

## **God is Our Life Preserver**

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You've heard it, I'm sure. It is a common phrase of encouragement, often used when giving a pep talk to a teenager, college student or new employee. It goes like this, "Your career is in your hands." The message is that it is up to you. You can do as much or as little as you want. All you need is to get a good education, work hard and set goals for yourself and you can have it all.

This is a good and valuable message. It is true, but only to a degree.

What happens when the company you work for decides to send your job overseas, hiring cheaper labor? What happens when the company you work for faces tough economic times and is forced to cut some of its operations? What happens when the stock markets crater, the financial markets tighten credit, and businesses are forced to close?

But I thought you had a good education; but I thought you had a world of experience in your field; but I thought you worked hard; but I thought you had a good performance review every year; but I thought that you saved for your retirement.

What happened? How could you have lost your job? How come you can't find a new job? Will you have to move? Will you be able to find a new job at your age? What happened to your savings account?

How are you doing? Some of us get angry or depressed when these things happen. Others seem to take it in stride.

Where do these other people get their strength?

Last summer, my husband and I went canoeing on the Chrystal River near Waupaca, Wisconsin. We were in a small, miniature, fiberglass canoe. We were heading

over a spot in the river that had a number of rocks and right after the rocks was a quick turn to the left. Not being canoe paddling experts, I was quite pleased that we were able to maneuver past the initial set of rocks, even though the path was a bit bumpy. But then came the quick turn, in a spot where the current was too fast, pushing us straight toward the bank. Just before reaching the bank, there was another rock, one I didn't see until it was too late. "Turn! Stop! No, go left, go left, go left," I shouted to my husband. "I'm trying," he shouted back.

Then it happened, slowly but surely, with no physical way to stop the inevitable. The canoe jolted and then lodged on the hidden rock. The river current pushed against its side like a bulldozer, until it tipped, dumping me into the water, soaking me from head to toe. I was drenched. My boat had capsized. There was nothing more to do. Yet, somehow, my husband fared better than I. He managed to get out of the boat before it went under. He stood there, reasonably dry and comfortable.

Perhaps someone with better canoeing skills might have fared better on that turn than I, but it is a lot like losing a job at no fault of your own. It is a lot like losing your savings to a deep dip in the financial markets. It is a lot like being diagnosed with a life changing disease. Being dumped into the brink is a lot like the many bumps in life that hit us, whether expectedly or unexpectedly.

Does any of this sound familiar? Can you relate? How come some people manage to face the capsizing boat with confidence and peace? What kind of life preserver do they have?

Their life preserver is their faith; their strength comes from God. Many people understand that life is not fully within their control. They know that life happens, and

what happens isn't always good. They know that their boat might capsize even when they have done everything within their control, but they also know that God is with them.

Through God, in good times and in bad times, there is peace. The Apostle Paul said this same thing in his letter to the Philippians, chapter 4, verses 12-13. "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (NIV)

God was Paul's strength. God is my strength. Find your strength through Him. He is our life preserver.