children of Israel (I Chronicles 6:31-32), as well as in the New Testament church (Colossians 3:16-17). Music helps us connect on a deeper, emotional and spiritual level with God (James 5:13). Music is the universal language that connects us to fellow believers (Ephesians 5:18-20). And music helps us remember God's Word (Deuteronomy 31:21). More importantly, it allows us to express our love to God (Psalm 147:7), which pleases Him (Hebrews 13:15-16).

God has always been pleased with our musical expressions of praise and worship, and just as it served as the fabric of worship then, it should be the same for us today. Now I must admit, I don't have a great singing voice, and my husband can attest to this. I remember growing up singing in the church choir (a must for a PK), and during rehearsals, the choir director would section us off — sopranos, altos, tenors and the Jones girls. But God doesn't say, "only those who are gifted with the voice of the angels are to make joyful, melodic, well harmonized, syncopated musical rendition ." No, the command actually says, "make a joyful noise (Psalm 100)." So I think my praise and worship is covered because I most certainly consider it joyful, and others probably consider it noise. But what matters most is that it's acceptable and even pleasing to God (Romans 12:1).

- **Memorialize God's Goodness (I Chronicles 16:12)** — How easy it is to forget all that God has done for us. Like Elijah, we bask in the mountaintop experiences, but as soon as the next trial comes along, we're wallowing in the valley of despair (I Kings 18:20-45 and 19). No wonder God tells us never to forget (Isaiah 46:9-11). He knows us all too well. So how can we memorialize the goodness of God? Like Joshua, who set up stones after he and the Children of Israel had

crossed the Jordan River (Joshua 4:6-7), we can create tangible reminders of God's goodness. One idea is to create a centerpiece that holds your Stones of Remembrance (I used a metal bowl and created a rock garden). I have smooth white stones on which I write the various blessings bestowed upon my family and me, and I display them as a constant reminder. I also have a gratitude journal where I document answered prayers.

Additionally, I keep a gratitude calendar where I document a blessing each day. And I am also intentional about offering prayers of thanksgiving daily. All of these things keep me in a continual state of praise.

I could say much more about praise and worship, and perhaps I will in another post. But for now, this should give you something to think about. Also, an excellent book to read is Holy Roar by Chris Tomlin. So go ahead and make a joyful noise unto the Lord! Turn up the volume, sing like nobody's listening, and dance like nobody's watching, all to the honor and glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ!

### Reflections

- How do the texts Ezekiel 37:5-6 and Psalm 34:1 speak to you?
- King David danced in celebration and sang before the Lord with all his might. How do you celebrate before God? (2 Samuel 6:5)
- How can we change our worshipping practices to be more God-focused than familiar and "me-focused?" (1 Corinthians 14:15, Ephesians 5:19-20)
- How do we avoid boring, empty ritualistic worship?
- What are your personal LIFE Lessons?
  - **Liberation:** What new insights have you gained that have freed you from past thoughts or practices?
  - **Inspiration:** In what ways have you been spiritually, emotionally or mentally motivated to live for Christ?
  - **Fortification:** What additional scriptural texts, passages or stories can reinforce and strengthen you against the attacks of the enemy?
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### Playlist

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- Air I Breathe by Byron Cage — [Air I Breathe — Byron Cage — An Invitation to Worship](#)
- Every Praise by Hezekiah Walker — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJJMgh6Oec>

### Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, Praise be to You my Lord from everlasting to everlasting! The Creator of the ends of the earth and the Creator of me! I praise You because You do not faint or grow weary, and Your understanding is unsearchable (Isaiah 40:28). Your ways are higher than my ways, and Your thoughts are higher than my thoughts (Isaiah 55:9), and for this I give You praise (1 Chronicles 29:10-13). Thank you for life and for being the very air that I breathe (Job 33:4). In Your most holy name Jesus, I pray, Amen.



# Be Enlightened — Man Overboard

Thanks so much for continuing with me along my adventure aboard the Zaandam and Rotterdam cruise ships, from March 7th to April 4th, 2020. This is a continuation of the lessons learned and of God's interventions, His revelations, His sustaining power, as well as the miracles He performed during my voyage.

In the previous LIFE study, *The Air I Breathe*, I shared how we had been quarantined to our rooms which was a 183 square foot interior room without a window or balcony. After three days with no contact with the world beyond our cubby hole, we were granted a 30-minute walk around the upper deck for fresh air and sunshine.

Our thought and hope was that perhaps this could be a daily thing, but that hope was quickly dashed when the following announcement filled our room. "This is your captain speaking. We have some unfortunate news. Sadly, four of our passengers have died due to COVID-like symptoms and complications. Our hearts go out to the families and loved ones. Unfortunately, we will have to discontinue the fresh air program as the number of those experiencing COVID-like symptoms is increasing."

Wow. If we didn't know it before, the seriousness of our situation began to hit home. As the days passed, more staff became ill, which resulted in even fewer services. The wait time to get someone on the phone from guest services had increased. Our meals were now delivered via "knock and run" by the scarce crew who were afraid of contact. And our meal options were interesting, to say the least. One night I declare the lamp chops mooded. And other days, I could only assume that the yellowish/orangish little blob on the plate were eggs. The "healthier" of us were transferred to another ship, the Rotterdam, in an attempt to lessen the staff's burden and provide more care and attention to the sick. Being healthy was determined by self-report and a temperature check. So Derrick and I made it to the Rotterdam. And we at least had a window.

So while uncomfortable, and bored, and longing for home, we were maintaining. That is until we weren't. Derrick began to show symptoms of what we presumed to be COVID. His little jog became a shuffle. Planks resulted in him passed out on the floor. His breathing came in little gasps, and he was feverish. And if you know Derrick, when I say he slept most of the day, then you too will agree that something was definitely wrong. I initially thought that this was a blessing in disguise because while I could read and write and watch movies most of the day, being still was not Derrick's strong suit. So being down and out for a bit kept him from climbing the walls.

Now I know that I have a flair for dramatics. I love to read and write fiction, after all. But I'm not kidding when I tell you that one morning, Derrick looked like death. He was sweating profusely. He was dizzy, and he was burning up. I wanted to call the ship's doctor, but Derrick thought that bringing attention to our situation would somehow prolong our ability to get off the boat, whenever that was to be. Besides, he asked, what can they possibly do at this point?

So I acquiesced, but I was beyond scared. I was scared that Derrick would make death number five, and I was also afraid that I too would catch the virus and that we'd both die! Talk about a praying wife. I

anointed his head with baby oil. I rebuked demons and spirits. And I pleaded with God, begging that Derrick be made well.

And then, he slept. A peaceful countenance fell over Derrick, and peace flooded my soul. God heard my cry through all the theatrics and drama. God saw me. God heard me. God answered my prayers (Psalm 34:15).

**Scripture:** Psalm 34:15 - The eyes of the LORD *are* on the righteous, And His ears *are open* to their cry.

### Lessons Learned

I am so thankful that we serve a God who sees, hears, and answers. This experience was certainly a faith-building experience. I learned that although I don't always "feel" God's presence and think He is silent at times, He is always with me (Isaiah 41:10). Whether I make my bed in hell or ascend to uttermost depths of heaven, He is with me (Psalm 139:7-10). I learned that I can't confine God to my pea-sized understanding of His power and might. How dare I limit His miraculous abilities and His love for me (Ephesians 3:20). His ways are not my ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). And just as He's pulled me out of situations in the past (Psalm 34:4), He's orchestrated events in ways I can't even phantom (I Corinthians 2:9). Just as He's seen me, heard me, and answered me in the past (Isaiah 65:4), He'd do it again; and I needed to trust in Him (Deuteronomy 7:9).

### Lessons Lived

My experience reminded me of the story of Hagar. She'd felt scared, frustrated, hopeless and alone. While in the wilderness, she wondered if God saw her. Here are four points that I got from her story regarding my pursuit to trust God more:

**Point Number 1 — God Sees Us:** God pursues us and provides grace even in the wilderness (Jeremiah 31:2). In Genesis 16:8, The angel of the Lord found Hagar by a fountain of water in the wilderness. See, God has always been in pursuit of us. From the beginning of time in the Garden of Eden when God called to the man, 'Where are you?' (Genesis 3:8-10) to the parables of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:10-14) and the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10) to the very mission of Jesus "to seek, to pursue and to save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10). God has demonstrated his love and grace toward us. God pursued Hagar in the wilderness of her heartache and pain. And he pursues each of us today, providing His love and grace in the wilderness (or the quarantined staterooms) of our lives too. Yes, we may be tossed overboard, but God hears our cries for help, He sees our SOS signals and whatever the outcome, His presence is with us, and He will answer our prayers.

**Point number 2 — Be Still:** Sometimes, we just need to be still (Psalm 46:10). It was by the still waters amidst the quietness of the wilderness that the angel of the Lord appeared before Hagar. Sometimes we, like Hagar, just need to be still. To take a breath so that we too can hear that still small voice, ministering to us, affirming us, reassuring us (1 Kings 19:11-13). But unfortunately, that's not our nature, is it? We must always be doing, going, moving, working, lest it all topples down. But that's not God's plan for us, so let stillness and time with God be our first response. Draw near to God as He relentlessly pursues us, drawing ever near to us (James 4:8).

**Point number 3 — God Hears:** We have to exhibit patience during the pause. From the time Hagar returned to Abram's house until she and Ishmael had to leave again, at least 14 years had passed.

Now, I'm imagining that things had to have been better upon her return. I mean, after all, the angel of the Lord God spoke to Hagar personally and told her to name her son Ishmael, which means God hears. So I think that this name not only affirmed God's care for Hagar, but perhaps it also sent a subtle message to Abraham and Sarah – I see yall's mess, and I'm watching you.

We also witness the name change of Sarai to Sarah. Sarai, which meant argumentative in the Hebrew language, was changed to Sarah, meaning princess. Perhaps there was a character change here as well. Perhaps Sarah began to act more like a princess and less like the wicked witch of the East. So for 14 years, Hagar clung to God's promises and demonstrated patience during the pause.

My friends, the fact that God *has not yet* given what He promised does not mean that He *will not*. Time doesn't limit God or empty His promises of their power. Sometimes we have to pray for wisdom during the wait, faith until fulfillment, strength in the soon but not yet, and patience during the pause.

**Point Number 4 — God Answers:** God's blessings abound, even in the midst of our mess (or our theatrics and drama). Genesis 16:10-12 shows that not only had God heard Hagar's affliction, but He also promised to bless her. First, God reveals that her baby would be a son, which was a big deal in that day. There was no social security to fall back on in old age, so women had to rely upon their husbands or sons to care for them. So God showed himself as Hagar's provider by giving her a son. Then God provided Hagar an image of wild donkeys running free. See, in Hagar's ancient world, donkeys didn't look like our donkeys today; they looked more like wild mustangs. God was promising Hagar that Ishmael, the son of a slave girl, would dwell in the presence of his brothers and despite conflict amongst them, he would never be a slave; he would be free, like the beautiful wild donkeys that roamed the deserts in her world. What hope this message of liberation for her son and his descendants must have given Hagar, an Egyptian slave girl.

### Reflections

- Provide evidence of God's pursuit of us in the Garden of Eden, the parable of the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin, and in Jesus' mission towards humanity.
- Define the meaning of grace.
- How can Jeremiah 31:2 be applied to Hagar's experience? How can it be applied to yours?
- Reflect on the times when God covered you with His grace.
  
- How does "mentally and spiritually being still" differ from "physical stillness?"
- How comfortable are you with "being still mentally and spiritually?"
- What are some ways that you can "be still" even amidst the busyness of life?
  
- What strategies can help you wait on the Lord and be of good courage?
- What are your personal LIFE Lessons?
  - **Liberation:** What new insights have you gained that have freed you from past thoughts or practices?
  - **Inspiration:** In what ways have you been spiritually, emotionally or mentally motivated to live for Christ?
  - **Fortification:** What additional scriptural texts, passages or stories can reinforce and strengthen you against the attacks of the enemy?
  - **Edification:** How might you share your story to edify others and bring glory to God?

## Playlist

As you process, digest, and apply what's been shared, here are a couple of songs from my "Got Me Through on the Boat" Playlist. Listen, and let the music infiltrate your soul. Read the lyrics and let the words encourage you. And I pray that you'll be blessed as I was.

- The God Who Sees by Kathie Lee Gifford & Nicole C. Mullen — [The God Who Sees](#)
- If He Did It Before by Tye Tribbett — [Tye Tribbett — If He Did It Before....Same God](#)
- Trust His Heart by Babbie Mason — [Trust His Heart with Lyrics \(By: Babbie Mason\)](#)

## Prayer

O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, Nor chasten me in Your displeasure. Please have mercy on me, O Lord, for I *am* tired and afraid, and I feel alone. O Lord, please heal me, for my bones are troubled, and my soul also is greatly troubled. But You, O Lord, how long? Please return, O Lord, and deliver me from my distress! Save me for Your mercies' sake! For in death *there is* no remembrance of You. In the grave, who will give You thanks? I am weary with my own groaning. All night I make my bed swim, and I drench my couch with my tears. My eyes waste away because of grief. It grows old because of the enemy's workings against me. In the name of Jesus, I command you to depart from me, all you workers of iniquity, for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled. Let them turn back *and* be ashamed suddenly. You, Oh Lord, have heard my supplication. I know that You, Oh Lord, have received my prayer (Psalm 6). I praise You because You are my God who sees, hears and answers. I pray this bold prayer in the most holy and precious name of Jesus, Amen.

# Be Enlightened — All Hands on Deck

Thanks so much for continuing with me along my adventure aboard the Zaandam and Rotterdam cruise ships, from March 7th to April 4th, 2020. This is a continuation of the lessons learned and of God's interventions, His revelations, His sustaining power, as well as the miracles He performed during my voyage.

In the previous LIFE study, Man Overboard, I shared how more staff were falling ill. Four passengers had died, and Derrick began to display the symptoms of COVID. I thought he would die, but God granted us both peace. His fever broke, and although he was still fatigued and weak, he was doing much better.

But God didn't stop here. While He ministered to us, He also sent hundreds of you who prayed for us, encouraged us, advocated for us, humbled us and buoyed our spirits. We are still in awe of the love we experienced. Friends within our Facebook communities, prayer groups from all walks of faith, church communities, and family members interceded on our behalf. We received text messages that made us laugh. Songs that calmed us and carried us through (Psalm 91 by Shane and Shane, Smile by Jonathan McReynolds). That penetrated our hearts and souls. Our mothers contacted Senators and Mayors (I even think they tried to reach the President. You gotta love momma's fighting for their "babies"). Friends called news stations. Some held prayer vigils. Family members sent us pictures of themselves to connect us to home. Our daughter and her boyfriend checked on our house, stocked our fridge, and ensured we had toilet tissue. Friends gave us medical advice. My students sought to lessen my burden and decided I should cut the assignments in half so that I'd have less to grade (hmmm...for them or me? It doesn't matter. I'm going with they cared). Little boys in Bermuda followed our journey and prayed for us every night. And Angela Bryant-Dungee turned my poem into a song. You can listen on [www.mazuriministries.org](http://www.mazuriministries.org).

We still don't have the words to express our gratitude, but from the bottom of our hearts, THANK YOU!

## Scripture

1 Thessalonians 3:1-5 — Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

## Lessons Learned

Derrick and I were humbled beyond words. We are so accustomed to caring for others. We are so accustomed to doing for ourselves. To be in a situation where we had no control and our strength and resolve were waning was new for us. And to witness this rallying of support and prayers from people all over the world. To read the expressions of love. To be reminded of God's love for us. Well, it was one of the most incredible, moving, meaningful expressions of love ever experienced.

What we learned was that no man is an island. We learned that we are called to be in fellowship with others. We learned that it's okay to ask for help and allow others to carry the burden with you. We learned that we are not alone.

### Lessons Lived

Like Moses in Exodus 17:8-16, we all need encouragement to keep us motivated, to remind us that we're loved, and to support us through the hard times. And as much as you can benefit from the encouragement of others, you can gain a hundredfold by encouraging others. And it doesn't take much to be a blessing to someone else.

Here are a few things you can try to love others intentionally and more meaningfully.

- **Know Your Neighbors:** It's really hard to love those you don't know. Start with the people in your immediate neighborhood. Bake cookies and spread the love. Host a neighborhood drop-in. Arrange a playdate with your children and children who live nearby. Find out where your more senior neighbors may live and find ways to help them out. Tutor some children who may be struggling. Plan time to just sit and chat for a while. And then extend out to your local community, your church family or your colleagues. See and be seen. And truly get to know your neighbor beyond hello.
- **Get Out of Your Comfort Zone:** It's so easy to love those who are more like us, but we are called to love those who may differ by race, religion, age, gender, socioeconomic status, beliefs, etc. So make a conscious decision to make new friends. Find ways to appreciate another culture (art, music, food, language). Hang out in a different community. Have an open mind, assuming that you can learn as much from others as you can share with them.
- **Invest in the Life of a Child:** Who doesn't love kids! Adopt or become a foster parent. Become a mentor. Volunteer at a school. You'll be amazed how you will seem to benefit more than the child whose life you impact!
- **Be An Ambassador of Christ:** I hope their life is somehow enhanced after each interaction because Christ was reflected in my actions and words. Live a life pleasing to Christ every day, and you'll bless others without even knowing it. Strive to suspend judgment (not our job anyway) while modeling and encouraging others to walk as Jesus walked.
- **Pray for Your Neighbors:** "Ooh chile, I'll be praying for you." Have you heard that or made that statement before? We often say it to avoid committing to doing more or to get out of having to listen any longer. This is not the type of praying I'm speaking of. I'm talking about that sincere, prolonged praying that makes a difference. I'm talking about the prayer that has you on your knees 'til they're ashy and achy. I'm talking about the prayer that transforms lives! Set aside time daily to bring the petition of others before the Lord. Keep a prayer journal where you can record specific requests of others, and document answered prayers. And while you're praying for others, pray that God gives you a heart like His and that He will equip you to love as He's asked you to love.

### Reflections

- How does 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5 speak to you?
- How can you more intentionally love your neighbors (or those in your family, at work or church)?
- What are your personal LIFE Lessons?

- **Liberation:** What new insights have you gained that have freed you from past thoughts or practices?
- **Inspiration:** In what ways have you been spiritually, emotionally or mentally motivated to live for Christ?
- **Fortification:** What additional scriptural texts, passages or stories can reinforce and strengthen you against the attacks of the enemy?
- **Edification:** How might you share your story to edify others and bring glory to God?

### **Playlist**

As you process, digest, and apply what's been shared, here are a couple of songs from my "Got Me Through on the Boat" Playlist. Listen and allow the music infiltrate your soul. Read the lyrics and let the words encourage you. And I pray that you'll be blessed as I was.

Count on Me by Whitney Houston — [Whitney Houston, CeCe Winans — Count On Me \(Official HD Video\)](#)

I Need You to Survive by Hezekiah Walker — [Hezekiah Walker: I need you to Survive \\*Lyrics\\*](#)

### **Prayer**

Dear Heavenly Father, help me be an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity (I Timothy 4:12). Help me put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, malice, and evil speaking. Help me be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving of others, just as You Oh God in Christ has forgiven me (Ephesians 4:31-32). Establish the work of my hands (Psalm 90:17) and show me how to encourage others towards love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25). Help me please my neighbors and build them up for their good (Romans 15:12). In Your most holy name Jesus, I pray, Amen.

# Be Enlightened — SOS

Thanks so much for continuing with me along my adventure aboard the Zaandam and Rotterdam cruise ships, from March 7th to April 4th, 2020. This is a continuation of the lessons learned and of God's interventions, His revelations, His sustaining power, as well as the miracles He performed during my voyage.

In the previous LIFE study, All Hands on Deck, I shared our gratefulness towards everyone who encouraged, supported and prayed for us. And while we were doing fine, we were going out of our minds. Our situation was serious, but it was beginning to feel like we were living a scene from the movie Titanic. You remember the scene when the ship was sinking, yet the orchestra played on. I get that the crew was trying to maintain some semblance of normalcy. Still, I didn't know if I could endure one more minute of the entertainment team and their chair aerobics, Name That Tune, and the Daily Newsletters (which was a repeat of the day before since every day was the same day lost at sea)! And I absolutely wanted to do bodily harm to the captain. We dreaded hearing those words, "This is your captain speaking." Most times, it was bad news. Once, he actually came on television dressed like Captain Crunch offering champagne toasts as his welcome aboard the Rotterdam. We didn't want champagne. We didn't want to play games. We just wanted to get off the boat! Yes, it sounds like another temper tantrum, and it was. Seriously. I had another full-fledged temper tantrum. "Waaaaa!" "I wanna get off da boat!" "I wanna go home!"

## Scripture

Psalm 137:1-4 — By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?

Colossians 3:2 — Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

## Lessons Learned

Derrick and I were ready to get off the ship. But with each passing day, home seemed further and further away. And while we worked to keep our spirits up and keep "faithing it" until we made it home, it was hard at times. But what God taught me was that my struggle to cope was so much harder because my homesickness was misplaced. Like the Children of Israel who were unable to sing the Lord's song in a strange land, we too found it difficult to "sing the Lord's songs in a strange land" because we were focused on worldly things. I was longing for my physical house and all of the comforts it held. I longed to be on stable ground, where things were safe and secure. I was homesick for Meatless Mondays and Taco Tuesdays. I missed my children and my friends. I wanted to visit with family, and I even missed teaching Methods of Teaching Mathematics (another story for another day). But none of these things were permanent, and none of these things could save me.

The home that we needed to keep front and center is our heavenly home. With heaven in our view, nothing else matters — being shipwrecked, lonely, or bored, storms, illness, financial struggles, homelessness, pain, joblessness, 50th birthday celebrations, bucket lists fulfilled, or death — none of it matters in the light of the promises of eternal life.



## Lessons Lived

In order to be heavenly-minded, you have to first:

- **Put to death the things of the world.** The Bible makes it clear, so I'll let it speak for itself. "Put to death, therefore, the components of your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience. When you lived among them, you also used to walk in these ways. But now you must put aside all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips." – Colossians 3:5-8
- **Set your mind on things above.** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable — if there is any moral excellence and if there is any praise — dwell on these things — Philippians 4:8
- **Surround yourself with the things of God.** Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. – Colossians 3:16
- **Accept God's gift of salvation.** If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed from sin — Romans 6:5-7

## Reflections

- How do Psalms 137:1-4 and Colossians 3:2 speak to you?
- What things, people, or attitudes might you need to give up to have a renewed heart and mind? What steps can you take to let them go?
- What are your personal LIFE Lessons?
  - **Liberation:** What new insights have you gained that have freed you from past thoughts or practices?
  - **Inspiration:** In what ways have you been spiritually, emotionally or mentally motivated to live for Christ?
  - **Fortification:** What additional scriptural texts, passages or stories can reinforce and strengthen you against the attacks of the enemy?
  - **Edification:** How might you share your story to edify others and bring glory to God?

## Playlist

As you process, digest, and apply what's been shared, here are a couple of songs from my "Got Me Through on the Boat" Playlist. Listen and allow the music infiltrate your soul. Read the lyrics and let the words encourage you. And I pray that you'll be blessed as I was.

- No More Night by David Phelps — [David Phelps — No More Night \(Live\)](#)
- I Can Only Imagine by MercyMe — [MercyMe — I Can Only Imagine \(Official Music Video\)](#)

## Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, Set my mind on heavenly things and help me to see my life from your heavenly perspective. Help me not become like the world. I pray that I am transformed by the renewing of my mind that I may learn to understand Your will for my life, which is good and pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:2). I thank You for my spiritual transformation, help me be renewed every day, with heaven in my view always. In Your most holy name Jesus, I pray, Amen.

# Be Enlightened — There's No Place Like Home

Thanks so much for continuing with me along my adventure aboard the Zaandam and Rotterdam cruise ships, from March 7th to April 4th, 2020. This is a continuation of the lessons learned and of God's interventions, His revelations, His sustaining power, as well as the miracles He performed during my voyage.

In the previous LIFE study, SOS, I shared how we were going crazy from boredom and growing less confident in seeing home again. And then we heard these words..."This is your captain speaking. Good news. We are headed to Florida, and we have been granted permission to dock at the port in Fort Lauderdale. We should be docking in two days, and you will then be able to begin your journey home." Okay, I could have kissed the captain (I know, I know. Last lesson I wanted to kill the captain. No wonder Derrick's theme song for me is "Your Crazy Is Beautiful to Me." Yet another lesson for another day). Sorry. I digressed. We were going home!!

We just had a few more days to go! We had to make a clandestine crossing through the Panama Canal (So that was scary. All the lights had to be off. We weren't supposed to look out the windows, although Derrick and I couldn't resist. And when we saw the men with rifles on the wall, we shut those curtains real quick). We had to make new flight reservations. We had to pack. We had to update our family and friends. We had to give President Trump his props (Yes, even writing that hurt. But he convinced the governor of Florida to let us disembark when no other country would. And God did use all kinds of kings to accomplish his purposes. Just read about Saul and Nebuchadnezzar). Sorry, I digressed again. We had to get another health screening and clearance (I was pushing ice chips and Tylenol and threatening Derrick that he'd better not cough or look sick cause we needed to get off this boat)! And I danced it out to songs about home (Leaving on a Jet Plane (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SneCkM0bJqQ>), I Wish I Were Home ([The Wiz \(8/8\) Movie CLIP — Home \(1978\) HD](#)), Take Me Home ([John Denver — Take Me Home, Country Roads \(Audio\)](#)) and Coming Home ([Gwyneth Paltrow — Coming Home \(Country Strong OST\)](#)) like nobody was watching!

I can't even tell you how joyous it was to walk off the ship for the final time. One of the stipulations of disembarking in Fort Lauderdale was that we'd go directly from the ship to a bus, which then drove us to a private runway, where we boarded a chartered plane, to then be flown to Atlanta. We were a motley crew, to say the least. We were pale. Some had difficulty standing. Many wept. Others cried out, "Thank You, Jesus." And a few fell to their knees and kissed the ground.

When we walked through the front door of 647 Riverside Drive, we just stood and stared. We were so overwhelmed and overjoyed. We were in awe of God and His goodness. And we could say with certainty that there was no place like home.

## Scripture

Deuteronomy 31:8 – And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.

## Lessons Learned

I liken our journey to that of Abraham's. Sure Abraham is known as the Father of Faith. But his journey didn't begin that way. Abraham grew over time in relationship and trust with God (read Genesis 12-25).

And this growth and transformation were evidenced in the names He gave God. Along Abraham's journey, He grew to know God as:

- **Yahweh** — Before the experiences, Abraham knew God as Yahweh, a name primarily used out of respect for its sacredness (Genesis 12).
- **Deliverer** — Melchizedek, in His blessing, accredited God as Abram's deliverer. Abraham was beginning to know God because of personal experiences (Genesis 14:20).
- **Elohim** — God as "Creator, Mighty and Strong" (Genesis 14:22).
- **His shield and great reward** — God identified Himself as this to Abraham (Genesis 15:1).
- **Redeemer** — God identified Himself as this to Abraham (Genesis 15:7).
- **El Shaddai** — God Almighty — This is a name meant to establish God's power on earth, over nature, and in the life of Abram and Sarai. He also showed Himself still as mighty even after "Hagar" (Genesis 17:1).
- **Adonai** — "My Lord, personal, mighty, sovereign" (Genesis 18:3).
- **Merciful** — The Lord saved Lot (Genesis 19:27-29).
- **A Promise Keeper/One Who Makes Me Laugh** — This is revealed in the naming of Isaac (Genesis 21:6-7).
- **Everlasting God** — "From everlasting to everlasting, You are God." This name signifies God's nature which is without beginning or end, free from all time constraints. (Genesis 21:33).
- **Jehovah Jireh** — "The Lord Will Provide" — This name was given by Abraham when God provided a ram to be sacrificed in place of Isaac ([Genesis 22:14](#)).
- **El Shaddai — My Faithful God** — God appears to Abraham as Sovereign God or God Almighty, the God for Whom nothing is impossible (Genesis 24:7).

### Lessons Lived

We need to develop a trusting, faithful and intimate relationship with God just like Abraham did. Just like Derrick and I are doing. The names given to God reflected His holiness and power and represented an intimate and meaningful experience or encounter with Him. We need to know and rely on the power of God. We need to walk with Him, grow with Him, lean on Him and trust Him. Often we don't consider the possibility of the miraculous because we put God in our small, cramped boxes of humanity. We question, we doubt, and we shy away from even asking for the desires of our heart-healing, deliverance, chains broken, children returned within the fold, a safe voyage home. But it's in the impossible that God usually shows His glory, His power and His love for us. Just because God hasn't fulfilled His promises yet, doesn't mean that He will not. Neither circumstances nor time can deplete God's promises of their power. It just may mean that sometimes we have to wait with patience and in faith. Come to know God's promises for yourself. He promises never to leave you nor forsake you. Derrick and I know that to be true. Won't you trust Him today?

### Reflections

- How does Deuteronomy 31:8 speak to you?
- How do the varying names of God speak to You?
- Abraham is known as the Father of Faith, but he didn't start that way. He began as Abram. God changed his name to Abraham. What's the name that God has for you? You may not be there now, but how can you get there?
- What are your personal LIFE Lessons?
  - **Liberation:** What new insights have you gained that have freed you from past thoughts or practices?

- **Inspiration:** In what ways have you been spiritually, emotionally or mentally motivated to live for Christ?
- **Fortification:** What additional scriptural texts, passages or stories can reinforce and strengthen you against the attacks of the enemy?
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### Playlist

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- Home by Chris Tomlin — [Home by Chris Tomlin \(Lyric Video\) | Christian Worship Music](#)
- Won't He Do It by Koryn Hawthorne — [Koryn Hawthorne — Won't He Do It \(Official Music Video\)](#)
- We've Come This Far By Faith by Donnie McClurkin — [Donnie McClurkin — We've Come This Far By Faith/I Will Trust In The Lord](#)

### Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I come before with singing and shouts of joy for being my rock, my deliverer and my salvation. I come in Your presence with thanksgiving; for You, my Lord, are a great God, and a great King above all kings (Ps. 95:1-3). I offer you my praise and my thanksgiving; for without You, I wouldn't have made it. Father, I bless Your holy name! You're a good, good Father, and Your steadfast love and faithfulness endures forever to all generations (Ps. 100:4-5). I will give thanks to You, my Lord, with all my heart, and I will tell of all your wonderful deeds so that Your work in my life will serve as a reflection of You, drawing all men unto Thee (Ps. 9:1). If I had ten thousand tongues, I couldn't praise You enough! Thank You, Father. Thank You. In Your most holy name Jesus, I pray, Amen.

# Be Empowered

*The Rock The Boat LIFE Lessons* provided you the opportunity to examine God's Word regarding the themes of fear, trust, and peace through my "stormy life" experience. Now, it's your turn.

## **So What's Your Story?**

Write or tell a story about a crisis or "storm" you've experienced in your life similar to the disciples when they were on boat during the storm with Jesus (Mark 4:35-41). Write from "your boat in the storm" and describe the storm, your feelings, your thoughts, and the dialogue with the others in "your boat" as well as your encounter with Jesus.