



## **MEFC Community Group Study Guide**

For the week of February 9th-15th

### **Getting Started**

1. Looking back over your life, what is one or two of the most challenging storms through which the Lord has brought you? Are you (perhaps) in the midst of a storm right now? Please take some time to share with the group.

### **Digging Deeper**

2. A “storm” is obviously a metaphor for suffering in this life. We’ve considered (in these last two sermons) how Christians ought not to be surprised by suffering (1 Peter 4:13), but rather expect it. We’ve also given thought to recognizing God’s sovereignty over suffering (1 Peter 4:19), rather than denying it. Finally, we’ve considered how we even ought to come to experience the joy of the Lord through suffering, rather than merely enduring it (1 Peter 4:14; Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4). What has your experience of suffering been like relative to these three realities (surprise, sovereignty, sweetness)?

## Open Your Bible to Acts 27:1...

3. In Acts 27:1-3, Luke describes how Paul and his shipmates begin their journey on the Mediterranean Sea under rather pleasant circumstances. The wind is in their favor. How about you? Describe a season in your life when you sensed the wind to be in your favor (tailwinds).

4. In Acts 27:4-12, it becomes clear that Paul's sea voyage is starting to become more challenging. The winds are no longer in their favor, but in their face. How many different ways (in these verses) does Luke describe this shift from enjoying tailwinds to encountering headwinds? What are some examples of common headwinds in our lives (that don't necessarily precipitate stone-cold panic, but certainly invite some concern)?

5. As we turn to Acts 27:13-20, we've graduated from tailwinds to headwinds to an all-out whirlwind. One of the keys in this section is that life's storms teach us to abandon all hope of salvation in this world (see verse 20 especially). Why should this be interpreted as a mercy of God instead of merely inviting despair? In other words, why is this ultimately *good* news?

6. By the time that we reach Acts 27:21-26, we see Paul teaching his shipmates (and us!) that in the midst of storms we need to cling to our only hope of salvation in God's Word. How does Paul do this in this part of the story? On what promise(s) in particular is his hope based (Acts 19:21; 23:11)? What are some of your favorite promises in God's Word?<sup>1</sup>

7. Other evidences of God's grace in this storm include the ship's passengers turning to prayer (v.29) as well as offering thanksgiving (vv.30-38). Do you find your prayer life firing up during times of suffering? If so, in what ways? If not, why not? Same question for thanksgiving. Have seasons of suffering in your life ever become the occasion for thanksgiving (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:20)? If so, please share with the group.

8. Close your time as a group by praying together. Whether you're experiencing tailwinds, headwinds, or find yourself in the midst of the whirlwind, let's pray *with* as well as *for* one another that we would come to see that storms are indeed the triumph of God's art.

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<sup>1</sup> Let's remember that all of God's promises are "yes" in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20), meaning that the first and greatest promise God ever made was that he would send a seed of the woman to crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Moreover, it's a promise he undeniably kept in the life, death, and resurrection of his Son Jesus. The result is that if God did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, he will surely not withhold from us anything else he's promised for our life and godliness (Romans 8:32; 2 Peter 1:3-4) - promises of his pardon (1 John 1:9), presence (Matthew 28:20), power (Isaiah 41:10), pleasure (Psalm 16:11) and people (Matthew 16:16).