

STORM WATCH (1): STORM WARNING

XP3

BOTTOM LINE: EVEN DURING THE STORMS, GOD IS IN CONTROL.

INTRODUCTION

It's unavoidable—every one of us goes through storms. Sometimes the storms are big and cause lots of damage. Sometimes they rumble through and then they are gone. So if a storm is going to happen—whether it's a death, a diagnosis, a divorce, or a breakup—how do you weather the storm? What do you hold on to when the storm hits?



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STATEMENT OF FAITH

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ABOUT GOD

God is the one and only true God, yet He exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God is the Creator, so everything belongs to Him and is under His control. God is holy, so He is righteous, majestic and loving. God is all knowing and purposeful, so He's at work to bring about His will. No person, thing or idea compares to God.

ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES

God reveals Himself to us through the Bible, and it is 100% accurate, reliable and authoritative.

ABOUT PEOPLE

People are made in God's image and for His pleasure. But everybody falls short of God's intention, or ideal, for people. In other words, everyone has sinned. As a result, we are all separated from Him, even though He wants an intimate relationship with each of us.

ABOUT SALVATION

That's why Jesus, God's Son, came and lived on this earth, died and rose again. God offers His free gift of salvation to all who believe in Jesus and accept Him as Savior, the only way to be forgiven and reconciled to God. Anyone who accepts this gift is adopted as a son or daughter into God's family and will live with Him forever in heaven.

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STORM WATCH (1): CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT

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We believe that the set, stage, music and everything in your room communicates a message—without you saying a word. That's why we put together a list of production ideas to help you set the stage for the session and the series. From the music you play when students come into the room to the worship set your band plays, we want to make sure that your room conveys "Storm Watch" in a multi-sensory way. There is a downloadable checklist available in your series downloads that will give you all the elements for this session (and the entire series).

BACKGROUND PLAYLIST FOR THE STORM WATCH SERIES

"Apologize" by OneRepublic (from *Dreaming Out Loud*)
"S.O.S." by Jonas Brothers (from *Jonas Brothers*)
"Brighter Than Sunshine" by Aqualung (from *Strange & Beautiful*)
"Bring The Rain" by MercyMe (from *Coming Up To Breathe*)
"Boston" by Augustana (from *All the Stars and Boulevards*)
"Somewhere Over the Rainbow" by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole (from *Alone in IZ World*)
"Sitting, Waiting, Wishing" by Jack Johnson (from *In Between Dreams*)
"Soak Up The Sun" by Sheryl Crow (from *C'mon C'mon*)
"The Shadow Proves the Sunshine" by Switchfoot (from *Nothing Is Sound*)
"Island In The Sun" by Weezer (from *The Green Album*)

WORSHIP PLAYLIST FOR STORM WATCH SESSION 1

"Praise You In The Storm" by Casting Crowns (from *LifeSong*)
"Deliver Me" by David Crowder Band (from *Illuminate*)
"Everything Glorious" by David Crowder Band (from *Remedy*)
"Til I See You" by Hillsong United (from *Look to You*)

THE SET

Create a set that looks as if a storm has blown through. Ask a local builder if you could have any damaged doors and windows. Attach half a chair to the wall so that it appears as if the other half has gone through the wall. Scatter paper, clothes, books across the floor. Go online to iTunes and type in the search word "storm sounds" to download sound effects for the room. Make sure you leave room on the wall to post the storm stories that are a part of this month's XP.

SERIES ART

Art for PowerPoint backgrounds and for series promotional ads is available as a free download with every series. Visit the XP3 web site, log on to your account and download the images to use in your presentation, newsletters and web site.

VIDEO

Three session videos and a video bumper are available for the Storm Watch series as a video download from the reThink store. You can purchase the videos by logging into your XP3 account and clicking on the "purchase videos" link. The Storm Watch session video contains three storm stories that are to be used in each of the three sessions of the Storm Watch series. We suggest you play the Storm Watch bumper video before the designated Storm session video. Then the communicator speaks after the Storm session video. This is the order for each session.

The bumper video was created to be used as an intro for all three sessions of the Storm Watch series.

STORM WATCH (1): MIDDLE SCHOOL ADAPTATION

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The following activities and illustrations will help middle schoolers connect with the subject matter in ways that engage them physically, mentally, socially and sometimes emotionally.

GAME: WHEEL OF TORTURE (Play this game as an icebreaker to Session 1.)

Build a spinning wheel similar to the one on "Wheel of Fortune." You could make it vertical or put it on a wall so the students can see it better. Instead of putting dollar amounts on each slot like on the game show, write in different challenges for students to accomplish. Select your contestants and let them spin the wheel to determine their challenge. Give a small prize to each student who completes the challenge.

Here are a few examples:

Baby Food	Eat a jar of baby food in 30 seconds.
Macarena	Do the Macarena in front of everybody.
Shoe Lick	Lick the bottom of someone's shoe heel to toe.
Sock Soda	Place a used sock over a soda and drink through the toe.
Clothespins	Attach 20 clothespins to your face in one minute.
Diaper Dive	Eat chocolate pudding out of a diaper.
Broom Balance	Balance a broom on your forehead for 15 seconds.
Inside Out	Wear your clothes inside out for the rest of the program.

If you don't have the resources to build a wheel, you could also cover a dartboard with the challenges, and have students perform challenges based on where their dart lands.

ILLUSTRATION: WHEEL OF MISFORTUNE

The introduction to this lesson tells us that we are not in control over the events of our lives. We all experience "storms." Use the same wheel you built for the "Wheel of Torture" game. You can either flip the wheel over or put new words on your wheel. Here are a few examples that you could mention as you talk through point "B" in the introduction section of the teaching script.

- Parents Get Divorced
- Sickness or Death
- Bad Breakup
- Bad Grades
- Move Away
- Natural Disaster
- False Rumors About You
- Didn't Make the Cut

TEACHING SCRIPT

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The teaching script is divided into five sections.

INTRODUCTION

This introduction is intended to connect you, the communicator, to the audience usually through a personal story or observation. We've included our stories, but you may want to substitute your own story in this section.

TENSION

The tension moves the message from the "me" mentality of the introduction to a "we" mentality. For example, a transition statement might be, "At some point in our lives, we have all been jealous of someone over something."

TRUTH

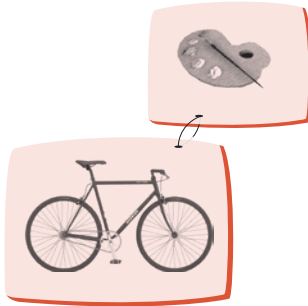
Once the tension builds, the next logical step is to uncover the truth of what the Bible says about the topic.

APPLICATION

At this point, the message moves to a "you" mentality in order to teach the application. The "you" is the student. Take God's truth and unpack how it relates to each student so that he or she can apply it to everyday life.

LANDING

Here it is important to land the message on what each student needs to know and do with what they've heard. Just as the message began with a personal story or observation, the message also ends with a "me" mentality. For example, one possible landing statement might be, "I have a greater sense of purpose knowing that God created me in His image." Leave the students with a clear sense of what all of you should do with what you've heard. Unless otherwise noted, the landing will always set up the small group dialog and give students an opportunity to process and internalize what they've heard.



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TEACHING
OUTLINE

PG. 1

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BOTTOM LINE: EVEN DURING THE STORMS, GOD IS IN CONTROL.

INTRODUCTION

We all face situations where we are out of control.

Three situations everyone faces:

- You are currently in the middle of a storm
- A storm is coming and you don't know about it
- You are just walking away from a storm that has blown through

TENSION

We all face storms.

"In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33 NIV).

"He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45 NKJV).

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground (Genesis 2:4-6 NIV).

Storms are both inevitable and unavoidable.

TRUTH

Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" (Matthew 8:24-27 NIV).

But the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:24-31 NIV).

APPLICATION

Jesus is in control during the storm; the storm isn't in control.

Who is in control during the storm is important.

LANDING

God is bigger than the storm.

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TEACHING
SCRIPT

PG. 1

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BOTTOM LINE: EVEN DURING THE STORMS, GOD IS IN CONTROL.

INTRODUCTION

[NOTE: The Storm Watch session video #1 is a great introduction to this session. We suggest showing the bumper, then Kristen's story, then start teaching the script. For more information about the video, visit www.therethinkstore.org.]

A. A few months ago, I was on an airplane flying overseas. If I can be really honest, I don't particularly love to fly. I like the convenience of getting to your destination faster, but the headache of traveling often leaves me feeling a little uneasy. On this particular flight, we experienced some severe turbulence due to a storm. The plane would jerk up and then drop without warning. On one specific jerk upward, the Diet Coke® I was drinking squirted through my nose as my heart dropped to my toes. In that moment, I was scared. I wondered, "Is this how it's going to end?"

I think what made this even scarier was the fact that there was not one thing I could do to change the situation. I couldn't make the storm stop. I couldn't control the turbulence. I couldn't even fly the plane. All I could do was simply sit there and hope I made it through. I had absolutely no control over anything that was going on. The only thing I could do, or at least try to do, was to keep my fear in check so I wouldn't have a fear-induced meltdown there on the plane—like in the movies where someone would have to slap me on the face and say, "Get a grip."

On that flight, no matter how tightly I grabbed the hand of the person next to me (fortunately it was someone I knew), we still went through the storm. And over and over in my head, I kept thinking how glad I would be to get my feet safely back on the ground.

B. The thing about life is that we all face situations where we are out of control, storms we go through that make us feel helpless, scared or even mad. These are situations we would never choose to be in if we could control everything.

Sometimes it's as simple as airplane turbulence, but sometimes it looks more like a breakup you didn't see coming or a team list that doesn't have your name on it. Sometimes it's your parents' divorce or remarriage, or the death of someone close to you. Life brings all kinds of storms. And everyone is in one of three situations:

- You are currently in the middle of a storm,
- A storm is coming and you don't know about it,
- Or you are just walking away from a storm that has blown through.

A storm is something that comes when you least expect it. You have no control over it, and it can easily make a mess of everything around you, leaving debris everywhere.

TENSION

A. The most obvious thing about storms is the fact that they happen. Meteorologists can track storms. They can try to predict what they will do. A darkening sky or falling rain hints that they are coming. But even

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TEACHING
SCRIPT

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with the warning we may or may not have, we have no control over storms. They happen to all of us.

- B. The same is true of life. Storms hit and remind us just how hard things can get. Even Jesus said, *“In this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33 NIV)*. Not exactly the “sunshine and lollipops” view of life, but then reality is brutal sometimes, isn’t it? Jesus also said no one escapes the storms, even if you’re one of His followers: *“He makes His sun rise on the **evil** and on the **good**, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45 NKJV, emphasis added)*.
- C. Things weren’t always that way. In Eden, there were no storms. It didn’t even rain. The Bible says: *When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground (Genesis 2:4-6 NIV)*. But when sin entered the world through Adam and Eve’s disobedience, so did storms—and hardships, pain, disease, even death. Elements of our world that we would just call “life.”
- D. So if storms are both inevitable and unavoidable, then the question we all must ask when facing a storm is, “If I’m not in control, then who is? Whom can I look to in the midst of this storm?” When the doctor gives a scary diagnosis to you or a friend or a parent, life feels like you are caught in the winds of hurricane. Down is up and up is down. When a parent leaves you and a household of emotional debris to start a new life, things don’t make sense, do they? When something you hoped for, dreamed about, and worked hard at doesn’t happen, you’re left with questions and confusion.
- E. You can choose good old American self-reliance and trust in yourself to get through it. After all, if you can’t count on anyone else, then you have to do it yourself, right? Or maybe there’s a group of friends or a parent you could lean into to help see you through. Which is great—we all need people around us cheering us on and encouraging us. But even then, there’s a limit to what they can do and say to help you endure the storm. There’s a point when even their insights, words and actions will fall short.
- F. Storms will come into your life. It’s not a matter of if—it’s when. And when they do, what are you going to hold on to? Where are you going to go?

TRUTH

- A. Storms have been going on for a long time. When we open up the Bible to Matthew 8, we find the disciples and Jesus caught in the middle of a storm—literally. And if you think being up in an airplane in the middle of a storm is bad, these guys were on a fishing boat in the water! The Bible has a special way of using very few words to say a lot. Check out this description of the storm:

“Without warning a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat” (Matthew 8:24 NIV).

The storm was furious. The waves swept over the boat. This was more than a steady rain. This was a shaking-the-boat, we’re-going-to-die kind of storm. The disciples were completely out of control and they knew it.

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- B. Now Jesus was on the boat, and the disciples had recently heard Him preach the Sermon on the Mount. They saw Him heal sick people and cast out demons. They knew He could do things that went beyond their abilities. They knew He was capable of mind-blowing, reality-bending things. But according to the last part of verse 24, Jesus was asleep in the middle of the storm.

Prior to getting in the boat, the disciples had been impressed with Jesus, but tonight they panicked! All of the things they had seen Jesus do were great, and He really helped a lot of people. But this storm, this scary moment was personal. Everything could end right here.

I have to think that if I were on a small fishing boat with waves of water sweeping over me as the boat rocked and pitched violently in the wind, I would have been afraid too. I might have even been angry with Jesus for getting on the boat and putting us in this scenario in the first place.

- C. The disciples knew Jesus was capable of amazing things, but when things turned personal, when it seemed like Jesus was disconnected from something they needed at this moment, they feared the worst.

I've been in the boat, have you? I've read about all the awesome things that Jesus did in the Bible. I've even heard people tell stories of how God provided for them, healed them, restored them. But when it comes to my life and the people in it, sometimes it seems as if Jesus is asleep. Sometimes it seems like those miracles, those events are for everyone but me, and the tough situations that come into my life are ones I have to face alone. Sometimes I wonder if Jesus is asleep in my boat, even though I know the Bible promises that He is with me.

- D. The disciples decided it was time to wake Jesus up.
The disciples went and woke him saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" (Matthew 8:25 NIV).

Do you hear the panic in their voices? In this moment they weren't thinking about Jesus as the wise teacher who taught them to love their enemies. They weren't thinking about Jesus as the Perfect One, the Miracle Worker who had healed a man with leprosy. They were desperate. They were worried about themselves and their situation. They felt out of control.

- E. It's not the last time Jesus has been approached with that kind of desperation. It's not the last time someone has come to Him with that sense of urgency, pleading, "If You don't do something, things are going to get even worse." Some of us have been there too, haven't we?

When life gets hard, when life gets scary, don't we sometimes wonder, "God, are you going to do something?" Don't we secretly wonder if He's too busy taking care of everyone else to help us out? Don't we sometimes think that even though we feel lost or hurt or scared, maybe God doesn't think it's that important?

- F. But He's still in control.

He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the

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waves, and it was completely calm (Matthew 8:26 NIV).

Notice the words the Bible uses here. Jesus replied to the disciples, but He rebuked the winds and the waves. Jesus knows that from our perspective, the storm looks big. The divorce, the heartache, the illness, the death—it's overwhelming. And sometimes our faith is very small. We know that God can do amazing things; we're just not sure He's going to come through for us. We're scared that He's forgotten. We're scared that He's asleep.

But regardless of how we feel or what we see, Jesus is in control.

- G. When Jesus had stopped the raging storm, the disciples were left standing on the boat in the middle of a calm that had to be almost equally terrifying. The Bible says they turned to each other *amazed and asked*, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and waves obey him!" (v. 27 NIV).

This man who seemed to be able to provide what everyone else needed suddenly provided for them. Jesus' miracles become personal. It wasn't just what He could do for everyone else; it was about what He did for them.

- H. Now, I wasn't there, and I cannot say what moments impacted the disciples most. But I imagine that this was one of the more defining moments in their lives. They had been in one of those unexplainable situations where life is completely out of control and witnessed firsthand Jesus' ability to step in and change the course of events just by speaking. I'm certain they never looked at Him the same. This man could calm the wind and stop the waves!
- I. But that wasn't the only storm the disciples encountered. In Matthew 14:24, the disciples were back out on the water in the middle of some windy weather. This storm wasn't nearly as foreboding as the last, but the Bible tells us that the boat was *buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it*.

Here's how the story unfolds:

During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water" (vv. 25-28 NIV).

- J. What a crazy thing to say! Do you hear it? Peter must have known that people swim, float, bathe, drown and sink in water, but they do NOT walk on water. Can you imagine what was going through his head? It was like asking Jesus to make him fly. People just don't do that. Keep in mind that the water wasn't calm either. There was storm going on.
- K. I could be wrong, but I think Peter made his request because he had seen Jesus calm the storm. If this really was Jesus, then Peter knew anything was possible. The man who could speak and calm the waves could surely walk on them.
- L. So Jesus simply commanded Peter to move forward, And Peter got out of the boat. But here's the part of

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the story that just shows how human Peter was. Once he was out of the boat and started walking on the water toward Jesus, he took a second to glance around him. That's when he saw the wind out across the water and he became afraid again.

- M. He panicked when he took his eyes off Jesus, and that's when it happened. Peter started to sink. He *cried out*, "Lord, save me!" (v. 30 NIV).

Does that sound familiar? "Lord, save me!" is exactly what the disciples cried out in the last storm when they were focused on the wind and the waves. Now Peter was back in the same situation. And the panic in his voice betrayed his anxiety and his lack of trust. The story ends well. Jesus reached out His hand and caught Peter, saying, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (v.31).

Even if you know Jesus is in control, even if you believe in Him enough to step out, sometimes when we look around, the reality of what we see throws us off.

- N. What are you going through? What does your storm look like? Is it scary? Overwhelming? Does it seem like "the end" of your dreams, your life, your reputation, your sanity?

Life is hard. In this world, we will have trouble. But God is still in control.

APPLICATION

- A. If I walked around this room and asked, "Do you believe that God is in control even in the middle of people's storms?" Some of you would probably agree that He was. You know that. But it doesn't feel like it, does it?

What about when the storm is personal? What about when it is you who didn't get invited to the party or you who didn't make the team? What about when it is your parents who are splitting up? What about when it is your brother with cancer? Then what? Is God really in control then? Do you believe it not just with your head but also with your life?

Are you the kind of person who is willing to get out of the boat? While Peter wasn't perfect, his actions showed that he trusted God enough to get out of the boat. I've always wondered about the rest of the disciples in the boat. They must have wondered what it was like for Peter. You know they all wanted to try it, but they didn't.

- B. What would your life look like if you absolutely, without a doubt, 100-percent believed that God could be trusted? What would your relationships look like? How would you view school? Your parents? Your friendships? I know one thing for sure: Your experience in the middle of the storm would be insanely different.
- C. The disciples discovered that Jesus was in control; the storm wasn't in control. What types of storms are going on in your life? Is there a friendship that turned ugly? A change in your family's income? A move? A diagnosis? A breakup? All of those very real, very hard situations are the wind and the waves. But Jesus is bigger than the storm. If you believed God is always in control—no matter what—how would this change how you view the storms that come into your life?

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D. You see, who is in control when the storm hits is so important. In fact, when you are in the middle of the storm, it is worth everything to know that God hasn't left, hasn't abandoned you, and hasn't turned His watchful eye. Instead, you can know that He is there in the storm.

LANDING

- A. We said at the beginning of this session that every one of us is in one of three places:
- You are currently in the middle of a storm,
 - A storm is coming and you don't know about it,
 - Or you are just walking away from a storm that has blown through.

Are you going through a hard time in your life? Whatever it is, if it's big to you, if it feels like the waves are crashing in and you are scared or overwhelmed, you're not alone.

- B. In a minute, we're going to break off into our small groups. If you feel comfortable, share with the group what the storms are in your life. And if you're listening to someone share their story, just listen—today is not about providing solutions or answers. Today is about people acknowledging that there is a storm. Today is about saying that what is going on in my life is bigger than me and everything is out of my control. Today is about acknowledging the God who is bigger than the storm, and realizing that while He does care for everyone else—He also cares about you.

(Note: Make sure there are enough adults present to talk with students, and that your students feel like it's okay to talk about the storms going on in their lives.)

[TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS]

SMALL GROUP DIALOG: STORM WATCH

STORM WARNING

WEEK 1

XP3-

BOTTOM LINE: EVEN DURING THE STORMS, GOD IS IN CONTROL.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: JOHN 16:33, MATTHEW 5:45; GENESIS 2:4-6; MATTHEW 8:24-27; JOHN 11:32; MATTHEW 14:22-33

Storms can be incredibly terrifying. We feel out of control, and we never know how much damage the storm is going to do. This week we are setting up a series that will take a look at the out-of-control, hard times we all face in life. Your goal this week is to help students begin to talk about the storms they have experienced. Let them see that everyone has storms.

You may be surprised this week to learn that a student is enduring something you may never have imagined. It may be something that you need to bring to the attention of your youth pastor so they can find professional help. Remember that your role is to listen and guide this student, advocate healthy relationships at home, and pray for the student throughout the week. You may not be able to fix the situation. But you can be present for him or her in the middle of the storm.

CREATE MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION. ADJUST QUESTIONS AS NEEDED, AND DON'T FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO ANSWER ALL OF THEM.

1. What did you think of the talk this week? What did you hear the speaker say?
2. Have you ever been in a tornado, hurricane, earthquake or really big storm? What happened?
3. What does it look like to "have a storm in your life"? Why is a "storm" a good description for those events?
4. Have you ever been through a difficult time that you would call a storm? What was it like?
5. The speaker said we are all in one of three places. Which one of these best describes you right now?
 - a. You are currently in the middle of a storm.
 - b. A storm is coming and you don't know about it.
 - c. Or you are just walking away from a storm that has blown through.
6. Would you say that you believe God is in control?
7. Do you feel like God is in control even in the middle of your storm?
8. Let's read John 16:33. How can this help us remember God is in control—even in the storms of life?
"I've told you all this so that trusting me, you will be unshakable and assured, deeply at peace. In this godless world you will continue to experience difficulties. But take heart! I've conquered the world"
(The Message)

NEXT STEP

Pay attention to the dynamic of your group, and choose a way to pray for each other that seems authentic and helpful. You may want to split into pairs, so the students can pray specifically for the storms in each other's lives. Or if you only have one or two students going through a storm, have the group divide and pray over them. Follow up this week with students who shared about a storm they are experiencing right now.

THE XP: STORM WATCH

STORM STORIES

XP3



Every one of us has either gone through a storm, is going through one now, or will be facing one eventually. Some of the storms that hit our lives are huge and leave a lot of debris. Others are smaller and create chaos for a short season. But regardless of the size of the storm, everyone has a storm story.

This XP is designed for students to do individually and/or in small groups. It is coordinated through the small group leader. Some students may require more time and thought to craft their storm stories; others may be able to write their stories during their small group time. Determine what would work best for the students in your group; then adapt this XP to fit your group.

STORM STORIES

Supplies: Storm Story sheet (located in the series extras for Storm Watch) and a pen. For students who prefer to type their stories, you can e-mail the downloadable Word doc to them and have them type their stories in the template.

The Plan: We all know what it is like to go through a storm, even if the storms we've been through look different than those others have experienced. Some of us have had someone close to us die. Others have faced storms that came through a diagnosis, a divorce or a parent losing a job. For others it's been the heartbreak of a relationship or the disappointment of not making the team. And sometimes the storms we face are the aftermath of the consequences of our choices.

When it comes to storms, we all fit in one of three categories:

- You are currently in the middle of a storm,
- A storm is coming and you don't know about it,
- Or you are just walking away from a storm that has blown through.

Being able to share your storm story with other people helps others know they're not alone, and that people do survive a storm. That is exactly what this XP is designed to do. Print out the "Storm Story" sheet (from the series extras downloads) and make copies for all your students.

During the small group time of Session 2, give students the opportunity to write out their personal storm story, or assign the story for them to write before Session 3. If you assign the stories, hand them a sheet and also e-mail the template to students this week. (Just keep in mind that there will be some students who will forget. To plan for that, you may also want to give students an opportunity to write their story in Session 3.)

Everyone's storms are different. Some students may still be in the middle of the storm. Encourage them that the storm doesn't always have a

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resolution or a lesson learned—knowing God is with us in the storm is sometimes the only thing we have to hang on to. (If they prefer, students can write their stories anonymously.)

Collect the papers in your small group time and use them to decorate the wall(s) of your youth room. This will allow students to encourage other students who may be going through the same thing. It will also serve as a way of remembering what God has done for them in the past so that when the next storm hits, they will be reminded of what God can do.

As students have the opportunity to read others' stories, they may discover more about our big God who is always in control.

CONTACT US

If you have any questions about this XP, you can contact the XP3 team at xp3@rethinkgroup.org. Also, we would love to see pictures and hear stories about how this XP impacted your group. E-mail us and let us know, or post a message on the XP3 Facebook fan page.

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[FOR STUDENT PASTOR]

The week before you begin Storm Watch, e-mail the parents of your students to inform them about the new series and what students will be discussing. This will help keep your parents in the know, and it will give them an opportunity to stay involved in their child's activities. You may also want to include updates or reminders about important upcoming events, registration deadlines, retreats or church projects. Attach pictures or links to your web site so that parents can see what is happening in your ministry. Use the e-mail to encourage your parents and celebrate each other's successes.

Copy and paste the following description into your e-mail to help convey the main goal of this series.

E-mail for parents:

STORM WATCH

Have you ever woken up to thunder so loud you thought the sky really was falling? Or maybe you have listened to the wind scream as it ripped through trees and knocked over fences? Storms can be scary. In the middle of a storm, we know that we are unbelievably out of control. But while physical storms may threaten and terrify us, there are other kinds of storms in life as well. There are storms that rip apart friendships and families. Storms that meet us in a hospital room on a sunny Saturday afternoon. Storms that creep up on so subtly we never saw them coming. Storms like these often leave us asking "Why God?" For the next three weeks we will be talking with your child about the inevitable storms of life and how we handle them.

Week One (include date)

The first week we are going to set up the series talking about the characteristics of physical storms and showing how they describe those moments in life when things go unexplainably out of control. We will look at the disciples who were afraid when their small boat was out on the water at night in the middle of a tremendous storm, and see how Jesus was never afraid because He knew the One who was in control. Students will be challenged to see that God is in control—even in the middle of the storm.

Week Two (include date)

"Why, God?" If you have ever said a prayer, it has probably been this one. "Why God" is a natural response when we are hurting. This week, students will learn that God is okay when we need to ask this question. While there may not be a very clear and rational answer, sometimes God uses the struggle to show us something about ourselves, about Himself, or to draw us into a closer relationship with Him.

Week Three (include date)

Have you ever noticed how tabloids and mainstream magazines always seem to capitalize on the difficult trials celebrities face. If a celebrity wanted more publicity, it seems like all they need is a good trip to rehab or a divorce or a custody battle. When people go through storms, the world pays attention. Something in us wants to see how other people handle the troubles life throws at them. This week we are going to look at the potential for influence that we all have when a storm hits, whether we want it or not.

PARENT CUE:

In this series we will be talking about some of life's most challenging situations. Your child may be taking a look at his or her life in a new way, and this may provide an opportunity to learn something new about their world, about their story. Try to find some time over the next few weeks to get away with your

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child for a few hours. Go some place they enjoy being, and see if you can become a student of your child. Let them teach you about their experiences. You may find an opportunity to share with your child about a storm you went through, but first make their story a priority. Understanding your child will take intentional listening.

Chap Clark is professor of youth, family, and culture at Fuller Theological Seminary and the father of three grown children. Here is what Chap recently had to say about the importance of *understanding* in the life of parenting a teenager.

“To understand, as the most foundational of all parenting roles, is to make sure that your child knows that you are absolutely, unequivocally committed to working hard at taking seriously the reality of your child’s life.”¹

¹ Clark, Chap and Dee Clark. *Disconnected: Parenting Teens in a MySpace World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007.