

# Celebrating Life in the Midst of Life's Storms

By Rev. Kim DeVries

## OPENING PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, sometimes we feel overwhelmed by life. We may grow tired and weary, weak and discouraged. We may question whether You love us and even care about what is happening to us. We may fear that there may be something in our past that can never be forgiven and that prevents us from being close to You. We may find it difficult to rejoice in Your goodness and to find joy in our relationship with You. Open our hearts now as we study Your Word together to hear and believe the wonderful message of Your love for us and Your plan of salvation. Strengthen our trust in You as our loving, caring Father so that we can find the joy in life that You intend for all of Your children. In Jesus, our Savior's Name, we pray. Amen.

## INTRODUCTION

It seems easy to celebrate life when everything is going well for us, our health is good, and our finances are secure. But how do we celebrate when the dark clouds of doubt, disease, despair, and discouragement fill our lives? How can we rejoice when we question God's very existence, agonize over our failures and mistakes, and wonder if God could ever love us and forgive us?

A woman once told her pastor that she wondered if God was interested in her life and even cared about what was happening to her. She felt totally unwanted and unloved by anyone. She is not alone in those fears. Describe the feelings expressed in the following verses and consider whether you've ever felt the same way:

**Job 3:25-26**

**Psalms 13:1-3**



As our Lord began His ministry, He went into the desert for 40 days to fast and meditate. While there the devil came to Jesus and tempted Him three times. In his tempting words, Satan questioned Jesus' very identity as the Son of God. Read **Matthew 4:1-11** and pay close attention to verses 3 and 6.

How does Satan use our trials to cause us to question whether we are a son or daughter of God?

How did Jesus meet the devil's challenges? (See verses 4, 7, and 10.)

How can we apply Jesus' words to our own temptations to despair and doubt?

Even though we believe in God and are faithful to Him, there may still be dark days in our life. In those difficult times we can rediscover and celebrate the joy that we can have as believers in our loving God by turning to Scripture.

Read **Habakkuk 3:17, 18**. What is the prophet here affirming in the midst of the tough times of life and what can we learn here?

A program on a nature channel describes birds that live at the tip of South America where there are high winds and cold, stormy weather. These birds build their nests and raise their young in the cliffs overlooking the ocean and have learned to live and thrive in that bleak environment.

As Christians we, too, must learn to nest in the inevitable gales of life. Read and discuss how **James 1:2-4** tells us this is possible.

Read the following Scriptures and discuss together how God helps us to survive in the midst of life's storms and tempests.

**Genesis 26:24**

**Joshua 1:9**

**Psalms 34:18-19**

**Isaiah 41:10**

**Matthew 11:28-30**

A young soldier in Iraq writes to his pastor that he finds great comfort in **Psalm 46: 1-3, 7**. Why do you think these verses would be helpful to a soldier serving in a difficult and dangerous place? What comfort can you find in these verses wherever you are presently serving God?

In the next verses, God affirms that He cares for us and knows what is happening to us. Read and discuss them together.

**Job 23:10**

**Jeremiah 29:11-13**

**Matthew 10:29-31**

**Philippians 4:6**

What additional promises does God make to us that give us hope in our struggles? Read **Isaiah 40:29-31**.

**Hebrews 12:1-2**

From all these verses we can see that the ability to celebrate life does not depend on sunny circumstances or the absence of conflict and stress. Rather it comes from knowing that whatever we face in life, God loves us, He cares about us, He gives us second chances, He is always there to help us, we have fellow Christians to cheer us on, and that there are joys ahead for each of us whether in this world or the next.

## CLOSING

Give those present an opportunity to share how they have found in their own life God's joy in the midst of life's storms.

Sing or recite together the comforting words of the hymn, "If You But Trust in God to Guide You" (*LW 420*; also found in *TLH 518* and *LSB 750*).



*Listen to the song With You, With Me sung by Angela Dittmar. Go to [www.lwml.org](http://www.lwml.org), find the Quarterly icon, and click on the link to the song. ©2007. Permission granted for use by LWML.*

*Pastor Kim DeVries, senior Pastor at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas, has served as a pastoral counselor on the zone and district level LWML. He and his wife, Cathy, have written several Bible studies and other resources for the LWML. They have two adult sons.*