

# WHO Cares?

November 20 & 21: When I'm Afraid  
Leader's Guide

## Series Overview

Do you ever ask yourself, "Does anyone really care about me and what I'm going through?" This series explores ways God walks with us even when we feel alone. In the midst of life's struggles, it is possible to experience peace, support and hope.



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## Sermon Highlights

*Job 1:1-4, 7-22*

Since we all live in what is called a "fallen world," each of us has to face difficulties and struggles. Our storms vary in intensity and duration. Some may be going through a relational storm. Financial storms are beating down on some because of the present economy. There are marital storms.

We all go through storms, and we have to deal with them when they come. To properly deal with the storms of life, we must:

### 1. Expect storms to come.

Storms are a part of life. Sometimes we see them off in the distance—thunderclouds forming. Other times they come up instantly and from out of the blue. Sometimes the storms we face are caused by poor choices and bad decisions that we make. However they get here, storms will come. Jesus tells us this Himself.

*John 16:33, In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*

*Matthew 5:45, He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

### 2. Expect benefits from your storm.

*James 1:2-4, <sup>2</sup>Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup>Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

Storms have a purging and purifying effect. If we remain faithful and expectant, we will see benefits from the struggles we face.

*Romans 5:3-4, <sup>3</sup>Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup>perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

Although it is tough at the time, many could testify that the storm was one of the best things that could have happened to them.

### 3. Keep focused.

*Job 38:1-13; Mark 4:35-41*

Jesus doesn't promise to always take us out of the storm, but He has promised to go with us through it, even the storm in the valley of the shadow of death. When you're dealing with the storms of life, Jesus says, "Do not be afraid." He cares for you.

## On being afraid...

- God in the flesh is the end of fear; and the heart that realizes that He is in the midst will be quiet in the middle of alarm. –F.B. Meyer
- *Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. –Isaiah 41:10*



## Take it home ... Practical Applications

Maybe someone you know is in the midst of a life-storm right now. In your time alone with God, ask Him how you can be a testimony of the love and care of Christ to that person. If you are going through the storm yourself, ask God to surround you with people who will help you to see God's work in your life in this difficult time.



## Take it to the source ... Bible Study

**Introductory question:** What is your strangest fear or phobia? Spiders? Snakes? Stuffed penguins? Why?

### Opening Thought

Every one of us has times when we are afraid. There are many things that can cause us to fear or be uncertain about our lives, our relationships or our future. Use this question to get your group thinking about what makes them afraid, what causes them to be uncertain and how rational or irrational those fears are.

### Read *Job 1:1-4, 7-22*.

1. Have you been through any experiences in your life that can help you relate to Job? How? Why?
2. What would be your response be if you lost nearly everything that was important or dear to you?
3. Verse 20 says that after Job heard all this bad news, he fell on the ground and worshiped. What does this do to your idea of what worship is? What do you think your worship would look like in a situation like that?
4. If you had been a friend of Job's, or a member of Job's small group, how would you have responded to the storms in his life at that time?

### Key Point

Job's situation is certainly not the norm. This guy had it all happen in a very short span of time. But even in the midst of all the tragedy that surrounded him, Job was able to worship. He kept his eyes on God. Help your group to think about their own response in the face of trial and difficulty, not only in their lives, but in the lives of those around them.

### Read *James 1:2-4* and *Romans 5:3-5*.

1. Do you think James is being realistic about the trials of life? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever had a time of difficulty in your life that actually helped you to grow in your relationship with God? In what area of your spiritual life did you grow the most?
3. Do you trust God to produce meaning from the miseries of life? How might a deep trust in God produce joy, knowing that God is in control, even in the midst of difficulties and hardship?
4. Why do storms help us in gaining maturity in our spiritual lives? How much of it depends on how we face the situation?

### Key Point

Rejoicing in the midst of trials is not something that most of us do. We find it hard to be grateful and count it pure joy that we're going through really hard times. But *James* says that God uses times like this to develop character and perseverance and the ability to stick with it when the going gets tough. Because of that, we can rejoice that God is doing that kind of work in us. God doesn't cause the problems, but He does use them to help us grow and develop spiritually. Being glad about this means that we trust God even when we don't fully understand what's going on. It may not always be immediately evident, but God brings meaning out of misery and actually uses those hard times to make us more and more like Him.

**Read Job 38:1-39:30 and Mark 4:35-41.**

1. What do the two chapters of *Job* say to you about God? How often do you take a moment to think of the awesome majesty of God and the fact that He is in control of all things?
2. How does the story about Jesus calming the storm speak to you? Would you say you trust Him to calm the storms in your own life? Why or why not?
3. Do you ever feel like there are times when Jesus is asleep in your life? How do you respond to that?
4. What does the fact that Jesus was sleeping peacefully say about His trust in God, even in the middle of a storm? What things could you do to develop that kind of peace and confidence in God in your own life?
5. How can your small group help each other to have a sense of the presence of God in your lives, even in the midst of the worst storms?

**Key Point**

The presence of God in our lives should give us a sense of peace and rest, even in the middle of the most difficult of times. His work in our situations may not always be obvious, but we can trust that He is with us and that He is working all things to our good. Seeing God in all His greatness helps us to trust Him more. This helps us make sense of the good times and the bad times that come our way.

**SPECIAL NOTE:**

There will be no study guide next week. We encourage your small group to get involved in some kind of community outreach project or take some time to reflect on what it means to be thankful for all that God has done in your lives during the past year.

**Notes...**



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*All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.*

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