

AN UNCOMMEN ORIGINAL

RISE AGAIN

the prayer of a righteous man availeth much

UNCOMMEN

Overcoming adversity, loss or change in life

Proverbs 24:16 - “For the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity.”

All of us have experienced some variation of adversity, loss, or unexpected change in life. We don't all handle it the same way. Some expect change to never happen in life, and some are worried that change will come at any moment.



Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

James 5:16

Jesus tells us in John 16:33, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” With this in mind, changes in our everyday routine still catch us off guard and annoy us greatly.

If we take a look at our focus verse, we see that the righteous fall seven times and rise again. This scripture is not to say you will only fall seven times in life; it's a metaphor that we will fall many times in life but will rise again if you remember that Jesus has overcome the world. That same overcoming Spirit lives within every believer, and we need to approach change in a Christ-like manner.

Preparing yourself mentally that change will happen in spite of your best efforts, you can put yourself in the best position for change. This difference is not always a bad thing, but it will be if you never expect it to happen to you and your plans.

Change and then some

It was August 29, 2005, and I went into work just like any other day, not knowing that life-altering change was about to happen in my life and many others. I was in my performance review at work as I had just turned 11 years at the creative agency I was working at in New Orleans. I told my boss that I needed to see growth and change in my position this next year because I was bored with my job.

On my way back to my desk, the office manager handed me a printout of the path of Hurricane Katrina. Having been born and raised in New Orleans, this is pretty common from June - November every year.

When I got home that evening, the television was active with news of the pending Hurricane. We discussed our options as a family and decided to pack up and evacuate for the coming storm. While a short evacuation is somewhat familiar, this one caused me to take extra steps before we left. It was the first time I'd even boarded up my windows to my home for a storm. We were planning on driving from New Orleans to Baton Rouge to see if that might be far enough away from the storm to pass.

We even left a car behind to avoid being separated while on the road. We packed our mini-van to the brim and also took our homeschool curriculum as well. For some reason, this storm felt different, and so we set out for Baton Rouge to stay with family to ride out the storm.

It would be five months before we set foot back in our home, and that was to sell it while we were living in Arizona. We were sitting in a house in Baton Rouge without power listening to the radio when the levee broke, and we knew life would be different for us from that moment on for our family.

We had been praying about moving out of state, and this was the moment God spoke to us to take that leap of faith and move. It didn't only catch us off guard, but my in-laws as well. They didn't know we had been praying about this transition for 6-months before this moment. After some emotional conversation, we all decided to drive to

Houston to get a little bit further away from the storm and destruction.

It wasn't until we were standing in a hotel lobby in Houston, Texas, that we saw what the rest of the world had seen for the last several days. Complete and total destruction of a place we called home for the previous 40 years of our lives. While we lived in a city called Metairie, which is about 12 miles east of Downtown New Orleans, the water and damage were everywhere.

We prayed for wisdom, discernment, and the courage to take the next steps in the most significant change in our lives. We proceeded to move 1500 miles east to try to build a new life in Chandler, AZ.



And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:12

Uncommon Questions

When was the last time you had a change that impacted you and your family for years to come?

What did you learn from that experience? Did you grow closer to God? Your family?

Uncommon Challenge

I challenge you to prepare yourself for change because it happens to everyone. Know that you can take whatever you're going through to the throne of God and ask for wisdom and peace.

When the water becomes still again

Psalm 23:1-6, A Psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

We spent 18 months in Arizona, rebuilding our life from the ground up, and I can tell you one thing about the process. When you rebuild, it's never the same, and that for us was a great thing. During that 18 month process, there were new experiences personally and professionally that took place that couldn't have happened if not for Hurricane Katrina.

I wouldn't wish what we went through with Katrina on anyone, but after going through it, I can tell you it was the single most significant growth period in my life up to that moment.

Did I like all the changes that took place? No, I did not.

Were there times in spite of knowing God was in control that we doubted and cried out for help? Yes, there were many.

Would I want to go through that again? No, I would not.

This side of Katrina

I looked at Hurricane Katrina like Joseph looked at his 11 brothers who tried to kill him by putting him in the pit and then selling him off. Genesis 50:20 "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."

That is a lesson that I didn't fully understand until I got to this side of Katrina as it was too difficult to grasp while going through it entirely. They say that hindsight is 20/20, and my view of that event is much more unobstructed now than during that time.

But when I look at Psalm 23, I don't see a disclaimer that says, "this should happen after a life-changing event or when things calm down again." This verse paints a picture that is to be experienced all day every day. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

In spite of us rebuilding a life in Arizona, we felt the pull of being closer to home and begin the process of moving back across the country. We went back to New Orleans to get our bearings and see family again. While we wanted to move back to New Orleans, Arizona unlocked something in us that needed to be explored further.

After 661 days of the fearful, dependent, tearful life-altering change, God led us to Charlotte, NC, in 2007, where we have lived since that hurricane. This time we took all of the things we owned to Charlotte, but the best thing I brought was a different perspective on God's provision in my life during the difficult times.

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Did I like all the changes that took place?

No, I did not.

Uncommen Questions

When was the last time you looked back on a bad situation and realized it benefited you more than you realized?

Are you going through that right now? If so, read Psalm 23 out loud to yourself right now!

Uncommen Challenge

I challenge you to try to find God in every situation you find yourself in because He is right there with you. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows."

New Location and a new purpose

Micah 7:8: “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me.”

After 661 days of significant life changes, we purchased a home in Charlotte, North Carolina, in June of 2007. Having unpacked a fully loaded 26ft moving van and multiple vehicles, we could finally sit for a moment and try to catch our breath again. Dana and I were having coffee a couple of days after moving in, and I asked her, “what would you think of starting our own business?”

In the middle of her sip of coffee, she looked at me and said, “really?” After choosing to go to one-income, homeschool and move across the country twice, I figured this would be the one she would lose it over. I said, “well, during our transition here, I took on a couple of freelance projects, and I think I like it. Plus, all of the people I’ve contacted about work seemed to suggest contract work. I think God is pushing me toward starting our creative studio, and I’m excited to do it.” She said, “If God is for it, so am I, What do we have to do to get started?”

Now saying you’re going to start your own business and being able to sustain it is two vastly different statements. I reached out to people in my network first to let them know of our studio and then placed my one and only Craigslist Ad. We landed a large company that allowed us to diversify our clients during their time with us.

Never tell me the odds.

20% of small businesses fail in their first year, 30% of small businesses fail in their second year, and 50% of small businesses fail after five years in business. Finally, 70% of small business owners fail in their 10th year in business.

God stats: Micah 7:8 “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me.”

This coming April will mark our 14th year in business, and we've also been running Uncommen for over three years now. I didn't buck the odds because of any skills I possess, but rather because I put God at the center of my business. I pray for wisdom daily, I pray for my clients (past present and future), I pray for my partners, and I pray for all those involved in the shaping of our business. I'm not going to lie and tell you there has never been stress when it comes to running two companies, but I try to keep my hands open and let God direct us.

If I try to step in and direct the business based upon my knowledge, then I may focus too much on profit, or even give too much away. I've always said that God is in charge of leading clients to us, and we are in charge of serving them for His Glory. Do we get taken advantaged of by some people? Yes! Even other believers have done so. But once again, our job is to serve them as if we are serving Christ Jesus.

If I think back to a mere 15+ years ago to where I was professional, my focus was all kinds of wrong. I was too focused on how much money I could or needed to make. I was focused on what others thought of my creative abilities instead of being content to grow where God was directing me.



She said, "If God is for it, so am I, What do we have to do to get started?"

Uncommen Questions

What situation are you in currently that you feel the odds are against you?
Have you taken that situation to God and asked for His Will and His Wisdom?

Uncommen Challenge

I challenge you to reexamine what you are doing and why you are doing it. If it's only about money, it will more than likely never be enough to satisfy. I would suggest changing your focus so you can sit in the darkness and rely on God to be your light.

There are still waves

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.”

I want to say that once we went through Katrina and have put in 14 years into our businesses, everything has been smooth sailing. But Jesus told us there would be trials, and while they may not be Katrina sized, I probably make them that size in my mind.

My mother passed away within six months of moving to Charlotte, and if you think having a loved one pass away is hard while you're in the same town, it's double that from long distance. It's an eleven-hour drive from Charlotte to New Orleans, and we did that several times during her very short bout with cancer. We were driving down again to see her when I got the call from my dad while passing through in Atlanta that mom had passed. That next eight hours felt three times that after getting that news.

I was standing in the DMV while my oldest was taking his driver's test when I got the call from our largest client that they would be hiring someone internally to handle the creative work within six months.

For almost 12 months, my oldest had stomach issues that required endless tests only to find out it was relating to stress.

My father-in-law's emphysema progressed to the point of oxygen tanks, and he cannot travel any longer.

My dad has had several medical issues ranging from kidney cancer, disc issues, and diabetes.

I could go on and on with issues that come up in life, but everyone has their list of issues they deal with every day. My point is, just because you go through something big, doesn't mean things get comfortable for a while. Life moves on whether we are ready to move or not.

It's best to understand whether we are going into a trial or coming out of one, Jesus is there with us. If you haven't read Daniel chapter three, I would pause and read it. Daniel recounts the story of Nebuchadnezzar throwing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace for disobeying the king they serve.

I love this story because, whenever we are going through something, we tend to think we are going through it alone. We may not realize people are supporting you with prayer, love, and service all around you. The office, home, or hospital room may not be overcrowded with people there to offer comfort, but there is one that is always there with you.



In this you rejoice,
though now for a little
while, if necessary, you
have been grieved by
various trials

1 Peter 1:6

Daniel 3:25 says, “He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”

As when a rock enters a pond and causes waves, life will have ups and downs that seem never to end. But Jesus chooses to be with us through all of our trials and tribulations. He doesn't have to be but instead chooses to be with us.

Uncommon Questions

Are you going through something in which you need some support? If so, pray that you realize that Jesus is with you already.

Do you know someone who could use some support as they are going through something of a fiery furnace themselves?

Uncommon Challenge

I challenge you to not only expect the waves but prepare for them by praying daily and strengthen your relationship with Jesus.

Are you prepared to rise again?

Isaiah 40:31: “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

The previous four chapters cover a birds-eye view of the last 14 years of my life going through a literal storm and coming out the other side. They all don't end up drawing closer to God, starting your own company, or even gaining a perspective of the trail you've just gone through. Some end up without any answer, some end with the result that you didn't want, and some never end.

Since we're all going to go through a Katrina of our own, we might as well prepare ourselves as much as we can for it. Our scripture tells us that those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. I'm usually a patient man, but in certain situations, my patience can be summed up with this prayer, “Lord give me patience and give it to me NOW!”.

Sometimes it feels like the Lord doesn't see us waiting, and we start waving our arms like, “hello....do you even see me over here!”. Another part of our focus verse says, “They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” I saw a sign the other day that said, “It's hard to beat a man that never gives up.”

I know people who are tough as nails, and I know some who fold at the drop of a hat. I don't think it's about when you've grown up but rather if you're prayed up. Pray that God prepares you for the day because, as we see in 1 Peter 5:8: “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Are you ready for that kind of battle? If not, you better get ready.

I know you'd like to focus on “God is Love” and everything is happy happy happy, but I'm sorry to say that is not how the world works. We are in a fallen world where we need to prepare ourselves.

Jesus tells us, “ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

Just like you would have to prepare yourself to play full-contact football, you have to prepare yourself for full contact life.

Ephesians 6:10-18 (Armor of God)

Finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.

Uncommen Questions

Are you ready to run and not get weary? What do you do to prepare yourself for that activity?

Are you ready to rise again in case the race caught you off guard?

Uncommen Challenge

I challenge you to prepare yourself for the days ahead. You may need to rise again and put on the full armor of God to run the race. You may have the armor on but need to wait upon the Lord. No matter your situation, are you ready?

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RISE AGAIN

the prayer of a righteous man availeth much

APPLICATION

Pray

Never Assume

Focus on the Bigger Picture

Prepare Yourself and Your Team

Be the Leader You Were Meant To Be

Speak with Truth & Grace

Set Attainable Goals

Avoid Judging

Build Trust

Pray


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