

Thriving or Surviving

"Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. (Genesis 6)

Christians are called to walk with God. Sometimes walking with God means changing our plans and welcoming the unexpected. Because of our human condition we often find God's will challenging, and often we go through life surviving when we could in fact thrive. Moving from surviving to thriving involves total reliance on God and God's will for our lives. This often involves patience and preparation as we see Noah and his family obeying God's direction.

God said to Noah: Make yourself an ark ... 450 feet long and 75 feet wide and 45 feet high ... I am going to bring flood waters on the earth. Everything on earth will perish but I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark - you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive ... Noah did everything just as God commanded him. (Genesis 6)

Neighbours may have found Noah's actions strange, even bizarre. Whatever the talk during the construction period ... which lasted 100 years ... nothing kept Noah from going ahead and completing the assignment God had given him. He realized that his survival depended on listening and responding to the voice of God. Are we failing to thrive because we depend only on the voice of a spouse, a neighbour, or a friend as we encounter the floods of life? During these times we need to hold onto God with all that we have. God can do anything. God's way will ultimately prove correct and fruitful.

Then God said to Noah: Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you - the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground - so that they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it. So Noah came out And built an altar to the Lord. Then God blessed Noah and his sons ... (Gen. 7)

Noah and his family entered the ark and the rains began and fell without stop for 40 days. However it was more than 150 days before the waters receded enough for

Noah's family to leave the ark. Imagine life on an ark with all the animals - to say nothing of the relatives. However, despite these circumstances, Noah and his family persevere. They all walked out on dry land after being aboard the ark for 150 days, and their respective families are intact. As we attempt to survive and navigate the currents of life, our families often struggle to thrive. The family unit continues to suffer as pressures in society grow. Some children feel devalued. Some parents find themselves straining to provide even minimal care. Both parents and children need a safe place. We need to see that God can deal with our circumstances, offering all of us a safe haven. God can and will help us find true joy, meaning, and purpose as we follow His voice through the tides of our lives.

God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. (Psalm 46)

God invites us to live in dependence on Him, resting in the ultimate security that God provides. God is available during every breath of our life. It's up to us to call on God so we can move beyond surviving to thriving. Even in times of illness or hardship, God is our refuge and strength. Giving up on God should never be an option. Often we get discouraged when things do not work out as we think they should. We find ourselves unable to stick with it, to hang in there, to believe or trust or hope or grow. We need to ask the question: How is God's plan for my ability to thrive being offered to me in this situation? This expresses faith that God is good, and that He will be good to me.

In order to thrive we must empty ourselves of anything that keeps us from living totally dependent on God. We have to peel back the layers that might include denial, deceit, unfaithfulness, lying, cheating, stealing, anger, impatience, hate, lust, and self-pity. True joy and satisfaction comes when God looks down and says: Well done, my child. You have not just survived but you have thrived.

Questions For Discussion and Reflection

1. What's the difference between thriving and surviving in my life?
2. How do I listen to both the voice of God and my loved ones in a healthy way?
3. How can I reach out to God in family pressures and difficulties?
4. What do I need to let go of in order to thrive with God in my current circumstances?