

Sermon Preparation Kit

A five-week biblical preaching resource

Designed to accompany the When Crisis Hits video vignette series.

STRENGTH • DEPENDENCE • HELP • LAMENT • PURPOSE

Five specific biblical crises invite five distinct responses of faith. This kit provides historical context, character studies, sermon outlines, theological guidance, study references, practical calls to action, prayers, FAQs and guided preparation prompts.

THE SERIES BURDEN
- When crisis hits, turn toward God and take the next faithful step.
- God's faithfulness is deeper than a promise that every crisis will end as we wish.

Includes the approved series artwork and separate preparation sections for all five weeks. The outlines are adaptable preaching scaffolds, with Scripture remaining primary.

SERIES OVERVIEW

General Series Introduction

Crisis interrupts our assumptions. A home is lost, a threat grows beyond our resources, a debt becomes unmanageable, a diagnosis changes the future, or the plan carrying us forward breaks apart. These moments expose both our vulnerability and the places where we have located our security. The church needs language that is truthful about the pain and confident in the character of God.

When Crisis Hits follows five biblical accounts without treating them as interchangeable success stories. David seeks strength before pursuing the raiders. Jehoshaphat admits helplessness before his people. A widow asks for help. Hezekiah brings tears into prayer. Paul trusts a divine promise while taking practical action on a failing ship. Each account has its own setting, its own particular deliverance and its own pastoral emphasis.

The series moves from the inner response of a distressed person to shared dependence, receiving help, honest lament and resilient obedience. It is not a ladder on which mature Christians stop grieving. A listener may need every response at once, and may return to an earlier one many times. The aim is a congregation able to seek God and care for one another while the outcome is still unknown.

Series Arc

Week and crisis	Primary passage	Distinct response
1. When Everything You Love Is Gone	1 Samuel 30:1-20	STRENGTH Recover your strength in God before deciding your next step.
2. When the Threat Is Bigger Than You	2 Chronicles 20:1-30	DEPENDENCE Admitting your limits can be an act of faithful leadership.
3. When You Cannot Afford Tomorrow	2 Kings 4:1-7	HELP Receiving help is not a failure of faith.
4. When the News Changes Your Future	2 Kings 20:1-11; Isaiah 38:1-20	LAMENT Faith makes room for honest lament.
5. When the Ship Goes Down	Acts 27:9-44	PURPOSE The loss of your plan does not necessarily mean the loss of God’s purpose.

Guide to the weekly sections

Each week contains: 1 Introduction; 2 Biblical History and Character Description; 3 Suggested Sermon Outline; 4 Comprehensive External Study References; 5 Suggested Call to Action; and 6 Frequently Asked Questions. Vignette connections and preparation prompts appear throughout, followed by discussion questions and a closing line.

How to Use This Kit

Start with the passage. Read the primary text several times, then its surrounding chapters. Identify what happened, what God said and what the narrator emphasizes before choosing an illustration.

Use the film as a doorway. Each planned film runs approximately 2:20. Show it before the reading or as the transition into exposition. The kit summarizes the scripted film; the completed edit should be checked against the passage. Visual reconstruction must not become the authority for biblical details.

Choose a central burden. Use the four-point outline as scaffolding. A suggested 30-minute message may allow 3 minutes for opening and video, 4 for reading and context, 15 for exposition, 4 for the gospel connection and 4 for response. Adjust to your service and reading length.

Answer the prep prompts before writing. Use the callouts to find the congregation's particular need. The same passage may comfort one listener and challenge another's habits of blame, control or indifference.

Study with discernment. The annotated references are further-study recommendations, not quotations from the books. Begin with the relevant passage entry. Commentary series represent different emphases; use them to test and deepen your own reading.

Make the response practical. Arrange follow-up before making an invitation. A congregation may need meals, companionship, prayer, help making a call or contact with appropriate local support. State what the church can actually offer.

Preach to the person still in the crisis

All five accounts include a remarkable rescue or provision. Say clearly that their particular promises are not automatic guarantees of the same outcome for every listener. Keep the Christian hope centered on God's faithful presence, Christ's saving work and resurrection. Do not judge a person's faith by whether the crisis has ended.

Ask permission before using personal stories. Avoid pressuring listeners to disclose pain publicly, and do not treat the sermon as a substitute for appropriate professional or emergency help. The red beacon is a visual symbol for urgency; it does not need to flash during a service or be accompanied by an actual siren.

> **SERIES PREP PROMPTS**
> • What single sentence should listeners remember across all five weeks?
> • Where does this congregation need permission to grieve, and where does it need a challenge to help?
> • Who will receive requests for follow-up, and what support can the church genuinely provide?

Scripture wording in the commentary and suggested spoken transitions is generally original paraphrase. Read public Scripture passages from your congregation's chosen translation and follow that translation's permissions when reproducing extended text.



WEEK 1 | STRENGTH

Primary text: 1 Samuel 30:1-20

Distinct lesson: Recover your strength in God before deciding your next step.

> **VIGNETTE CONNECTION**
> • The 2:20 film moves from the burned homes of Ziklag to David's distress, his inquiry through Abiathar, the exhausted men at Besor, and the abandoned Egyptian servant who leads them to the raiders. The families are rescued. Its closing emphasis returns to the earlier moment among the ashes: finding strength in God before acting. The empty frame and house key on the weekly graphic connect that ancient loss to contemporary fears about home and loved ones.

1 Introduction

A crisis can take away more than possessions. It can shake our sense of home, expose the fragility of our relationships, and leave us uncertain about who we are. David reaches Ziklag and discovers that the people he expected to embrace are gone. The men around him are grieving, and their grief becomes a threat against him. He has to lead while suffering the same loss as everyone else.

The hinge of the account is not David's tactical skill. Before the pursuit begins, he strengthens himself in the Lord and seeks direction. This does not make his pain disappear. It gives his next action a different source. The sermon should make room for tears, then ask what will guide us when tears have exhausted us. God's character, rather than the loudest accusation or strongest impulse, becomes the place from which we respond.

Suggested transition after the film: The rescue is remarkable. But before we look at what David recovered, notice where he turned when he had no strength left.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • What kind of loss is present in this congregation right now, and how can you acknowledge it without exposing anyone?
> • What is the difference between urging people to be strong and inviting them to find strength in God?

2 Biblical History and Character Description

Read 1 Samuel 27-31 for context; include 30:21-25 when extending the application.

David before the throne. David is still a fugitive, not the reigning king. Achish had assigned him Ziklag in Philistine territory (27:5-7). His presence there belongs to a complicated period of fear, accommodation and warfare. Do not turn the episode into a claim that David had made no questionable decisions or that faithful people never contribute to difficult circumstances.

The crisis and its victims. The Amalekites burn Ziklag and carry away its inhabitants alive (30:1-3). David's wives Ahinoam and Abigail are among the captives. The men's weeping is shared grief, not a failure of masculinity or faith. The threat of stoning is reported; the text does not say they actually stone David.

Abiathar and the ephod. Abiathar is a priest associated with David; his escape from Saul's slaughter of the priests is told in 22:20-23. David asks him to bring the ephod and then inquires of the Lord (30:7-8). The text records a specific instruction and assurance. It does not provide a modern technique for receiving infallible answers to every decision.

The exhausted and the abandoned. Of six hundred men, two hundred cannot continue beyond Besor. Four hundred pursue. They feed and give water to an Egyptian servant whose master abandoned him when he became ill. His knowledge leads them to the camp (30:9-16). Human weakness is encountered along the path of deliverance, not edited out of it.

Recovery and generous leadership. David recovers the captives and possessions (30:18-20). In the extended reading, he refuses to exclude the exhausted men from sharing the spoil (30:21-25). Strength renewed in God should make a leader more generous toward the weak, not more contemptuous of them.

Theological and interpretive care

The chapter participates in the larger account of David's emergence as king while Saul's reign collapses. Its specific promise of recovery belongs to this event. The application is not that every loss is reversible; it is that grief can be brought to the faithful God who directs his people. Do not label the Egyptian servant's illness a punishment or claim that God caused the raid to teach David a lesson; the passage does not give those explanations.

Supporting biblical connections

Psalm 56:3-4 — Fear and trust can be present together.

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 — God's comfort equips his people to comfort others.

Hebrews 4:14-16 — Christ invites the weak to seek mercy and timely help.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • What does the text actually tell us about how David strengthened himself, and what are you tempted to invent?
> • Will your sermon leave room for a grieving person whose loved one will not return?

3 Suggested Sermon Outline

Proposed sermon title: When Everything You Love Is Gone

Primary text: 1 Samuel 30:1-20

Repeated refrain: Find strength for the next faithful step.

I. Name the devastation honestly (30:1-6a)

Exegesis: The account gives grief time and language. The men weep until their strength is gone. David's distress includes both his own loss and the threat from his followers.

Practical and theological implication: Let people name what has happened before asking them to solve it. A faithful first response may be tears, a truthful prayer and the presence of a trusted person. Do not demand an immediate testimony of victory.

II. Seek strength before choosing direction (30:6b-8)

Exegesis: David turns to the Lord, calls for Abiathar and seeks guidance. The narrative places dependence before pursuit. Strength here is relational trust expressed in inquiry, not merely determination.

Practical and theological implication: Identify the reaction crisis is tempting you to make: blame, retaliation, withdrawal or a hurried promise. Bring it before God and seek wise help before making a consequential decision when a pause is possible.

III. Take the next faithful step with compassion (30:9-16)

Exegesis: The journey proceeds through exhaustion and an encounter with an abandoned man. Food and water restore the servant enough to speak. The route to the camp emerges through this encounter.

Practical and theological implication: Dependence on God and practical care belong together. Ask what action is available now and whom you might overlook because your own pain has narrowed your attention.

IV. Let received mercy shape your response (30:18-25)

Exegesis: The recovery is attributed to the Lord in David's later words to his men (v. 23). He protects the share of those who were too weak to continue. This extended conclusion challenges the stronger men's sense of entitlement.

Practical and theological implication: When you regain stability, resist judging those still exhausted. Turn remembered dependence into patient care. Use this final point only if you read or summarize verses 21-25 clearly.

Gospel connection

David is not a flawless savior, and the church is not promised an identical rescue. Move to Christ through the wider biblical witness: our great high priest understands weakness and opens the way to God's mercy (Hebrews 4:14-16). We approach God because of Christ, not because we have recovered our composure. His resurrection grounds a hope that reaches beyond losses this life cannot repair.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • Which point carries the sermon's main burden, and which can be shortened?
> • What sentence will help listeners distinguish God's enduring character from David's event-specific promise?

4 Comprehensive External Study References

David Toshio Tsumura. *The First Book of Samuel.* New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Eerdmans. Resource

Read the treatment of 1 Samuel 30 after tracing chapters 27-29. Use it to investigate narrative context and difficult wording.

Dale Ralph Davis. *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart.* Focus on the Bible; Christian Focus. Resource

Consult the exposition of chapter 30 for a preaching conversation partner. Test each application against the passage before adopting it.

Mark Vroegop. *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament.* Crossway. Resource

Use the material on biblical lament to keep the sermon from rushing mourners toward a cheerful ending.

Primary text. *1 Samuel 30.* King James Version; Bible Gateway. Resource

Read the whole chapter, especially the often-omitted conversation with the exhausted men in verses 21-25.

Illustration development

Hypothetical illustration: after a house fire, one person is pressed to make dozens of decisions before the shock has settled. A trusted friend sits beside them, helps identify the next necessary call, and stays. Use the example to show the difference between solving an entire future and receiving strength for one step; do not equate the friend with Abiathar in every detail.

5 Suggested Call to Action

Invite listeners to write three brief lines privately: What I have lost; What I know of God; The next faithful step I can take. The step might be asking someone to sit with them, arranging a necessary conversation, or accepting practical help. It is not a pledge to feel better. Invite those who have capacity to offer one specific act of support rather than general advice.

Church follow-through: Arrange a quiet way to request pastoral follow-up. Ask permission before sharing a person's story. Let the congregation know that those who cannot yet name a next step are still welcome and will not be hurried.

Suggested closing prayer: Lord, you see what has been taken from us and what fear is doing within us. Give us strength to turn toward you. Guide our next step, and make us gentle toward those who are exhausted. Through Jesus Christ, amen.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • Is the response possible for someone who is still in shock?
> • Who will offer practical follow-up after the service?

6 Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Does this promise that God will give back everything I have lost?

A: No. God gives David a specific assurance in verse 8, and this particular rescue fulfills it. Scripture also records faithful people who endure loss without restoration during their lifetime. Preach God's faithfulness and the Christian hope of resurrection without promising the return of every possession or relationship.

Q: How exactly did David strengthen himself in the Lord?

A: Verse 6 states that he did so but does not give a transcript of his thoughts or a prescribed ritual. His subsequent inquiry is explicit. Prayer, remembering God's character and seeking wise spiritual support are responsible applications, but should not be presented as a list of actions the text says David performed.

Q: Was the crisis punishment for David's choices?

A: The preceding chapters invite reflection on David's complicated circumstances, but chapter 30 does not explicitly identify the raid as divine punishment. Resist turning a narrative inference into certainty or suggesting that a listener's tragedy proves hidden wrongdoing.

Q: Were the two hundred men simply faithless?

A: The text says they were too exhausted to continue. David later protects their right to share the spoil. Their physical limits should not become an illustration of spiritual inferiority.

Q: Does turning to God mean waiting instead of acting?

A: Not necessarily. David seeks direction and then acts decisively. The lesson concerns the source and character of our response, not a required delay when immediate protective action is needed.

Discussion and reflection

1. Where does grief turn into blame in this story?

2. What changes when strength is received rather than performed?

3. How could our group honor someone who is too exhausted to keep up?

> **CLOSING LINE**
> • Your first faithful step may be turning toward God while someone helps you stand.



WEEK 2 | DEPENDENCE

Primary text: 2 Chronicles 20:1-30

Distinct lesson: Admitting your limits can be an act of faithful leadership.

VIGNETTE CONNECTION

• The 2:20 film begins with the report of invasion, follows the national assembly and Jehoshaphat's public prayer, and shows the response through Jahaziel. Worship precedes the march; singers lead the army; the enemy coalition destroys itself. The small orange block beneath a towering dark block on the weekly graphic expresses the imbalance between a threat and our perceived capacity.

1 Introduction

People often expect leaders to have an answer before they have had time to understand the problem. Parents, pastors, managers and caregivers can mistake confidence for certainty and conceal fear to preserve authority. Jehoshaphat's prayer offers a different picture. The king openly confesses his people's powerlessness and turns their attention toward God.

His admission is not surrender to chaos. He gathers the people, remembers the Lord's covenant faithfulness, listens to the word God gives, and leads the response. The sermon's distinct burden is this: a leader can be honest about limits and still help people move faithfully. The question is not whether we look invulnerable, but whether we direct those entrusted to us toward a trustworthy source of help.

Suggested transition after the film: The king's most faithful leadership began with an admission that many leaders are afraid to make: we do not know what to do.

SERMON PREP PROMPTS

• Who in your congregation feels responsible for everyone else's confidence?
• How will you distinguish humble dependence from refusing to take responsibility?

2 Biblical History and Character Description

Read 2 Chronicles 19:4-11 and 20:31-37 to keep the king's larger story in view.

Judah under threat. Jehoshaphat rules the southern kingdom of Judah in the ninth century BC. The invading coalition includes Moab, Ammon and people associated with Mount Seir (20:1,10,22-23). The account reports the advance from the region of En-gedi. Explain only enough geography to convey a concrete and approaching danger.

Fear leads to seeking. The king is afraid and sets himself to seek the Lord. He proclaims a fast, and people come from Judah's towns (vv. 3-4). The assembly includes women and children (v. 13). This is the vulnerability of a whole community, not a private test of the king's spirituality.

A prayer shaped by God's story. Jehoshaphat appeals to God's sovereignty, his gift of the land and the sanctuary's role as a place of appeal in distress (vv. 5-12). The prayer echoes the concerns of Solomon's temple prayer in 2 Chronicles 6. Its final confession of helplessness follows remembered faithfulness rather than replacing it.

Jahaziel and the specific word. The Spirit comes upon Jahaziel, a Levite from the line of Asaph. His message tells Judah where to go and that they will not need to fight in this battle (vv. 14-17). He is not the king. The account makes room for God's instruction to come through another member of the assembly.

Praise and deliverance. The king and people bow, Levites praise, and the next morning the procession goes out with singers before the army. The Lord sets ambushes; the enemy forces turn on one another. Judah collects spoil for three days and blesses God on the fourth before returning (vv. 18-30).

Theological and interpretive care

Chronicles tells Israel's history with sustained attention to seeking God, worship, temple and Davidic kingship. This event displays divine deliverance without Judah's combat. It does not authorize every modern nation, church or individual to identify opponents as these enemy armies. Nor is the ending a universal prediction that prayer will remove every threat. The king's later failed alliance in 20:35-37 also prevents an unqualified portrait of permanent success.

Supporting biblical connections

2 Chronicles 6:28-31 — The temple prayer anticipates appeals during affliction.

James 1:5 — Those who lack wisdom are invited to ask God.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 — God's strength is not dependent on human invulnerability.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • What details make the promise specific to Judah in this event?
> • How does the presence of families change the tone of your telling?

3 Suggested Sermon Outline

Proposed sermon title: When the Threat Is Bigger Than You

Primary text: 2 Chronicles 20:1-30

Repeated refrain: We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.

I. Let fear move you toward God (20:1-4)

Exegesis: The king's fear is stated before his seeking. He neither denies the danger nor treats fear as a reason to abandon prayer. He calls the nation into a shared response.

Practical and theological implication: Give leaders permission to acknowledge fear without making it the congregation's master. Name the threat accurately, then invite prayer and mutual support.

II. Remember who God is before declaring what you cannot do (20:5-12)

Exegesis: Jehoshaphat's prayer begins with God's rule and faithfulness, then arrives at Judah's helplessness. His confession is framed by relationship and history.

Practical and theological implication: Teach listeners to pray with both honesty and remembrance. Acknowledge limits without concluding that those limits define God's capacity or character.

III. Receive guidance without needing to own every answer (20:13-19)

Exegesis: The word comes through Jahaziel. The king bows with the people. Authority does not require him to be the source of every insight.

Practical and theological implication: Ask leaders to listen, especially when crisis tempts them to isolate. Evaluate proposed direction by Scripture and wise counsel; do not equate every confident impression with Jahaziel's prophetic word.

IV. Obey the direction you have received (20:20-30)

Exegesis: Judah goes out as instructed. Their praise expresses trust before they see the outcome. Deliverance produces thanksgiving rather than credit for military skill.

Practical and theological implication: Dependence has actions: gather, listen, go, stand and give thanks. Ask what obedience looks like now without promising that worship will make every opponent disappear.

Gospel connection

Move from the king's confessed weakness to Christ's faithful obedience. In Gethsemane, Jesus brings anguish before the Father and submits to his will (Mark 14:32-42). The cross shows that divine victory may come through suffering rather than its avoidance. Christian leadership follows the servant Lord; it does not need to imitate an image of unbroken control.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • Where does the sermon move from helplessness into obedient action?
> • How will you prevent the phrase "the battle belongs to God" from becoming a reason to neglect responsibility?

4 Comprehensive External Study References

Martin J. Selman. *2 Chronicles.* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries; IVP. Resource

Study chapter 20 within the book's themes of seeking, worship and covenant.

Michael Wilcock. *The Message of Chronicles.* The Bible Speaks Today; IVP. Resource

Use this exposition as a preaching conversation partner on the message of Chronicles.

John Stott. *The Message of Acts.* The Bible Speaks Today; IVP. Resource

For the wider series, compare how Acts portrays prayer and shared dependence without importing Judah's military promise into the church.

Primary text. *2 Chronicles 20.* King James Version; Bible Gateway. Resource

Read the entire prayer aloud, then trace each response from assembly through thanksgiving.

Illustration development

Hypothetical illustration: a family faces a major decision after a sudden change in a parent's employment. The parent says, 'I cannot answer every question tonight, but we will seek God, face the facts and ask for help together.' The point is accountable honesty, not an assurance that the family will quickly recover its former circumstances.

5 Suggested Call to Action

Invite each listener who carries responsibility to write one honest admission and one faithful action. For example: I cannot control the outcome; I can gather accurate information, pray with others and make the next responsible decision. Encourage a conversation with one trusted person instead of a public performance of vulnerability.

Church follow-through: For a leadership team, name the decision, the information still missing, who will be consulted, and when the next update will be offered. Shared prayer should accompany responsible communication rather than replace it.

Suggested closing prayer: Sovereign Lord, we do not see the whole way ahead. Keep our eyes on you. Give us humility to listen, wisdom to act and courage to lead without pretending that we are beyond fear. Through Christ our Lord, amen.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • What concrete action will accompany the call to trust?
> • Are you inviting honest leadership without asking people to disclose more than is appropriate?

6 Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Does “the battle is God’s” mean believers should never resist or act?

A: No. In this particular battle Judah is instructed not to fight, but is still told to go out and take its position. Other passages include different instructions. The enduring application is dependence and obedience, not a universal command to remain passive.

Q: Did singing force God to defeat the enemy?

A: The text connects their singing with God’s action, but God had already given the promise before the procession began. Praise responds to his word; it is not a mechanism that places him under human control.

Q: Who set the ambushes?

A: Verse 22 attributes the ambushes to the Lord without identifying the agents. The next verse describes the enemy forces turning on one another. It is better to leave the unexplained detail open than to invent an angelic army.

Q: Is it wrong for a pastor or parent to say “I don’t know”?

A: Not when it is truthful and accompanied by responsible care. Jehoshaphat admits the nation’s limits while continuing to gather, pray, listen and lead. Humility is compatible with responsibility.

Q: Can we identify our critics with Judah’s enemies?

A: That is a dangerous leap. The passage concerns a specific invasion within Judah’s covenant history. It should not be used to portray disagreement in a church as proof that God will destroy those who question its leaders.

Discussion and reflection

1. What does Jehoshaphat remember before he admits powerlessness?

2. Who speaks the word of direction, and how does the king respond?

3. What would responsible dependence look like in one decision before us?

CLOSING LINE

- You can lead faithfully without pretending to know everything.



WEEK 3 | HELP

Primary text: 2 Kings 4:1-7

Distinct lesson: Receiving help is not a failure of faith.

> **VIGNETTE CONNECTION**
> • The 2:20 film stays close to the widow, her two sons and Elisha. Neighbors lend vessels; the mother pours behind a closed door; the oil stops when no vessel remains. She reports back, and Elisha tells her to sell, repay and live on the remainder. The empty wallet and envelope on the graphic bring the pressure into a recognizable modern setting without claiming the ancient debt system was identical to ours.

1 Introduction

Financial pressure can isolate people before it becomes visible. Shame makes a person avoid a conversation, delay asking for help or imagine that every neighbor is managing better. The widow in 2 Kings 4 faces more than a tight budget. Her debt threatens the freedom of her children, and she has no obvious means of making the danger go away.

Her first action is to cry out. She tells Elisha the truth about her husband's death, the creditor and her two sons. The story then brings together God's extraordinary provision and ordinary participation: a remaining jar of oil, neighbors' vessels, the sons' work, and instructions about selling and repayment. Its unique lesson is permission to receive help. The miracle belongs to God; the widow is not required to maintain an appearance of self-sufficiency.

Suggested transition after the film: Before there was oil in the borrowed vessels, there was a woman willing to say plainly: I need help.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • How can you speak about debt without assuming that every financial crisis results from carelessness?
> • Will someone in need hear a practical invitation or only an inspiring story?

2 Biblical History and Character Description

Read 2 Kings 4 as a whole; compare the distinct widow account in 1 Kings 17:8-16.

A widow in the prophetic community. The woman identifies her husband as Elisha's servant and as one who feared the Lord. The expression "sons of the prophets" refers to a prophetic group, not necessarily biological sons of prophets. The widow is unnamed; the text gives no ages for her sons and does not name the town.

Debt and threatened servitude. The creditor is coming to take the sons as bondservants. This is a threat to the household's future, not a temporary inconvenience. The account reports the practice; reporting it is not an instruction for Christians to imitate it. Do not attempt a direct one-to-one comparison with a modern legal system.

Elisha's question. Elisha asks what he can do and what she has in the house. Her remaining oil is identified before the instruction to borrow vessels. The text does not tell us the oil's volume, commercial value or exact intended use. Avoid building a sermon on a speculative claim that it was a special anointing oil.

Neighbors and sons. She is told to borrow many empty vessels, then close the door with her sons inside. They bring the vessels while she pours. Elisha is not present in the room. The miracle is situated within a household's obedience and a neighborhood's available resources.

A practical conclusion. When there are no more vessels, the oil stops. The widow reports to Elisha, who directs her to sell, pay her debt and live on the remainder. The recorded scene ends with that instruction, not with a described marketplace transaction or a statement that she becomes wealthy.

Theological and interpretive care

God's concern for the vulnerable is embodied in this rescue. The oil is not explicitly assigned a symbolic meaning in the passage, and the empty vessels are not identified as measures of the widow's faith. Resist turning the miracle into a technique for increasing income or a demand to give money in order to receive money. A church that celebrates this account should also consider how it receives and assists people with real material needs.

Supporting biblical connections

Deuteronomy 15:7-11 — God's people are instructed to be openhanded toward those in need.

James 2:14-17 — Words of concern without practical help are inadequate.

Galatians 6:2 — Sharing burdens is part of the life of Christ's people.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • Which details belong to Elisha's widow, and which belong to Elijah's different story?
> • What will keep the sermon centered on God's compassion instead of a financial formula?

3 Suggested Sermon Outline

Proposed sermon title: When You Cannot Afford Tomorrow

Primary text: 2 Kings 4:1-7

Repeated refrain: Tell the truth about what you need.

I. Bring the real need into the open (4:1)

Exegesis: The widow speaks directly about death, debt and the threat to her children. Her husband's reverence for God has not exempted the household from crisis.

Practical and theological implication: Challenge the assumption that needing assistance proves spiritual failure. Offer a confidential, dignified way to ask for help without requiring a person to perform desperation.

II. Name what remains without pretending it is enough (4:2)

Exegesis: The jar of oil is real, but it cannot by ordinary means meet the described threat. Elisha's question notices a resource without minimizing the need.

Practical and theological implication: Help listeners inventory what is available: a relationship, skill, meal, opportunity or small resource. Avoid implying that hardship exists only because people have failed to notice their potential.

III. Receive help and participate in the response (4:3-6)

Exegesis: Neighbors lend the vessels; the sons bring them; the widow pours. Their actions do not explain away God's miracle, but the account does not separate provision from participation.

Practical and theological implication: Invite both sides of the church's response: those in need may ask, and those with capacity may lend, give, accompany or connect. Do not make receiving conditional on appearing sufficiently useful.

IV. Let provision serve actual obligations and daily life (4:7)

Exegesis: Elisha's instruction names debt repayment and the household's continuing survival. The conclusion is concrete rather than ostentatious.

Practical and theological implication: Keep the application equally concrete. The goal is a household helped, not a spectacular testimony collected. Ask what responsible support looks like after Sunday.

Gospel connection

The story reveals God's compassionate provision, but Elisha is not presented as Christ in every detail. Connect the application to the gospel through Jesus' generous self-giving and the church's material care (2 Corinthians 8:9,13-15). Grace forms a community in which people can receive as well as give. We do not purchase God's compassion by demonstrating financial competence.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • What action will you ask from those who have resources?
> • What sentence will reassure those who are not ready to disclose their need publicly?

4 Comprehensive External Study References

Donald J. Wiseman. *1 and 2 Kings.* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries; IVP. Resource

Consult the exposition of 2 Kings 4:1-7 for the account's historical and literary setting.

John W. Olley. *The Message of Kings.* The Bible Speaks Today; IVP. Resource

Read the surrounding Elisha narratives and consider how this household episode contributes to the message of Kings.

Mark Vroegop. *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament.* Crossway. Resource

Use this pastoral resource to keep financial vulnerability from being treated merely as a problem to solve.

Primary text. *2 Kings 4:1-7.* King James Version; Bible Gateway. Resource

Read the seven verses slowly and compare 1 Kings 17 so the distinct details remain clear.

Illustration development

Hypothetical illustration: a congregant says, 'I can manage,' while quietly missing meals to cover an essential bill. A friend asks privately what would actually help and follows through without making the story public. Use the illustration to expose shame and invite dignified assistance, not to promise an easy solution to every debt.

5 Suggested Call to Action

Offer two responses. Those in need may contact a designated trusted church leader and name one specific need. Those able to help may offer one concrete resource or act of service through the church's established care process. Make it clear that neither response requires a public disclosure. Encourage a conversation that begins with listening: What would help you most right now?

Church follow-through: Before preaching, identify who receives requests and how the church follows up. Preserve privacy, avoid public storytelling without permission, and do not promise assistance that has not been arranged. Refer complex financial or legal questions to qualified local help rather than improvising answers from the pulpit.

Suggested closing prayer: Compassionate Father, free us from the shame that keeps us isolated. Help us speak truthfully, receive graciously and give generously. Make our church attentive to households under pressure. Provide what is needed, and teach us to share. In Jesus' name, amen.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • Does the church have a real contact person for the invitation you will make?
> • Have you framed generosity as care rather than a guaranteed investment return?

6 Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Is this the same widow Elijah visited during the famine?

A: No. In 1 Kings 17 Elijah meets a widow at Zarephath whose flour and oil are sustained during famine. In 2 Kings 4 Elisha responds to a prophet's widow whose two sons face debt servitude. Mixing the stories produces details that neither account contains.

Q: Does the oil represent the Holy Spirit?

A: The passage does not identify that symbolism. Oil can have different uses and associations elsewhere in Scripture, but an association should not be imposed as the meaning of this particular miracle. The plain narrative concerns God's provision for a threatened household.

Q: Would more faith have produced more oil?

A: The text says the oil stopped when no more vessels were available. It does not rebuke the widow or say that she lacked faith. Turning the stopping point into a criticism of poor people goes beyond the account.

Q: Does faith guarantee that every debt will be paid miraculously?

A: No universal guarantee is given here. This specific act reveals God's compassionate power. Its application includes honest prayer, receiving help and practical generosity, without promising identical financial outcomes.

Q: Should a person have to tell the whole church before receiving help?

A: No. The widow tells Elisha her need, and the pouring takes place privately with her sons. The account does not prescribe a church procedure, but it gives no basis for demanding public exposure as a condition of care.

Discussion and reflection

1. What forms of help appear before and during the miracle?

2. What makes asking for help difficult in our community?

3. How can we offer assistance without taking away someone's dignity?

CLOSING LINE

- You do not have to carry alone what the people of God can help you bear.



WEEK 4 | LAMENT

Primary text: 2 Kings 20:1-11; Isaiah 38:1-20

Distinct lesson: Faith makes room for honest lament.

> **VIGNETTE CONNECTION**
> • The 2:20 film follows Isaiah's grave announcement, Hezekiah's tears and prayer, the prophet's return, the promise of fifteen years, the fig preparation and the backward-moving shadow. The lesson distinguishes the gift of this healing from a universal formula. The stethoscope and closed envelope on the graphic connect the account to today's moment of receiving life-changing news.

1 Introduction

Some news divides life into before and after. A diagnosis can change the meaning of a calendar, unsettle a household and make ordinary plans feel suddenly fragile. Hezekiah receives an announcement of approaching death, and the king's authority offers him no escape from human vulnerability. He turns his face toward the wall and weeps.

This week is not a lesson in how to secure an extension of life. It is an invitation to bring fear into prayer. God hears Hezekiah and grants a particular healing, but the text also preserves the anguish that preceded it. A faithful sermon should make room for both the person celebrating recovery and the person waiting for news that has not improved. Neither must pretend before God.

Suggested transition after the film: Before we speak about the years God added, listen to the prayer that came from a king who could not stop crying.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • Who will hear this sermon while still waiting for healing?
> • How can your language invite honest prayer without making calmness a test of faith?

2 Biblical History and Character Description

Read 2 Kings 18-20 and Isaiah 36-39 for the royal and Assyrian context.

A king under the shadow of Assyria. Hezekiah rules Judah in the late eighth century BC. His illness is narrated within accounts of Assyrian danger, and the promise includes protection for him and Jerusalem (2 Kings 20:6). The relationship between the illness and the surrounding events is discussed by interpreters; avoid claiming an exact chronology that the sermon does not need.

Isaiah's announcement. Isaiah tells the king to put his house in order because he will die (20:1). The scene is not a modern medical consultation. A prophet delivers the warning, while the illness itself is described as deadly. The text later mentions a boil; it does not supply a diagnosis such as cancer.

Prayer and bitter weeping. Hezekiah turns toward the wall, asks God to remember his faithful conduct and weeps bitterly (vv. 2-3). The account does not hide his distress. His appeal reflects his covenant relationship with God; it should not be converted into a claim that perfect behavior obligates God to heal.

The return and the promise. Before Isaiah has left the middle court in the KJV reading, God sends him back with assurance that the prayer has been heard and the tears seen. Fifteen years are promised, along with return to the Lord's house on the third day (vv. 4-6). Some translations reflect a different reading of the location; the essential point is the prompt return.

Figs, shadow and remembered anguish. A fig preparation is applied to the boil. Hezekiah asks for a sign; Isaiah prays and the shadow moves backward on Ahaz's device (vv. 7-11). Isaiah 38:9-20 preserves Hezekiah's reflection on his distress and recovery. The device's engineering is not explained, and the text does not offer a modern treatment protocol.

Theological and interpretive care

Prayer matters in the narrative: God explicitly responds to what he has heard and seen. Traditions explain the relationship between divine sovereignty and responsive prayer differently, but the sermon need not resolve every philosophical question before inviting prayer. Hold together God's freedom, the legitimacy of asking and the absence of a promise that every illness will end in recovery. Hezekiah later dies; Christian hope finally reaches beyond a temporary extension of life.

Supporting biblical connections

Psalm 13 — Lament gives fear and longing language before God.

Mark 14:32-36 — Jesus brings deep anguish and a real request to the Father.

Romans 8:22-27 — Groaning and the Spirit's help belong to Christian hope.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • Which part of the account is a specific promise to Hezekiah rather than a promise to every sick person?
> • Will the sermon explain prayer without implying that God must be persuaded to become compassionate?

3 Suggested Sermon Outline

Proposed sermon title: When the News Changes Your Future

Primary text: 2 Kings 20:1-11; Isaiah 38:1-20

Repeated refrain: You do not have to feel at peace before you pray.

I. Acknowledge the news that has changed the future (2 Kings 20:1)

Exegesis: The announcement names approaching death. Hezekiah's royal power cannot protect him from mortality. The narrative allows the seriousness of the news to stand.

Practical and theological implication: Avoid using reassurance to prevent a person from expressing fear. Ask what they have heard and what they are carrying; resist supplying a quick explanation for why it happened.

II. Bring the unedited heart into prayer (20:2-3)

Exegesis: Hezekiah turns to God and weeps. His prayer and his distress occupy the same scene. The text does not require emotional composure before the appeal is heard.

Practical and theological implication: Invite a plain prayer: God, this is what I fear, this is what I long for, and this is where I need help. Silence and tears can accompany that prayer.

III. Ask boldly while leaving the outcome with God (20:4-11)

Exegesis: God grants healing, additional years and a confirming sign in this event. The promise comes from God rather than a technique Hezekiah controls.

Practical and theological implication: Pray for healing without declaring a timetable or predicting a result Scripture has not promised. Appropriate care and faithful prayer need not compete; the narrative itself includes a material treatment.

IV. Let lament open into hope and gratitude (Isaiah 38:9-20)

Exegesis: The recovered king remembers both anguish and God's deliverance. Thanksgiving does not require him to pretend the earlier suffering was unreal.

Practical and theological implication: Those who recover may give thanks; those still waiting may continue to lament. Root both in God's character and the resurrection hope, not a comparison of whose prayer worked better.

Gospel connection

Jesus' Gethsemane prayer keeps anguish and obedience together. His path leads through the cross to resurrection, not around suffering. Romans 8:22-27 describes believers who groan while waiting and the Spirit who helps them. The gospel offers access to God in weakness and the final defeat of death; it does not require us to call death harmless or to conceal grief.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • Where will you leave a genuine pause rather than fill every moment with explanation?
> • What will a bereaved listener hear in your final paragraph?

4 Comprehensive External Study References

Donald J. Wiseman. *1 and 2 Kings.* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries; IVP. Resource

Consult 2 Kings 20 for the narrative, the illness and the sign.

John W. Olley. *The Message of Kings.* The Bible Speaks Today; IVP. Resource

Read the Hezekiah material within the larger theological presentation of kingship.

Barry G. Webb. *The Message of Isaiah.* The Bible Speaks Today; IVP. Resource

Consult Isaiah 38, especially the relationship between the narrative and Hezekiah's song.

Mark Vroegop. *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament.* Crossway. Resource

Use the book's exploration of lament to develop a pastoral response that permits both petition and sorrow.

Primary texts. *2 Kings 20 and Isaiah 38.* King James Version; Bible Gateway. Resource

Compare the two accounts directly before deciding which details to emphasize.

Illustration development

Hypothetical illustration: after difficult health news, a person says, 'Everyone tells me to stay positive, but I am afraid to say how frightened I am.' A friend replies, 'You can tell me, and we can bring that fear to God.' Keep the illustration about permission to lament; do not attach an invented miraculous recovery to it.

5 Suggested Call to Action

Give the congregation a quiet minute to begin an honest prayer. Invite three sentences: God, I am afraid of ...; I ask you for ...; Help me trust you with .... Do not require a completed answer or a public declaration of confidence. Encourage listeners to share the prayer with a trusted person if they wish.

Church follow-through: Offer prayer with consent and attentive listening. Avoid predictions of healing or pressure to stop appropriate care. Arrange continued companionship after the service, including support for caregivers and those grieving a death. The church's presence should not end when an immediate answer does not come.

Suggested closing prayer: Father, you see our tears before we can explain them. We ask for healing and relief. Meet us in uncertainty, sustain those who care for us, and hold us in the hope of Christ's resurrection. Receive the prayers we can barely speak. Amen.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • Have you explicitly welcomed the person who cannot yet say that they feel peaceful?
> • What ongoing care will follow the prayer invitation?

6 Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Did Hezekiah change God's mind?

A: The narrative presents a warning, prayer and God's responsive announcement of healing. Christians interpret how this relates to divine knowledge and sovereignty in different ways. What the passage clearly affirms is that God hears prayer and acts; it does not portray prayer as meaningless or as a method of controlling him.

Q: If someone is not healed, did they fail to pray with enough faith?

A: This passage does not teach that. It describes a particular gift to Hezekiah, not a measure for judging other sufferers. Scripture includes faithful people whose requested relief is not granted in the form they seek, including Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

Q: Was Hezekiah wrong to cry?

A: The account records his tears without rebuking them. God's message specifically says they have been seen. Tears can express grief and longing within faith; they are not evidence that prayer has failed.

Q: Does the fig preparation suggest faith and treatment are opposites?

A: No. The account includes both divine promise and a material application to the boil. It does not explain a medical mechanism or prescribe this preparation for present-day illness. Keep the sermon's focus on the text rather than offering treatment advice.

Q: What if the news is still bad after we pray?

A: The congregation must not be left with the impression that its story has fallen outside God's care. Continue prayer, companionship and appropriate help. The Christian promise of resurrection is deeper than an assurance that every present loss will be reversed before death.

Discussion and reflection

1. What does Hezekiah do immediately after the announcement?

2. Why is it sometimes difficult to pray honestly?

3. How can we accompany someone without requiring a hopeful performance?

CLOSING LINE

- Bring God the prayer you have, even when it comes with tears.



WEEK 5 | PURPOSE

Primary text: Acts 27:9-44

Distinct lesson: The loss of your plan does not necessarily mean the loss of God's purpose.

VIGNETTE CONNECTION

• The 2:20 film shows the disregarded warning, the storm, Paul's report of angelic assurance, the attempted escape by sailors, shared food, the grounding and Julius's protection of the prisoners. All 276 people reach shore. The paper boat and orange rescue cord on the weekly graphic express a failing means of transport alongside the possibility of help.

1 Introduction

Some crises happen after warnings were ignored. Others happen while we are doing what we believe God has called us to do. Paul's voyage contains both realities: his warning is dismissed, yet his journey toward Rome is not outside God's purpose. The ship carrying him toward that destination is destroyed, while the promise concerning his witness remains.

This final week gathers the series' responses into a mature picture of trust. Paul encourages frightened people, insists that sailors stay, tells everyone to eat, and depends on a centurion's intervention. Faith is active and embodied. The sermon should help listeners distinguish a particular plan from God's faithfulness, without suggesting that every personal ambition is a divine assignment that must succeed.

Suggested transition after the film: The ship did not survive. God's word did. What happens when we have confused the vessel carrying our plans with the purpose of God himself?

SERMON PREP PROMPTS

• What cherished plan might your listeners have mistaken for a guarantee from God?
• How can you speak about purpose without implying that every loss has an explanation we can discover?

2 Biblical History and Character Description

Read Acts 23:11; 25:10-12; 27:1-8; 28:1-16,30-31 to follow the journey toward Rome.

A prisoner on the way to Rome. Paul has appealed to Caesar (25:10-12), and the Lord has already told him that he must testify in Rome (23:11). Julius, a centurion, escorts him. At Myra the group transfers to an Alexandrian ship bound for Italy (27:6). This is a narrative of witness under constraint, not a leisure voyage.

A warning and a seasonal risk. At Fair Havens, travel has become dangerous and the Fast has passed (27:9). The reference is commonly understood as the Day of Atonement, marking a late-season setting. Paul warns of loss, but the centurion follows the shipmaster and owner. The initial gentle wind gives way to a violent storm.

Hope and an angelic message. After cargo and equipment are thrown away and days pass without sun or stars, hope is lost. Paul reports that an angel has assured him that he will stand before Caesar and that God has granted the lives of those sailing with him (vv. 20-26). That specific assurance does not promise preservation of the ship.

Promises and means. On the fourteenth night sailors try to leave in the boat. Paul warns that they must remain, and soldiers cut the ropes. Before daylight he urges everyone to eat, gives thanks and begins. Luke gives the number aboard as 276 (vv. 27-38). Ordinary actions are part of the account of preservation.

The wreck and the centurion. The bow runs aground and the stern breaks under the waves. Soldiers propose killing the prisoners to prevent escape, but Julius stops them because he wants to save Paul. Swimmers go first; others use boards and wreckage. Everyone reaches land safely (vv. 39-44). Malta is named in the next chapter, not at the moment of landfall.

Theological and interpretive care

Acts traces the witness to Jesus outward toward Rome. The storm episode demonstrates that opposition and disaster do not finally prevent the mission God has announced. Paul's warning in verse 10 and the later assurance in verses 22-24 should be distinguished: the narrative does not introduce the first warning with the same angelic authority. The promise of safety does not make seamanship, food, courage or Julius's action irrelevant.

Supporting biblical connections

Acts 23:11 — The promise of witness in Rome precedes the shipwreck.

2 Corinthians 4:7-10 — Human fragility and the power of God coexist.

Romans 8:35-39 — Suffering does not separate Christ's people from his love.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • How does the promised witness in Rome determine the meaning of this story?
> • What practical actions would be lost if you preached only the miracle of survival?

3 Suggested Sermon Outline

Proposed sermon title: When the Ship Goes Down

Primary text: Acts 27:9-44

Repeated refrain: A lost plan does not mean a lost purpose.

I. Admit when the plan is failing (27:9-20)

Exegesis: The sailors lose control, discard cargo and endure darkness. The narrative does not conceal the severity of the danger or the earlier disregarded warning.

Practical and theological implication: Allow people to acknowledge a failed plan without declaring their whole life a failure. Distinguish honest assessment from hopelessness, and avoid rushing to blame everyone in the boat.

II. Anchor confidence in what God has actually said (27:21-26)

Exegesis: Paul's renewed courage rests on the reported divine assurance: he will stand before Caesar and those aboard will live. The ship itself is excluded from preservation.

Practical and theological implication: Separate biblical promises from personal expectations. God's presence, love and final redemption are not identical to the survival of a business, institution, schedule or preferred outcome.

III. Practice trust through necessary action (27:27-38)

Exegesis: Sailors stay, soldiers cut ropes, people eat and the ship is lightened. Paul's prayer of thanks is joined to practical care for exhausted bodies.

Practical and theological implication: Ask what trust requires today: a difficult conversation, a meal, accepting help, gathering facts or completing an available task. Spiritual encouragement should not make practical work seem beneath faith.

IV. Recognize faithfulness beyond the wreckage (27:39-44)

Exegesis: The ship breaks, Julius prevents the killing of prisoners, and everyone reaches shore by different means. The narrative fulfills the assurance without preserving the vessel.

Practical and theological implication: Help listeners release an exhausted plan without pretending the loss is painless. Seek the next faithful responsibility rather than insisting on restoration of the exact former arrangement.

Gospel connection

Paul's preservation serves his witness to the risen Jesus. Keep that mission visible. The cross and resurrection also teach Christians that apparent defeat does not exhaust God's saving purpose. Romans 8:35-39 grounds confidence in Christ's inseparable love, not in a guarantee that every faithful person will survive a storm. The final hope is resurrection, not uninterrupted success.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • Which expectation might need to be released rather than baptized as God's promise?
> • How will you honor people who suffered a shipwreck-like loss without receiving a visible replacement?

4 Comprehensive External Study References

David G. Peterson. *The Acts of the Apostles.* Pillar New Testament Commentary; Eerdmans. Resource

Consult Acts 27 within the movement toward Rome and the book's witness theme.

John Stott. *The Message of Acts.* The Bible Speaks Today; IVP. Resource

Use the exposition of the voyage as a pastoral conversation partner on providence and human responsibility.

Mark Vroegop. *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament.* Crossway. Resource

Use this companion when addressing the grief involved in letting go of an expected future.

Primary text. *Acts 27.* King James Version; Bible Gateway. Resource

Read Acts 27 alongside 23:11 and the ending of Acts 28 so the journey's purpose stays clear.

Illustration development

Hypothetical illustration: a congregation loses access to the building where it has met for years. Grief is real, but the calling to worship, bear witness and care for neighbors is not identical to ownership of that address. Avoid claiming that the loss was necessary or that a larger building is guaranteed to follow.

5 Suggested Call to Action

Invite listeners to draw two columns: The plan I wanted and The faithfulness God calls for now. The second column should name a next responsibility, not a prediction of eventual success. Encourage one practical act within the week and one conversation with a trusted person who can help distinguish perseverance from attachment to a failing plan.

Church follow-through: As a church, identify a ministry purpose that can remain faithful even if its current method changes. Invite grief over what has been lost, listen to those affected, and make changes with care. Do not use this sermon to silence legitimate concerns about leadership decisions.

Suggested closing prayer: Faithful God, when our plans break apart, keep us near to Christ. Help us release what we cannot preserve, recognize the help you provide and do the next work of love before us. Hold our hope in your promise, not in our control. Amen.

> **SERMON PREP PROMPTS**
> • Is the next step concrete enough to practice?
> • Have you distinguished God's mission from a leader's preferred strategy?

6 Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Did Paul command the storm to stop?

A: No. He reports God's assurance, encourages the people and gives practical warnings. The storm and shipwreck continue. Do not merge this account with the Gospel stories in which Jesus calms a storm.

Q: Why did the sailors have to stay if everyone had been promised safety?

A: The account places God's promise and the sailors' remaining together. It does not treat necessary action as a rival to trust. Christians may explain providence in different ways, but the text clearly refuses a passive response that ignores the means of rescue.

Q: Was Paul's first warning a failed prophecy?

A: Verse 10 presents his perception of danger, including possible loss of life. The later assurance is explicitly connected to an angelic message. The narrative distinguishes the stages; avoid treating every judgment Paul makes in the account as an identical form of revelation.

Q: Does this mean every believer will survive a disaster?

A: No. The promise that all would live was specific to this voyage. Christian assurance concerns God's faithful love and final redemption, not immunity from tragedy. This distinction is essential when preaching to bereaved people.

Q: Can I assume that my dream is God's purpose?

A: No. Paul's mission to Rome is grounded in an explicit word in Acts. Our preferences require discernment and may need correction. Begin with clear Christian responsibilities such as love, truthfulness, witness and service rather than claiming certainty about every ambition.

Discussion and reflection

1. What was promised, and what was not?

2. Which ordinary actions contributed to survival?

3. What purpose can remain faithful even if a particular method must change?

CLOSING LINE

- The next faithful step may begin on a shore you never planned to reach.

REUSABLE PREPARATION WORKSHEET

From Study to Sermon

Use one copy for each week. Write in plain language before developing the full manuscript.

The text

What does the passage say and do in its own setting?

_____

The burden

What one truth must this congregation hear from this text?

_____

The distinction

What promise belongs specifically to this event, and what truth rightly carries into our situation?

_____

The movement

How will the message move from crisis through exposition to response?

_____

The gospel

How does the sermon lead people toward Christ rather than merely toward greater effort?

_____

The listener

How will the message sound to someone whose situation has not improved?

_____

The response

What specific act of trust or care can listeners practice this week?

_____

FINAL READ THROUGH

- Can listeners distinguish the biblical account from an illustration or artistic reconstruction?
- Does the message name a faithful response without guaranteeing an outcome God has not promised?
- Is there a concrete and dignified path to further care?

SERIES INTEGRATION

Carrying the Series Into Church Life

The series should leave more than five remembered stories. Its lasting fruit is a community in which people know how to turn toward God and toward one another under pressure. Plan a simple follow-through conversation after the final week with those responsible for pastoral care and practical assistance.

Five practices to keep

Response	Ongoing congregational practice
STRENGTH	Make room for grief and help people identify the next faithful step.
DEPENDENCE	Let leaders communicate honestly, pray with others and listen before deciding.
HELP	Make asking for practical help clear, confidential and dignified.
LAMENT	Include lament as well as thanksgiving in congregational prayer.
PURPOSE	Distinguish enduring gospel purposes from methods that may need to change.

A simple weekly preparation rhythm

Read and observe. Work through the passage and its context before the outline. Write down the crisis, the response, the promise and the outcome.

Study and test. Consult the relevant commentary entries. Compare the FAQ questions with your own assumptions. Remove any claim you cannot support.

Write and connect. Develop the sermon's central burden, connect it to Christ and select one responsible contemporary illustration.

Arrange and rehearse. Confirm the video, Scripture reading, prayer invitation and follow-up contact. Rehearse the transition from film to Bible.

Listen afterward. Invite feedback from trusted leaders and people who have known suffering. Ask whether the message offered truthful hope and practical care.

A closing prayer for the series

God of mercy, teach us to seek you when life becomes uncertain. Strengthen the grieving, humble the self-reliant, provide for those in need, receive the prayers of the frightened and guide those whose plans have broken. Make us a people who listen well and carry burdens together. Keep our hope in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, whose love will not let us go. Amen.

Use and study notes

The accompanying films are narrative introductions, not replacements for the biblical text. Biblical references throughout this kit identify the basis of its exposition. The linked books are recommended for further study; no unattributed commentary quotations or invented page references are included. Hypothetical illustrations are labeled and should not be presented as actual testimonies.

AI Church Resources | When Crisis Hits | Five-week sermon preparation kit