

In the spring of 2009 Keith's father/friend passed away. His wife had been quite ill the past year and was taken to University of North Carolina Hospital for treatment and an operation. While at the hospital he met a lady, Sue, whose son was dying. Together Keith and Sue prayed for her son. After they finished praying Keith turned to her and said, "God can turn what seems to be waves of adversity into ripples and make them into waves of Joy". "This truly reflected everything my family and I have been going through. It just brought everything I have seen on the faces of people I passed by in the store, at the hospital, or hugged at church into perspective. There was so much that I learned that day from Sue. I was truly the one who walked away blessed," said Keith. It was then that "Waves of Adversity" came to him. Keith went on to say, "Waves of Adversity was just my feeble attempt to put a face on the despair and hurt I have seen."

WAVES OF ADVERSITY©

By Keith Z. Yezdanian

In our society today there seems to be an increasing number of people facing adversity. Adversity has always existed and it took me facing it to become more perceptive to others and their needs. My family and I have faced adversity from the subtle to some in your face hardships as Christians. I am going to attempt to share how we as a family and as individuals have learned to live with these waves of adversity.

I looked at life as good or bad there was no room in-between. It wasn't until I started to grow as a Christian, a husband, a son and a father that I realized that we are provided a healthy amount of both.

Most of the time we look at a hardship we are facing as a tidal wave that is going to crush and wash our foundation out from under us. It could do just that if we allow ourselves to get distracted and forget how our foundation is built and the support system we have in place. **Luke 6:48 (NIV)** reads: **"He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built"**. These waves of adversity overtime will eventually cause erosion of our mind and spirit if we don't dig down deep enough.

Have you ever watched *Deadliest Catch* on TV? These men and women go out to the Bering Sea to catch crab, knowing that they will face some of the worst weather known to man. They take their 128 ft. fishing vessels and battle over 40 ft. waves while working in and with high winds, ice, slippery decks and dangerous sleep fatigue.

They can fish the Bering Sea because they have prepared themselves mentally, physically and they have the correct vessel to sustain them. This training didn't start in the midst of a storm; it started the day they decided to be fisherman. Their training has taught them how to work and how to respond when something goes wrong with their ship or crew. They also have support groups in the form of their families, other fishermen, the light in the harbor and the U.S. Coast Guard that help them face the harsh conditions of the Bering Sea.

I am sure you remember seeing the ship on the crest of a wave and then deep down in the trough. The crew would still be going about their business like it's no big deal, maybe looking up to the Captain in resentment from time to time. While up in the wheelhouse the Captain is doing all he can to maintain a safe ship and crew. The Captain knows in order for them to catch the crab and enjoy the benefits of a full ship when they return, he must stay the course.

We are much like these brave men and women of the Bering Sea; we may not be on a ship, but we wake up and face the winds of the world and sometimes these winds make the waters rise in our lives. Some of us could be the Captain using all his training and knowledge to maintain a safe ship and a healthy crew. And some of us could be the crew members doing the best we can with the job we have been given, while trusting in our Captain, our training and the support groups we have to see us through these harsh conditions.

So what are these waves of adversity? The first wave is called "Distraction". Distraction rolls in and redirects our attention to another oncoming wave. The second wave is called "Doubt". Doubt

rolls in stronger and we start to debate if this is a storm brewing or a wake from a passing ship. The third wave is called "Confusion". Confusion takes the form of "Distraction" and "Doubt". Confusion rolls in even stronger and we start to panic not knowing if we are about to face some rising waves and this is when we allow disorder in our lives. When disorder takes hold our focus is no longer on our shore of daily routines, but we are now frantically trying to fill sandbags to protect us from the impending storm. This confusion is the building up to the tidal waves of adversity that crash violently upon our shores. As we frantically try to fill our sandbags with the...who, what, when, where, why and how... the less order we seem to have as the sea continues to build stronger. So this brings us to the fourth wave called "Adversity". Adversity hits our shores hard and the erosion of the previous waves though lesser in size and strength has allowed the waters of "adversity" to reach our foundation. Adversity could be finances, health, relationship, jobs, family or any hardship that affects them. Our life has now become our own Bering Sea.

So how do we transform these waves of adversity into ripples of adversity and allow the waves of Joy to begin rolling in? First we must accept that we are going to face adversity at some point in our lives. We must also remember not to dwell on the fact that we are going to face adversity, but we use this knowledge to strengthen our foundations in preparation. How do we strengthen our foundation? We strengthen them much like the men and women of *Deadliest Catch* face the Bering Sea.

Second we need to decide whether or not we want to be Christians. Once we have made the choice to serve Christ we can now start training. Accepting Christ is nowhere near a pleasure boat ride that many mistakenly believe, nor is it without its pleasure. **1 Peter 4:13, "To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation."** By accepting that we will go through adversity we have already began to strengthen our foundation, now we can use this knowledge to focus on the problem at hand, instead letting doubt roll in and make us look at the oncoming waves.

So we have decided to become fishermen, now we need a ship. This ship doesn't need to be new nor does it need fresh paint, all it needs is a good harbor to return to. And our ship is our body; better yet our bodies are a vessel.

Our vessel doesn't need a suit or a proper haircut it just needs a good harbor and you guessed it our harbor is the church. Now keep in mind you may need to dock a few times until you find the harbor you will set sail from and return to.

Now any good sea worthy vessel needs a good Captain, someone to guide us on our journey even if it means passing through the Bering Sea. You guessed it our Captain is our Pastor.

Now that we have identified our vessel, harbor and Captain we need the added support of our family and friends. Though at times they may not agree with our choice, we still need to leave the harbor in order to provide for them so one day they can partake in the Joy of our catch.

Next we need specialized support that our vessel, harbor, Captain and families can't provide for us. Our specialized support is not the Coast Guard but the Holy Trinity...the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Just as the Coast Guard can fly ahead and scout the seas to see what the fishermen are sailing into or when they fly in and make a rescue before all is lost...God knows where we are headed and what's on the horizon and at times He will allow us to get wet before He pulls us out of the waters. He will guide us through His Word, through the Holy Spirit and He may use others for confirmation. **Psalm 46:1-2 "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea"**. Unlike the Coast Guard, God is with us everywhere and though we may disagree when our feet are wet... He knows what is best for us.

When we decided to fish for men we decided to give Christ our all. This means that we agreed to leave the mainland, our families and to trust in God. But before we leave our harbor we need to get in some good training first. We can start by talking to other fishers and share our concerns and questions. Then we must start to study our operating manual called the Bible. In this manual you will learn what is needed to operate our vessel safely and efficiently. We also need to get together with other fishermen to further develop into better fishermen, a group plumbers can give advice but could never truly help you grow into better fishermen. Turning the waves of adversity into

waves of Joy takes a lot of discipline. We have to learn that going to church on Sunday alone isn't enough to battle the waves. Fully putting our trust in Christ and not ourselves is a hard thing to do. This means taking everything we have learned in the past years and forgetting them.

John 12:24-25 *I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.* We have to forget what the world has taught us, forget what our bank accounts look like or negative things others say and start listening to what Christ is telling us.

Jeremiah 29:11 *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* Unlike the Coast Guard, God is in total control of our lives when we submit fully to Him.

Psalm 121:7-8 (NIV) *The LORD will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. John 14:1 & John 14:27(NIV)* *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."* When we learn to completely trust in God we will become less distracted by the waves of "Distraction" and "Doubt" and by doing so we can focus on the problem of today, not of tomorrow or next week the wave of "Confusion" would like...just focus on today.

John 16:33 *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*

We also need to stay in prayer not just when we go to bed or wake up, but we need to pray continuously. **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)** *Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* This verse of scripture is the key to changing the waves of adversity to Joy! And though it may not make sense now as you grow in Christ it will become clear. This is the Christians life summed up.

Be Joyful always; not just on payday but always even when they are coming to cut your electric off. You don't know your dryer could have lit off and burned down your house if it didn't get cut off. Be Joyful "Adversity" would love nothing more but to keep your focus on the crashing waves.

Pray continually; this is your time for fellowship with our Savior one on one, you and Him nothing could be better. He wants this conversation He longs for this closeness.

Give thanks in all circumstances; this one was hard for me to learn, I would much rather complain about my circumstance. I was also thinking I was supposed to thank Him "for" the circumstance, this is completely wrong we are supposed to thank Him "in" all circumstance. When we start to give thanks in all circumstances, we are thanking Him for being there, for giving us a refuge and a solid foundation for which no wave can crumble.

"Waves of Adversity" was written 10 January 2010