

Jane Jayroe

Strengthened by Storms

His way is in the whirlwind and the storm. ---Nahum 1:3

Springtime storms were as common as our red dirt when I was growing up in rural Oklahoma. A tornado could swoop down from a black sky and like a giant lawnmower, tear up a community in minutes. Often in the middle of the night, the threatening clouds caused the town's fire siren to pierce the air. Our safe spot was a cellar across the back alley.

Pulled from a warm bed, I pretended to be asleep so my daddy would carry me. Mother held sister's hand as we rushed out the kitchen door toward the neighbor's shelter. The wind slapped the pink Cinderella nightgown around my skinny legs and the stringy brown hair on my head blew about like one of those dirt devils that danced in our fields.

I tucked my head into daddy's neck. His one arm held me up while the other circled mother's shoulders. All was safe in my world---my daddy was carrying me.

Since those early days I have experienced different kinds of storms: the disturbance of a divorce and the despair that followed, the unrest of loneliness, the

downpour of fear, the turmoil of financial anxiety, cancer, insecurity, and the emptiness of loss.

I learned important lessons on my turbulent journey of faith:

1. *The storm passes.*

Measured in minutes or years---tough times don't last forever. We are promised in Psalm Twenty Three, that we walk "through" the valley of the shadow of death—we don't set up camp there.

2. *You're not alone.*

When the weather turns bad, there's nothing more comforting than the arms of the Father. In the light of today and distance of age, I know that my daddy *was* vulnerable. God is not. While we are not protected from every difficulty, *God always holds us close.*

3. *Share the cellar.*

As our family rushed through the stormy night, our neighbors always held the big storm shelter door open for us. Descending the concrete stairs, the musty smells greeted us before we clumped together on benches in that dark, dank space. The storm roared overhead. What would our world look like when the sound stopped? God only knew. But sharing the experience with friends lessened the ferocity of the situation.

Trouble will come just like bad weather. The experience can grow our faith muscles, teach us life lessons, and deepen our character, by the victorious grace of the Father.

Prayer: God, be big in our lives. When storms dump on us, wreck our plans and blot out the light, remind us that trouble always passes and faith filled friends can lighten our load. And if we become afraid and don't know where to find shelter, carry us in Your loving arms.

Thought for Today

God can pull us through the darkest hour.

Jane Jayroe is a former Miss America, television news anchor, and Oklahoma Cabinet Secretary of Tourism. She has co-authored an autobiography, "More Grace than Glamour," and "Oklahoma III."

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Edith's Story

She did what she could. ---Mark 14:8

Edith taught me a lot about joy generated from an attitude of service.

I met her on a sparkling spring day. My photographer and I drug our television equipment toward her house that was almost hidden behind other homes. We had come to this dumpy neighborhood to shoot a story for our series on volunteers. Our destination home was set back from the street and looked as though it had grown out of a garage. The structure was so small I worried that our equipment wouldn't fit within the walls.

The porch was sitting on the front of the house like a swollen lower lip and was decorated with wind chimes and saucers filled with cat food. Pots of flowers were scattered about. For a minute this felt like a fairy tale. Who was this woman we were meeting?

The door opened and my eyes dropped to meet Edith. She came to my waist even though we were of similar height. Edith suffered from arthritis and was so debilitated by it she couldn't stand. Her home was too small for a wheelchair so she had designed her own transportation: a piece of plywood on wheels with a pillow strapped on top. She

had folded herself on the self-designed scooter. Now she zipped around propelled by strong arms and hands.

This was no ordinary woman. Her warm smile wrapped us in a spirit that touched my core and changed my perspective. Edith was a dynamo of service to nonprofit organizations in our community. Before retirement, she had been a secretary. Now she offered her skills of sorting, stuffing, and mailing to several groups. She explained how she worked.

“This is where I lay the stacks out and put them together,” she said proudly, pointing to a sofa that also served as her bed. “I love it when Debbie (the volunteer coordinator) comes to pick them up when I’m finished.”

“My daughter wants me to move to California to be near her,” she said, “but I told her that this is my spot.”

We left Edith’s house with a memorable story under our belts. “My spot,” she had said. This community is my spot, too, I thought. It has so many needs but is blessed with so many positive people like Edith.

I wrote and delivered many stories during my seventeen-year career in television news, but this one stays within my heart, especially on days when I’m tempted to whine about my life.

“There’s always a need to fill and someone to help,” I can hear Edith saying. She taught many of us that joy is a byproduct of purpose and service to others.

Prayer: Thank you for Edith, Lord, and all those who remind us how we can serve one another. Bless her simple spirit, courage, and generosity. Help me be more like her today. Amen.

Thought for Today

Joy comes in giving.

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