

In a move that seemed unlikely only a year ago, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has announced that his country has stopped nuclear testing and missile launches, although it continues to hold its nuclear arsenal. If plans stay on track, a summit between North and South Korea will have occurred by the time you use this lesson. A summit between Kim and President Trump is tentatively scheduled for next month. While the North Korean announcement stops short of denuclearization, this seems like an opening where peacemaking might proceed, reducing international tensions.

While few of us have the opportunity to influence peace talks on the international level, the news does give us an opportunity to think about the place of peacemaking for followers of Jesus. So that will be the topic of this installment of *The Wired Word*.

If you'd prefer a different topic, look at our second lesson, which begins with news of a Navy-trained pilot who successfully landed a twin-engine Southwest Airlines Boeing 737 after one engine caught on fire and failed, sending shrapnel into the wing and body of the plane. One woman, who was partially sucked from the aircraft before other passengers pulled her back inside, died from her injuries.

In the harrowing six minutes following the initial impact until the jet touched down on the runway, the pilot showed remarkable calmness under extremely difficult conditions. We learned that she is motivated by her strong Christian faith to pursue excellence in her life and work. Her example gives us the opportunity to consider how our faith can prepare us for crises and also guide us in our everyday, ordinary lives.

The Editorial Team of *The Wired Word*



## **North Korean Leader Halts Nuclear Tests and Missile Launches**

*The Wired Word* for the Week of April 29, 2018

### **In the News**

Last week, North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un announced, "From 21 April, North Korea will stop nuclear tests and launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles."

This appears to be good news, which is exactly what President Donald Trump has labeled it. And South Korea has called the surprise declaration meaningful progress.

Most observers also consider the fact that Pyongyang made the announcement before upcoming summits with both South Korea and the United States as a positive development. The summit with South Korea is set to take place this week. There are hopes that the summit may lead to an end to the state of war that has existed between the two countries for over 65 years. The meeting between Leader Kim and President Trump is tentatively scheduled for May.

The stoppage of the tests and launches, however, does not signal any willingness on North Korea's part to denuclearize. Kim has said that further tests are no longer needed since his country has completed its drive to have nuclear weapons. Last year, North Korea tested two

long-range missile prototypes capable of hitting the continental United States with a nuclear warhead, and it also exploded its first hydrogen bomb.

Explaining the North's unwillingness to give up its nuclear weapons, an article in *The Atlantic* said, "From Kim's point of view, nuclear weapons constitute his only guarantee of survival."

As background, the article added:

North Korea saw what happened to Saddam Hussein, whose attempts to develop nuclear weapons were cut short by an Israeli air-force raid in 1981. It saw how things went in 1994, when Ukraine surrendered its Soviet-era nuclear heritage in exchange for "guarantees" from the United States, Britain, and Russia, to respect its territorial integrity. Above all, North Korea remembers the sorry fate of Muammar al-Qaddafi of Libya, the only dictator in history who agreed to surrender his half-baked nuclear program in exchange for economic benefits. This is why the Kim regime has spent 60-odd years building up its nuclear program.

Kim has said that ending the missile tests is aimed at pursuing economic growth in his country and developing a socialist economy. He also wants sanctions against his country removed.

Many observers believe that President Trump's promise to use armed force if the North Koreans did not agree to abandon their nuclear program was part of what changed Kim's position. *The Atlantic* explained, "For decades, North Korea has been certain that the United States would never strike first: Seoul, the capital of South Korea, the closest U.S. ally in the region, lies within range of North Korean heavy artillery. If the North retaliated, hundreds of guns would transform downtown Seoul into an inferno. Such a crisis would be followed by a war of immense destruction."

But, said *The Atlantic*, "Trump has altered this calculus. While his 'fire and fury' threat may have been a bluff, he has persuaded the Kim regime that it is dealing with a president who is willing to risk Seoul (along with the U.S.-South Korea alliance). A U.S. military strike, Kim has come to see, is no longer an impossibility."

Apparently, the U.S. president's threats also helped persuade China to support the toughest sanctions that country ever imposed on Pyongyang, making it almost impossible for North Korea to sell anything internationally.

In North Korea, sanctions have increased the price of gas, rice and other commodities, reduced oil imports by one-third, and banned more than 90 percent of the North's exports to United Nations countries.

Even if Kim doesn't denuclearize, it is to be hoped that his ending the testing and ceasing to bristle at the world will reduce the threat from North Korea and contribute to peaceable relations on the Korean peninsula, in the region and with the rest of the world.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[North Korea Missile and Nuclear Test Halt Hailed. \*BBC\*](#)  
[Holstering the K-Pop, South Korea Silences Propaganda at the DMZ. \*The New York Times\*](#)  
[4 Key Questions Before the Trump-Kim Meeting. \*The Daily Signal\*](#)  
[How North Korea Learned to Live With 'Fire and Fury.' \*The Atlantic\*](#)

## **Applying the News Story**

One of the problems with drawing a lesson for ourselves from peacemaking moves on the international level is that generally speaking, other than praying for the outcome, there is almost nothing individual private citizens can do to contribute to those efforts. We feel powerless to shape world events.

Yet we who are followers of the Prince of Peace cannot let the difficulty of peacemaking prevent us from applying the ways of peace in the realms we can affect, including our own families, our own neighborhood, our own church, and people with whom we interact each day.

## **The Big Questions**

1. We tend to think of peacemaking as a global task, but where does the call to make peace apply to ordinary citizens? Are there special applications of the call for Christians? If so, what are they? Since nations have different purposes than individuals, how might their approaches to peace differ?
2. What is the goal of peacemaking? Why is peacemaking a Christian value? What makes reconciliation a matter of theological and Christian concern?
3. Compromise is sometimes a tool of peacemaking, but when does it cease to be useful in making peace?
4. Is it a moral obligation for Christians to take the initiative in peacemaking? Why or why not? How far should you as a Christian go to keep peace with a rude, inconsiderate or obnoxious neighbor? What if the neighbor refuses your attempts at peaceful coexistence?
5. On the international level, armed force is sometimes viewed as a component of peacemaking. Do you agree that it can be? If so, how do we determine when it needs to be used for peacemaking? Are mercy and sacrifice more powerful than armed force in terms of making peace?

## **Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope**

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

### **Joshua 22:33**

*The report pleased the Israelites; and the Israelites blessed God and spoke no more of making war against them, to destroy the land where the Reubenites and the Gadites were settled. (For context, read 22:10-34.)*

This verse is a summary statement about the happy conclusion of a potential battle between two groups of Israelites (Perhaps not unlike the two nations of Korea in the current situation). Instead of a fight, a compromise was reached, and at that point, the narrator tells us that the Israelites "blessed God."

We have some understanding of what it means for God to bless us, but what does it mean for us to bless God? Sometimes we read that as simply another way of saying "Thanks, God," or "Praise God," but something deeper is going on. The Hebrew word translated by "bless" has the original meaning of to "bend the knee" or to "kneel." Blessing is characteristically something that assures well-being and re-energizes us. But some of our actions, such as behaving with hostility toward others, in effect "diminish" the God who calls us to love one another.

Thus, when we engage in peacemaking and reconciliation, we are directing our energy to God and raising his stature in the eyes of those who worship him. We are, in effect, blessing God.

**Questions:** What behaviors of yours do you see as "blessing God"? Is it possible that a reduction in hostilities between the two Koreas will "bless" God? Why or why not?

### **2 Corinthians 5:18-19**

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. (For context, read 5:11-21.)*

These two verses are the answer to the question we asked in Big Question #2 above about why reconciliation is a theological and Christian issue. It is theological because God (the "theo" part of theological) practices it himself. He reconciles us to himself through Christ. Then God assigns us as his agents in reconciling the world to him, as we proclaim what he has done for us and for all people. The Christian message and ministry of reconciliation has been entrusted to us who follow Jesus.

**Questions:** In what ministry of reconciliation have you participated? What has to be in place for reconciliation between individuals to endure and produce the fruit of peace?

### **Genesis 13:8**

*Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herders and my herders; for we are kindred." (For context, read 13:1-18.)*

This is Abram's statement to his nephew Lot when the land they were sharing could no longer support the herds and flocks of both men. What Abram offers goes way beyond compromise. He is actually willing to sacrifice what appears to be best for him so that there will be no conflict between the two of them.

Lot agrees to Abram's solution and selects the best land for himself. It later turns out that God blesses Abram even on the poorer land, but Abram didn't know that that would happen at the

time he was making the offer. Thus, Abram had to be prepared to come out of the arrangement as the loser.

**Questions:** When have you had to accept loss to keep the peace with someone? In the long view, was it good that you did so?

### **Matthew 5:9**

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.* (For context, read 5:1-12.)

This statement from Jesus is a definitive declaration about the need for his followers to actively work at making peace, for it is by doing so that they "will be called children of God."

Peacemaking does not connote a passive attitude -- it is not simply conflict avoidance -- but positive actions for reconciliation. From this verse, it seems clear that peacemaking is not optional for Christians but is as much an expected activity as is praying.

**Question:** The Greek word translated here as "blessed" means "fortunate," "happy," "well-off" or "in a privileged situation." Why do you think Jesus attached a word with such meanings to the activity of making peace?

### **Esther 4:14**

*Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.* (For context, read 4:1-17.)

This is a statement made by Mordecai, a member of the Jewish diaspora community in the Persian Empire, to his relative, Esther, who was married to the Persian king.

Mordecai had learned of a plot against the Jews by a member of the king's court, and he spoke the above to persuade Esther to intervene on her people's behalf with the king -- a risky thing for a woman in that day to do.

Mordecai referred to Esther's "royal dignity"-- her placement as queen -- as perhaps having happened primarily to put her in a position to save her people's lives. (The book of Esther doesn't mention God, but it seems that Mordecai's meaning is that God placed Esther in that spot "for just such a time as this.")

The king not only commanded that the chief plotters, Haman and his ten sons, be hanged. He also gave the Jews permission to defend themselves against those who would have exterminated them, resulting in the deaths of over 75,000 of their persecutors.

Do you know the term "vessel theology"? It's used by some Christians to mean that God has chosen an unlikely person to be a vessel to accomplish God's purposes. Besides Esther, another biblical example is Persian King Cyrus, who freed the Jews from captivity and sent them home to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4; Isaiah 45:1-4).

**Questions:** Given that our country is strongly divided over Mr. Trump as president, is it possible that despite whatever strengths and weaknesses he may have, his mode of operation is the only one that would work with the belligerent Kim Jong-un, especially since decades of efforts by more conventional America leaders have not succeeded?

Does the idea of vessel theology make sense to you in this case? What are the objections to vessel theology? Do you view all elected or appointed officials as potentially vessels of God's will, or only certain authorities? If only some, but not all, fit that category, what in your view qualifies a person to be considered as a vessel of God?

### **For Further Discussion**

1. Assuming that North Korea will not give up its nuclear arsenal, but will discontinue its testing and missile launches, is it still worth normalizing relations with that country and lifting the sanctions? Why or why not?

2. Have you ever been in a conflict with another person where that person made a serious attempt to make peace with you? If so, how did you respond? How do you wish you had responded? What was the outcome?

3. In game theory, one of the most successful strategies is called "tit for tat," often modified to a "tit for tat with occasional forgiveness." In this strategy, a person responds in like manner to the other person. If the other is cooperative or beneficial, then one responds in a cooperative or beneficial manner. If the other person is malicious or perverse, then one responds similarly. Since this strategy is very clear -- both sides know what the response will be -- it tends to foster cooperation. To prevent a death spiral, occasionally a perverse action is responded to in a beneficial manner. This gives the other the opportunity to do the same, preventing a death spiral. Do these strategies compare to how God would have us act in our relationships with others? Does the status of relationship (e.g., peer-peer, parent-child, etc.) matter?

### **Responding to the News**

Pray for the efforts to reduce nuclear threat from North Korea.

Wherever possible, act as a peacemaker in your dealings with others.

### **Prayer**

O God, please grant wisdom, courage, perseverance, energy, faith and a desire to make peace to all those in a position to do so. Especially help those involved in the two summits to find a peaceable and verifiable way forward. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Other News This Week**

# Pilot Who Landed Crippled Plane on One Engine Found 'Nerves of Steel' in Her Training and Faith

## In the News

"Something is wrong with our plane! It appears we are going down!" Marty Martinez wrote on Tuesday, April 17, in the caption of a live video he posted on social media, showing himself breathing through an oxygen mask.

Martinez was a passenger aboard Southwest Flight 1380 when the engine on the captain's side caught fire and failed, forcing the pilot, Tammie Jo Shults, to divert the plane from its intended destination of Dallas to make an emergency landing in Philadelphia with a single engine.

The Boeing 737 had been airborne from New York City less than an hour when the incident occurred at 32,000 feet. Shrapnel from the blown engine slammed into the plane's wing, fuselage and the window next to passenger Jennifer Riordan of Albuquerque, who was partially sucked out of the aircraft before fellow passengers managed to pull her back in. Riordan suffered fatal blunt trauma injuries.

The hole in the 737's side caused a loss of power and cabin pressure, but Shults kept cool under stress, communicating clearly with air traffic controllers about the situation and landing the disabled plane safely after it dropped 20,000 feet in six minutes.

"The plane was steady as a rock after (the engine blew)," said passenger Eric Zilbert. "I didn't have any fear that it was out of control."

During the crisis, Shults requested that medical personnel prepare to treat trauma victims on the tarmac as soon as they were on the ground. Once the plane touched down, the pilot thanked air traffic for their assistance and walked the aisle of the aircraft checking on passengers.

One of them, Benjamin Goldstein, asked her whether he would get a hug, too. "She said, 'Of course. I wouldn't let you by without a hug. '"

"It was very touching," Goldstein said. "Here at the most crucial moment, she had the presence of mind and the courage to act with excellence as it was required. It's a beautiful quality, and we have our lives to thank for it."

Diana McBride Self, who was also on board, expressed gratitude to the pilot and crew for "their knowledge and bravery under these circumstances."

"[The captain's] grace and knowledge under pressure were remarkable," she wrote on Facebook. "She has nerves of steel. ... I applaud her," agreed Self's husband, passenger Alfred Tumlinson,

Seven of the 149 people on board were hospitalized with minor injuries, according to authorities.

The day after the accident, Shults and Flight 1380 first officer Darren Ellisor sought to avoid the media limelight, focusing instead on aiding the official investigation of the incident. They released a statement on behalf of the entire crew, expressing appreciation for the support of the public and of their coworkers and grief over "one family's profound loss."

In her book, [\*Military Fly Moms: Sharing Memories, Building Legacies, Inspiring Hope\*](#), retired USN Captain Linda Maloney wrote that Shults loved watching Air Force jets fly over her family's ranch in New Mexico when she was a child. Shults had also been inspired by the story of Christian missionary pilot and martyr Nate Saint, about whom she read in the book [\*Jungle Pilot\*](#).

When she showed up as the only female student at a presentation about careers in aviation at her high school, the retired colonel lecturer asked if she was lost. She insisted that she knew where she was and had every intention of becoming a flyer. Shults would not be dissuaded by those who told her the idea of a woman pilot was "degrading" and that the cockpit had no room for females.

While a student at MidAmerica Nazarene University in Kansas in the 1980s, Shults was encouraged by a meeting with a woman who had just received her Air Force wings. But when Shults learned the Air Force was not ready to train her as a pilot, she joined the Navy.

There she completed flight training, becoming one of the first female Navy fighter pilots, flying the F/A-18 Hornet and other aircraft. Before women were permitted to fly combat missions, she took on the role of an "enemy pilot" in training exercises, helping male pilots "hone their skills" during Operation Desert Storm, according to Navy spokesman Cmdr. Ron Flanders.

Cindy Foster, one of Shults' college classmates, said the pilot experienced "a lot of resistance" in the Navy because of her gender, but "she wasn't going to let anyone tell her she couldn't."

"She knew she had to work harder than everyone else," Foster said. "She did it for herself and all women fighting for a chance. ... She saved a lot of lives."

Kevin Garber, the director of alumni relations for Shults' *alma mater*, remembered how she went to bat for women and encouraged them to push for acceptance in male-dominated fields.

"She had tenacity to do something that excelled beyond the norm of what women were allowed or expected to do," Garber said. "She pushed the limits and became what she strived for."

Shults, along with her husband, Navy veteran pilot Dean Shults, began flying for Southwest in the 1990s. They have two children, ages 18 and 20. Tammie Jo Shults retired as a lieutenant commander from the Navy in 2001.

Staci Thompson, administrative assistant at the Shults' home church, First Baptist Church in Boerne, Texas, said Shults "would tell you everything she has she's been given from God, so she wants to share it." The aviator has led children's worship and taught Sunday school for all ages at

the church, assisted hurricane victims, widows, the disabled, the elderly and at-risk children, as well as coworkers and passengers she meets while on the job.

According to a blog post by Shults, being a pilot has provided her with "the opportunity to witness for Christ on almost every flight," "to pray over [people] and give them Scripture and give them love."

Thompson said Shults' greatest desire is to "share her faith and [have] it resonate and awaken people's eyes to how great a God we have," not to focus on what some people call her heroism. "She wants people to know that God was there with her" on Flight 1380, "that he helped her in getting control of that plane and landing that plane. It was because of him, not her," Thompson said. "She was just a teammate and a co-captain. He was the captain."

"I had never touched an airplane, but I knew flying was my future," Shults once said. "I hoped that God had given me an interest in flying for a reason."

Something tells us the passengers about Southwest Flight 1380 were part of that reason.

As Amanda Bourman, another survivor of that frightening flight, wrote on Instagram, "God sent his angels to watch over us. I actually heard someone say, there is a God!! ... #anotherdayofgrace."

More on this story can be found at these links:

[LISTEN: Southwest Pilot Coolly Plans One-Engine, Emergency Landing. NPR](#)  
[Heroic Southwest Pilot Studied in Olathe, Among 1st Female Fighter Pilots in the Navy. \*The Kansas City Star\*](#)  
[Hero Southwest Pilot's Text After Landing: 'God Is Good.' \*The Western Journal\*](#)  
[Southwest's Heroic Pilot Known for Sharing Her Faith. \*Baptist Press\*](#)

### **Applying the News Story**

In the harrowing six minutes following the initial engine failure until the jet touched down on the runway, the pilot Shults showed remarkable calmness under extremely difficult conditions. We learned that she is motivated by her strong Christian faith to pursue excellence in her life and work. Her example gives us the opportunity to consider how our faith can prepare us for crises and also guide us in our everyday, ordinary lives.

### **The Big Questions**

1. What early passions or childhood experiences shaped your career choices and life direction later on? Are there any early dreams that remain unrealized for you? If you had your life to live over again, would you make any different choices, and if so, what "alternative life" might you have chosen, and why?

2. Some people might be described as "people-oriented" while others seem to be more "task-oriented," but Shults demonstrated the ability to focus on performing the technical part of her job, safely flying and landing the aircraft, even in extraordinarily difficult circumstances, without neglecting the interpersonal aspect. Once she had the plane on the ground, she focused on the people she was serving, walking the aisle, dispensing hugs and comfort.

Do you tend to emphasize one focus more than the other? Do you think it is more important to be "people-oriented," or "task-oriented"? Explain your view. What do you need to do to become more balanced, to develop your "people skills" as well as your natural abilities and spiritual gifts, so that you can be a more effective servant of God?

3. Who has inspired you to follow a particular path in your life and/or career? What particular qualities do you admire in that person? How has that role model impacted your decisions and behavior throughout your life?

4. How do you handle "naysayers" who seem to want to "rain on your parade" and hinder you from achieving your goals? How does your faith help you, if at all, become all God created you to be, in spite of opposition and adversity?

5. Have you faced discrimination in the workplace due to personal characteristics beyond your control? What can we learn from the way Shults handled discriminatory attitudes and behavior? How does our faith speak to the problem of discrimination?

### **Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope**

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

#### **Joshua 1:8-9**

*This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. (For context, read Joshua 1:1-9.)*

Following the death of Moses, Joshua's mentor, the LORD promised to be with Joshua just as he had been with Moses. He encouraged Joshua repeatedly to "[b]e strong and courageous" (v. 6), "be strong and very courageous" (v. 7), "[b]e strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed" (v. 9). Joshua's strength and courage was to come from his assurance of God's unfailing presence and promise never to forsake him (v. 5, 9). He was guaranteed success as long as he followed God's law (vv. 7-8). Joshua did lead the Israelites into the Promised Land by trusting in the promises of God and obeying his commands.

Shults had many opportunities to develop the "nerves of steel" that prepared her for what happened April 17. But while she had years of training, experience and skill development behind her, she also knew the God of the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Bible, and she trusted that God would never forsake her. For those reasons, she was able to perform her duties with calmness and courage when she needed those qualities the most.

**Questions:** What biblical truths serve you well in dire emergencies? What scriptures do you turn to for courage when you need to be brave?

### **Judges 4:8-9**

*Barak said to [Deborah], "If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go." And she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. (For context, read 4:1-24.)*

Before the Israelites had their first king, they were governed by judges, of whom the prophetess Deborah was one. This chapter tells how King Jabin oppressed them cruelly for 20 years. After they cried out to the Lord for help, God answered them through Deborah, who called on Barak to assemble an army to confront King Jabin and his commanding general Sisera.

But Barak refused to give unqualified obedience; he agreed to go only if Deborah accompanied him. She indicated that because of his attitude, the glory of the victory would go to a woman rather than to him.

And so it happened that a woman named Jael convinced General Sisera to come to her tent where she hid him under a rug, just before driving a peg into his temple while he slept!

Shulths had to overcome gender barriers and an entrenched hierarchy in order to serve her country.

**Questions:** What, if anything, does this story suggest about the role of gender in times of crisis? In activities that have traditionally been assumed to belong to a specific gender? Does this story have relevance to us in our time? If not, why not? If so, how is it relevant?

Do you or anyone you know face barriers of one kind or another that make it difficult for you to serve in the church? In your community? Do any of those barriers exist for any legitimate reason? Explain. How can you help remove barriers that hinder others from fully participating in the life and ministry of the church? How might doing so benefit the body of Christ?

### **Esther 4:14-16**

*[Mordecai said to Esther]: "For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." Then Esther said in reply to Mordecai, "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish." (For context, read 4:6-17.)*

Some people who heard about Shulths' courage and composure under pressure compared her situation to Queen Esther's grace at a time of incredible danger and risk for herself and her people.

Esther had become queen in Persia, but had not revealed her identity as a Jew to her husband. When the king's official, Haman, plotted to exterminate the Jews, her relative Mordecai told her that she should go to the king for relief.

But by law, anyone who appeared before the king without being called was to be put to death unless he extended his scepter to the supplicant, and he had not called Esther for 30 days. To enter into his presence, she would be risking her own life.

Esther ultimately decided it was worth the risk in order to save her people, and God did intervene to put an end to Haman's plot.

**Questions:** What was the value to Esther of having the entire Jewish community hold a three-day communal fast for her? When have you needed courage at a time of great danger? How does an awareness that God's people are praying for you affect you at such a time?

How should followers of Jesus prepare to meet crises? What mandate(s) do Christ's followers have in the scriptures to train to meet spiritual, social and physical emergencies?

### **Luke 8:22-24**

*One day [Jesus] got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they put out, and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A windstorm swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. They went to him and woke him up, shouting, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. (For context, read 8:22-25.)*

Sometimes when we are in transit from one place to another, we face particular danger. In the case of Southwest Flight 1380 on April 17, the danger of crashing the plane was very real. In the incident recorded here by Luke, the disciples were in danger of swamping the boat and drowning.

Even though Jesus was with them in the boat, he was asleep, seemingly oblivious to their situation, so they woke him up with panicked shouts. He calmed the windstorm with a word, and then asked his followers, "Where is your faith?"

Then Luke tells us that the disciples were "afraid and amazed." No longer in physical danger of drowning, they recognized that they were in the presence of someone with the power to command the forces of nature. That created in them a different kind of fear, what we might call the fear of God, causing them to ask who Jesus might actually be (v. 25).

The reaction of the disciples to their rescue from imminent danger seems akin to the way the survivors on board Southwest Flight 1380 reacted when they realized that their lives had been spared. As one of them (Amanda Bourman) wrote on Instagram, "God sent his angels to watch over us. I actually heard someone say, there is a God!! ... #anotherdayofgrace."

**Questions:** Have you ever been in a situation where you feared for your life? How did you react?

Have you had a similar reaction of a different kind of fear and amazement upon learning that you would "live to fight another day"? How does that kind of fear relate to a deeper knowledge of God, and his son Jesus Christ?

**Romans 8:28**

*We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.* (For context, read 8:26-30.)

TWW team member Joanna Loucky-Ramsey brought various ingredients to make a chocolate cake to a children's Bible club and asked the children to try to identify each ingredient, using their five senses.

Some the children figured out right away just by looking at the ingredients, but others were more difficult. Several dry ingredients gave them a little trouble, since sugar, flour, baking soda, and baking powder are all white. Some children resorted to their taste buds before venturing a guess. Depending on the ingredient, they smiled or grimaced.

Loucky-Ramsey asked the children whether they could see any reason why they would want to add some of the bitter-tasting ingredients to the chocolate cake batter. Some of them thought it would be a bad idea. Some of the older children who had more experience in how cakes are made said that even the bitter ingredients were necessary in order for the cake to come out right.

Then the children read Romans 8:28. Loucky-Ramsey explained that in life, we have some joyful, pleasant experiences, mixed with some painful and unpleasant experiences. But God can combine those pleasant and unpleasant experiences to make a good result, just as sweet and bitter ingredients can be blended together to make a delicious cake.

Of course, after the object lesson, the children enjoyed eating chocolate cupcakes!

In the larger context of the Romans 8 passage, we can see that God's purpose is that we be conformed to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ.

**Questions:** What positive and negative experiences do you see in Shults' life? From what you know about her, would you say that God used them all for good?

How easy is it to believe that all things work together for good? Do you have Paul's confidence to say that you KNOW this for certain? What is the "good" that God wants to accomplish for us, in us, and through us, no matter what kind of experiences we have?

**For Further Discussion**

1. Some might say that Shults exhibited the kind of courage that author Ernest Hemingway described as "grace under pressure." When have you felt called upon to that kind of courage? What was the nature of the pressure you felt, and what does "grace under pressure" look like?

2. Ponder and respond to these quotes from one of Shults' role models, Nate Saint, missionary pilot who, along with Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, Ed McCully and Roger Youderian, was martyred in Ecuador January 8, 1956:

- "If God would grant us the vision, the word sacrifice would disappear from our lips and thoughts; we would hate the things that seem now so dear to us; our lives would suddenly be too short, we would despise time-robbing distractions and charge the enemy with all our energies in the name of Christ."
- "And people who do not know the Lord ask why in the world we waste our lives as missionaries. They forget that they too are expending their lives ... and when the bubble has burst they will have nothing of eternal significance to show for the years they have wasted."
- "When life's flight is over, and we unload our cargo at the other end, the fellow who got rid of unnecessary weight will have the most valuable cargo to present the Lord."

3. Reflect on this from a person identified only as Harrison Jobst, who responded to the news about Shults this way: "True humility is when we attribute everything to God. That's exactly and precisely what Tammie Jo Shults did perhaps during and certainly after she landed that plane safely. She and her co-pilot truly are heroes. And so are the crew members and many of the passengers who tried to help during the plane event."

4. Even though Shults displayed coolness under fire, and passengers and crew displayed heroism, this was not sufficient to save everyone. One passenger died under terrible circumstances. We can't always rescue or save everyone. Despite our best efforts, people die. Peter was rescued by an angel, but James the apostle was executed first (Acts 12:1-11).

What does our faith teach us about horrific, tragic events that occur every day? How are we to understand them? Where can we find hope in these hard realities?

### **Responding to the News**

Think about what kind of situations trigger a fear response in you, causing you to fall apart or blow up under pressure. Share Bible verses or spiritual disciplines that help you prepare to meet such situations with strength and courage.

### **Prayer**

O God, empower us with your strength, that we faint not in the day of adversity. Help us to be prepared for the crises that come to us all, by meditating on your promises and obeying your commandments. Teach us not to be afraid, but to believe your promise to be with us always, even to the end of the age. We trust in you, our Rock and our Salvation. Amen.