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GENERATION

**BORN FOR
THE STORM**

INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER ONE

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INTRODUCTION: A PERFECT STORM

Positive! This usually encouraging word sent fear through the earth as millions of people's tests confirmed that they had contracted coronavirus or COVID-19 during the once-in-a-century pandemic of 2020. The day the word "positive" appeared on an official medical email to my wife, Lisa, announcing her antigen test result, it sent shock waves through our family. Within moments, we were taking steps to isolate Lisa and move me to another area where I would quarantine for ten days. Lisa's asthma caused us additional concern as we faced her bout with the killer virus. Thankfully, after a few days of sickness, she rebounded quickly, tested negative, and survived an ordeal that has officially claimed more than a million lives globally. During my ten days in quarantine, I tested negative two different times and successfully survived my extreme staycation intact. Never has the word *negative* been so positive.

The 2020 pandemic shook the world and challenged all of us as never before. Schools closed, classes moved online, and life passages—like graduations, weddings, and even funerals—were postponed or canceled. Travel was halted, restaurants shifted to carryout, sporting events were scratched, masks were donned, and we were told to distance ourselves from others. This was all in the interest of slowing the spread of the virus and reducing the number of positive cases.

In many ways, the 2020 pandemic was part of a twenty-first-century perfect storm swirling in the world. The movie *The Perfect Storm*, starring George Clooney, depicts the story found in a nonfiction book of the same name, written by Sebastian Junger. Junger relates the dramatic account of a commercial fishing vessel called *Andrea Gail* and her captain Billy Tyne, played by Clooney in the movie. *Andrea Gail* attempted to sail—without success—through a 1991 “perfect storm” that included a tropical depression-turned-hurricane off the coast of Newfoundland. A rogue wave crashed into the ship, causing it to sink with no survivors. Despite the efforts of a courageous crew, the storm was simply too big and too powerful to overcome.

In many ways, what feels like a perfect storm surrounds this generation in the twenty-first century. The relatively calm waves, interrupted by periodic turbulence, that were experienced by previous generations have given way to a tumultuous life-sea where the waves are high, the winds are strong, the intensity is unceasing, and the challenges feel insurmountable. This book is about the generation at the center of this increasing storm—Generation Z.

While *Andrea Gail* was unable to sail through the storm, despite the courage and determination of her crew, Gen

Z has the potential to not only *survive* the perfect storm of this day but also to *thrive* in the midst of it. This new generation, born between 1997 and 2012, has never witnessed a calm sea. Social harmony, economic stability, physical tranquility, and domestic peace have all been very distant during this period. While those of us from earlier generations are often disturbed by it all, Generation Z considers these storms a part of their existence. They are survivors, and they are being equipped by God for maximum kingdom impact during a time when the world needs them the most.

Generation Z: Born for the Storm is written as a book of hope for this new generation. We will examine the environment surrounding Gen Z and try to understand who they are. We will also look at the unique qualities God is forming in Gen Z believers. I have attempted to be both inspirationally descriptive in identifying qualities already emerging and also prophetically aspirational in predicting qualities that will emerge as Gen Zers take their place of leadership in the world. Every chapter focuses on a person or persons from the Bible whose names begin with “Z” and who embody qualities God is forming in this new generation. This is not an exhaustive volume that details everything about Gen Z. It is simply a snapshot in time connected to the timeless truths of Scripture that will allow us to reflect upon, respond to, and empower what I believe is the most important generation to ever live. I am honored and grateful that God has given me an opportunity to love and serve them. Their potential is beyond description.

The rogue waves of the perfect storm surrounding us will sink those vessels attempting to sail by their own strength. The pressure of these waves of turmoil will be crushing. Many will shipwreck and not survive. Yet for those who

follow Christ fully, the giant waves of this perfect storm will propel us forward like the waves of the ocean thrust forth a surfer.

I have always been amazed at those who challenge the largest waves on earth. From Hawaii and California to Australia and Portugal, these giant wave surfers rise to conquer what would kill others. Riding waves that reach heights of more than fifty feet, they position themselves in a way that the energy of the wave propels them forward rather than taking them under. The result is terrifying exhilaration and amazing speeds of up to fifty miles an hour. Spirit-empowered believers in Generation Z are now being positioned in a way that the giant breakers of spiritual turbulence in our generation will serve as a propellant, pushing them beyond any generation before. Yes, the terrifying exhilaration will also be used by God as a supernatural accelerant. The storm will carry them to the ends of the earth with the message of Jesus Christ.

Just as with the COVID-19 tests, when every “negative” was a “positive,” Gen Z will take the negative circumstances they have been given and, by God’s grace, turn them into positives. Generation Z is ready. God is equipping. The Holy Spirit is moving. The world is waiting. The winds are blowing, and the waves are roaring. Spiritual history is going to be made because Generation Z is *born for the storm!*

CHAPTER 1

"ZEKE": A GENERATION BORN TO LEAD

Generation Z has been called to live and lead in unprecedented times. The dark clouds of surrounding storms have informed their entire earthly journey. Rarely in history has any one generation endured so many history-making, tumultuous events in so few years as today's teenagers and youth have experienced. Physical, sociological, emotional, and spiritual storms have been a way of life for them. Those born between 1995 and 2012 have lived in a world filled with disarray and consistent prophetic energy. Many of today's young people have already experienced more personal and corporate disorder than my generation, the "baby boomer" generation, has experienced throughout our entire lifetime. And Gen Z is just getting started.

For one, they have endured the ongoing storm of terrorism and shootings in America. The events of September 11, 2001, ushered in a new age of violence and radicalism throughout the world, evidenced by the collapse

of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Generation Z was marked by this event. I can relate to this some; I still remember where I was standing as a five-year-old on November 22, 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. I remember watching the black-and-white television in horror as the news anchor described the president being shot and fatally wounded while riding in a Lincoln convertible in a ten-mile motorcade through the streets of downtown Dallas. Thirty minutes later, the thirty-fifth president of the United States was pronounced dead at only forty-six years of age. My entire generation was marked by the violence and upheaval of that day. I also remember where I was on 9/11, and I recall the sense of terror unleashed across America, but Gen Z's childhood was shaped by this event and by events of the years that followed. Children watched as terrorism not only permeated the world but also struck fear into their communities, schools, and families.

Between 2007 and 2017, an average of 21,000 deaths per year were due to terrorism. In 2014, global deaths as a result of terrorism hit an all-time high of 44,490, constituting roughly 0.05 percent of all deaths around the world. Terrorism has not only been a global phenomenon; it has also become a local reality on an entirely new scale with the rise of mass shootings and random violence.

A 2018 American Psychological Association study called *Stress in America* states that 75 percent of Gen Zers reported mass shootings as a significant source of stress for them. It is no wonder since on average, at least four people have been killed in a mass shooting every forty-seven days since June 17, 2015. According to *The Washington Post*, there have been school shootings in forty-three of the fifty

states, occurring at a rate of about once per month, since the year 2000.

Another storm Gen Zers have endlessly endured is the storm of natural disasters, which seems to have escalated in frequency and impact throughout their lifetime. Hurricanes, tsunamis, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, wildfires, and droughts have all been part of this generation's life experience. Smartphones and social media have brought these natural storms close, allowing us to receive eyewitness reports on the destruction and tragedy. Between 2000 and 2012, global natural disasters caused \$1.7 trillion in damage and affected 2.9 billion people. The year 2017 was the US's costliest on record, with sixteen different disasters resulting in at least \$1 billion in damage each. Overall, the US lost \$300 billion from natural disasters in that one year alone.

There has also been a persistent storm of health crises in the world throughout Gen Z's lifetime. In November 2002, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) was first identified in China. By July 2003, more than 8,000 cases and 774 deaths occurred. In 2009, H1N1 swine flu sickened 575,000, resulting in 18,500 deaths. In 2012, about 122,000 people died of measles, and tuberculosis killed an estimated 1.3 million people. Beginning in 2014 and over the course of two years, the Ebola virus killed more than 11,300 people in West Africa and threatened to become a global pandemic. In 2015–16, there were 5,186 Zika virus cases in the US and many more throughout the world. In 2019, we experienced the highest number of measles cases since 1992. And in 2020, we faced the worldwide impact of the coronavirus, or COVID-19, resulting in more than 59 million cases and deaths exceeding 1.4 million at the time of this writing. Unlike any other health crisis in

modern history, the COVID-19 contagion swept the world in record time with horrific results. Nations shut down their economies and borders as people sheltered in place. Generation Z students were sent home from school to learn at a distance. Public events were canceled, churches dismissed their services, and the travel industry screeched to a halt. Fear swept the globe as the cruel coronavirus wreaked havoc worldwide.

Still, the aforementioned storms are just the tip of the iceberg. Many other whirlwinds of uncertainty have spun around today's youth during the last two decades, including economic downturns and recessions, racial division and riots, domestic and sexual abuse, identity confusion, and a plethora of other adversarial winds. When we reflect on what has happened in our world during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, we understand more clearly the unrelenting pressure Gen Z finds itself under. It is little wonder that mental crises are at an all-time high. The more we read these statistics, research history, and study Scripture, the clearer it becomes that our culture is on a collision course—not with a meteor, but with a Master! We are in the days that Jesus foretold would precede His second coming.

God is not surprised by the chaos of our time, so we should not be either. Jesus prophesied, "There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven." He further predicted, "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken." The gospel writer Matthew records Christ's description of how nations will engage in

war with each other, natural disasters will plague the earth, and Christians will be intensely persecuted. He foretells that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

These passages make this truth clear: We are in the final days. Or as we could call it—*the final storm*. Though we do not know how long this tempest will persist, I do believe that God has called Gen Z to fulfill their destiny in these tumultuous times. This new generation was born for this day. Gen Z will not only survive the storms but will thrive in the midst of them. In fact, the storms will help shape them into leaders during these greatest days in the history of the world.

Time to Soar

Birds move through the air in various ways. Some fly by flapping—like hummingbirds, whose incessant energy keeps them suspended. Others fly by gliding—like songbirds leaving a limb to land near food and moving from one place to another without flapping their wings. Gliding allows a bird to ride the wind, but it always leads downward, just like an airplane glider, which rides the wind’s currents but ultimately lands on the ground.

Eagles are different, though. They belong to a select group of birds that have the capacity to *soar*. While gliding always leads downward, even if slowly or intermittently, soaring allows a bird to climb upward without ever flapping its wings. Eagles rely on thermal updrafts to carry them to amazing heights. Even and *especially* around storms, where

updrafts are pronounced, an eagle can use the thermal currents of the storm to rise higher—*if* he is willing to face into the wind.

I believe this generation will do exactly that. They will face the turmoil of the storm with confidence, using the updrafts of its turbulence to rise higher and go farther than ever before. They will not run away from the pressure. They will not quit; they will *soar!* Isaiah declared, “Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

One person who used the stormy winds surrounding him in his generation to soar high as a leader was Winston Churchill. Churchill had a storied political career before World War II, but it was during this “storm of a century” that he emerged as a global leader and one of the great heroic figures of the last hundred years. Churchill led the United Kingdom in the midst of horrific chaos throughout World War II. During this era, Hitler was running free across Europe and attacking Britain incessantly. Other Axis powers were threatening Britain’s allies and interests all around the world. The Japanese had captured Singapore in 1942, two years before D-Day. During this difficult time, Churchill uttered these famous words: “The whole future of mankind may depend upon our conduct. So far, we have not failed. We shall not fail now. Let us move forward steadfastly together into the storm and through the storm.”

Churchill discerned the storm of his day. It was severe, yet he believed that the United Kingdom and its allies could navigate through it. The turbulent winds of his time pushed Churchill higher as a leader and provided a context that

would reveal his leadership prowess. The powerful thermals and dynamics of the World War II storm elevated Churchill immensely. I believe the same will happen with this new generation as they face the storms that surround them.

As with Churchill, a new wave of leaders will emerge in stormy times like these. They will be leaders who are ready to embrace the challenges pervading their age. These Gen Z leaders will not run from the trials of their generation but will courageously face them, understanding that it is their destiny to lead through the storm. They will use the tempestuous winds they encounter to soar high. These types of leaders are found throughout history and Scripture. They are described in Proverbs 28:2 in this way: “When the country is in chaos, everybody has a plan to fix it—But it takes a leader of real understanding to straighten things out” (MSG). I believe Gen Z is filled with leaders like this—leaders who are *born for the storm*.

Scripture gives us a perfect example of two leaders who responded very differently to their storms. One Old Testament narrative reveals a leader who was born for the storm. In the New Testament church, we are shown a model for using the storm to soar.

“Zeke”

Our first leader is the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel, but we will refer to him as “Zeke.” His name means “God strengthens,” and this name proved to be key to his leadership. Zeke was born into a storm. The nation of Judah had drifted from God, and the resulting storm of judgment surrounded Zeke during his early life. Political upheaval, military defeat, economic collapse, and societal

disorder all culminated in Ezekiel's displacement to a foreign land. The spiritual reformation attempted by King Josiah failed, and scarcely more than a decade after the death of Josiah, Judah surrendered to the armies of the north. Young Ezekiel was among the first prisoners deported to Babylonia in 597 BC. In Babylon, Zeke was placed in a camp of God's people located at Tel Abib on the Kebar (Chebar) canal (near Nippur). This canal encampment was in Babylon, in what is now the country of Iraq.

The book of Ezekiel begins with this young priest living in an Iraqi (Babylonian) prison camp, far from home, enduring the ravages of war, terribly battered by the multiyear turmoil of being an exiled prisoner in a foreign land. Zeke's life was filled with storms, so it is probably not surprising that God appeared to him in the midst of one. Many times, we see God's greatest glory in the midst of our storms. The disciples were in a storm when Jesus came to them walking on the water. Job was faced with the greatest storm of his life when he saw God's glory and was restored.

The same was true for Ezekiel. He begins his autobiography in prophecy, stating that while he was living with the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens opened, and he saw visions of God. His first vision started with a storm. "I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light," he wrote. The prophet's incredible encounter with God and ultimate calling began in what seemed to be a *thunderstorm*. The glory of God would soon be unveiled to Ezekiel from the middle of this storm, permeated with amazing visions. God's appearance left him so stunned that he fell on his face. By the end of Zeke's first chapter, we find the young prophet lying

prostrate on Babylonian soil, overwhelmed by the storm of God's presence and the circumstances of captivity. Empty, humbled, disoriented, and weakened, he was ready to hear God's voice.

As He addressed the humbled refugee, God instructed Ezekiel to shift his posture and simultaneously empowered him with His Spirit to raise him to his feet: "He said to me, 'Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.' As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me."

At this moment, young Zeke was lifted to his feet and commissioned to prophesy to his generation. He was called to minister both to exiles and to those still in Jerusalem, predicting further judgment while also bringing future hope. Ezekiel was raised up as a leader in the midst of the storm of his generation. He discovered what our generation must discover: God can be found in the midst of the storm! God's purpose for Ezekiel's life flowed out of the storm he was living in and from the storm of God's presence he witnessed. The turbulent events that landed Zeke in Babylon were used by God to position him for a visitation. The pain of his imprisonment opened the door for his destiny. We would have never heard of Ezekiel without the storms he encountered.

Generation Z must understand that although God has not caused all the storms they have encountered, He *can* be found in the midst of them. The storm of Ezekiel's day did not end with God's thunderous revelation by the river, but God gave young Zeke the strength and power necessary to stand up during the storms ahead. Ezekiel was *born for the storm*, and God used him as an instrument of hope for his generation. After all, his name means "God strengthens"!

So, when the storm leaves the Gen Zers in our lives on their faces and they feel their strength is gone, we must remind them of Zeke. We must encourage them to listen for God’s voice and allow the wind of His presence to direct them toward their destiny of leadership.

Leadership in the Storm: Paul

Like Gen Zers, the apostle Paul was also born into a generational storm (in addition to facing a *real*, physical storm we will discuss later). Because he embraced God’s plan in the midst of these storms, he emerged as an incredibly influential leader in his day. The last few chapters of the book of Acts record that Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and incarcerated in the port city of Caesarea, where he remained in prison for two years. Paul appealed to Caesar for trial, and he was put on a ship in Caesarea and sent toward Rome. Upon arrival, he planned to defend both himself and Christianity in Caesar’s court.

Fig 1.1. Map showing route of Paul’s journey to Rome^{xxiii}



Paul's prison vessel started from Caesarea and traveled north along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean to avoid contrary winds. The prison ship circled Cypress, sailed over to Myra, and continued toward Crete, and a decision was made to continue sailing despite the approaching winter. This journey may not seem incredibly long on paper, but to the 250-plus passengers who endured storms, violent seas, a shipwreck, and months stranded on Malta, it not only seemed like years, but it actually took a year or more.

On Paul's voyage from Caesarea, he was not known as a great apostle or missionary. He was simply a prisoner in chains. No one looked to him for leadership. No one asked for his advice. Still, even without man's initial recognition, he emerged as a leader in a major storm—both a metaphorical and physical storm. This is the path many Gen Z leaders will follow. They will emerge from the unknown, nameless galleys of our day to lead in the midst of the storm. As we follow Paul in his journey, several leadership lessons emerge for those of us who are born for the storm.

Perception and Insight

Paul's voyage across the Mediterranean began in October, which means the captain planned to sail through the winter. From the start, this was destined to be a dangerous feat. As the ship prepared to leave the safe haven in Crete, Paul communicated an important insight to his fellow passengers. Before they set sail toward Rome, he said, "Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also." It did not take a genius to understand the dangers of sailing in the winter, but Paul was imparting spiritual insight beyond the norm. He was speaking with

clear foresight about something much bigger and more disastrous than cold weather. That is what leaders do. They face their present reality head-on while anticipating the future they will enter into.

You, like Paul, were born with insight. If you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you too have been given perception beyond the natural. A 2007 article in the *New York Times* said this about leadership and disaster: “In times of consuming trauma, psychologists and historians say, a leader must speak with a trusted voice and sketch honestly the painful steps to safety. A leader must weave a narrative of shared loss while acknowledging consuming anger.” This is what Paul did throughout this harrowing expedition.

Just as Paul predicted, as soon as the ship left the harbor, adversity ensued. The mild, warm breeze, once helping them sail comfortably, transformed into a feared northeaster. The cold winds and rains came sweeping across the Mediterranean in sheets of terror. They knew a storm like this could easily destroy any ship daring to sail into it. The winds blew with a chilling gale force. They put ropes under the bottom of the vessel to hold it together, and they took down the mainsail so that it would not break in the wind. Their situation seemed hopeless as the winds blew them toward shipwreck. The rain pelted the passengers for fourteen days, setting them adrift on a two-week, terror-filled voyage. When the wind and rain finally subsided, the passengers realized where they were—in the middle of nowhere. Upon this realization, Paul demonstrated the second set of qualities necessary to lead in the midst of the storm.

Courage and Confidence

At this juncture on their journey, Paul exhibited great bravery and poise when he addressed his fellow passengers, who were so terrified. He said, “But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’”

Paul’s confidence in the midst of chaos came not because he was without fear but because he had a word from God. God’s Word infused him with courage and confidence. The fact is that in the midst of the storm, chaos can easily rob us of confidence. Yet, when the wind threatens to blow us off course, we can tune into heaven, receive a word from God, and continue to lead through the storm.

This key leadership quality is why, at Oral Roberts University, we intentionally prioritize hearing God’s voice. We ask students regularly, “Have you heard God’s voice? Do you have a word from Him?” When you have a word from God, what the winds are doing does not matter. How high or how rough the waves may be is irrelevant. Why? Because you know God is going to get you through the storm. In fact, you know it so well that you can confidently encourage others with His truth, as you encourage yourself. That is what Paul did. Essentially, he said, “Don’t worry, men. The ship is going under, but you’re staying up. God is going to save our lives! I have a word from Him that we are going to be all right—even in the midst of the storm.”

Clarity and Decisiveness

After two weeks of enduring the terrible storm and being blown completely off course, Paul and the crew found themselves nearing land. They threw down four anchors from the stern, which held the ship in the rear. Fear overtook some crew members who felt their vessel was headed for shipwreck. They planned to use lifeboats, sail to shore, save their own lives, and leave the prisoners to die. At that moment, Paul discerned that he must immediately speak up. He confidently said to the captain, “Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved.”

Can you imagine how Paul felt uttering these words? There he was, having endured two weeks of violent weather, having held on to insight and a word from God when all hope seemed lost, and now he was hearing that the crew wanted to leave him and the other prisoners to die. In a moment, he had to act with Holy Spirit-inspired decisiveness and clarity. So, he stepped to the bow of the ship and addressed them. And because he did, the captain stopped the sailors from leaving. This was the defining moment in which a leader emerged in the midst of a storm. Because Paul had insight, courage, and authority—stepping forward with a voice demanding respect—those who were supposed to be his authority listened to and obeyed *him*.

Chaos always demands clarity. It demands that you make decisions both quickly and accurately as you are intentionally led by the Holy Spirit. As Christian author John Maxwell says, “A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.”

Focused Peace

At last, with the boat anchored, Paul, along with the

other passengers, anxiously awaited daylight. Here, his next leadership quality was revealed: the quality of focused peace. At this point, it was still storming, and passengers were still fearing their fate. In spite of this, Paul knew what was ahead, so he said to them, “Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.” Then, he prayed over his bread, broke it, and ate.

Let’s picture this for a moment. The winds were still blowing. The rain had not stopped. And there was Paul—having lunch. Remind you of someone? Throughout the gospels, we see Jesus reflect a similar, focused peace. He was never intimidated by the storm. He was never worried about it. In fact, at one point, he was asleep in the bottom of a boat in the midst of a horrifying squall!

Many years ago, English minister John Wesley encountered a group of Christians who exhibited this same trait. He was returning to the New World from England, where he had been ministering, though it is clear from his writings that he felt the mission was unsuccessful. On his journey home, a great storm arose in the Atlantic. The ship he was on was tossed harshly up and down. The storm became so intense that Wesley ventured from his cabin to the top of the ship to see what was going on. He observed the waves crashing as the winds nearly knocked him from his feet. Initially, he was terrified. But then, he noticed something in stark contrast to his setting. He watched and listened in awe as a group of Moravian Christians sang hymns unto God on the deck of the boat. They were having a worship service in the middle of the storm!

Wesley was inspired by their assurance of faith—something he was struggling with. He envied the trust in

Christ that they had and the peace that came with it. Upon returning to England, Wesley sought out the Moravians, wanting to discover the secret to their peace. It was not until he “went very unwillingly to a society at Aldersgate Street” that his heart became “strangely warmed.” He found the peace he had sought, and both his life and ministry were changed forever. Wesley eventually became known as a key figure in the First Great Awakening in America and the Evangelical Revival in England. What changed things that caused the gospel to come alive to him? The Moravians who, in the midst of the storm—perhaps even as they were about to lose their lives—exuded focused peace, fully trusting that God was in control. Isaiah encouraged Judah and any nation that keeps faith, “You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal.”

Resilience

During the ship’s final push toward the shore of Malta, it ran aground on a sandbar, and waves pummeled the small craft to pieces. Every sailor and prisoner aboard, all longing to step foot on land again, either swam the rest of the way to the shore or grabbed a piece of wood and floated there. Just as Paul had prophesied, no one lost their life. The passengers and sailors stood on the shore alive. They were dripping wet and freezing cold but still very much alive.

As they stood shivering onshore, the northeastern winds cut through them like an arctic blast, so they gathered wood to build a fire. Paul tossed a branch onto the growing flame, and a snake that had been hibernating in the timber leaped from it and attached itself to his hand. Those around him saw the snake bite Paul, so they began saying of their

visitor, “This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live. But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects.” What a testimony! In times when nothing seems to be going right—when your ship does not come in, your path takes a major detour, or you feel cold, abandoned, and forsaken—you can follow Paul’s example. On days when the enemy attacks, the serpent bites at the worst time, and you feel you have been pushed beyond the brink, you can adopt this leadership quality of resilience.

Resilience is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. It is toughness. Imagine how Paul felt. He had just endured so much—a horrific storm, attempted betrayal, harsh weather conditions with no shelter—and now this! A snakebite! But did he sulk or pout or give up? No—he shook it off. He persevered, and he suffered no ill effects. As it was with Paul, there will be seasons in our lives when we will seem to encounter trouble over and over again. When it feels like the storm will not stop, we can take heart. God will preserve us. True leaders are the ones who *always* get back up and demonstrate resilience.

Power

As it became obvious to the people sitting around the fire that Paul had not been harmed by the snakebite, word spread. They felt they had come into contact with someone touched by God. People began asking him to pray for their sick loved ones, and doors opened for him to spread the gospel. One account was when one of the island leaders’ “father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him, and God healed him. When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured.”

There Paul was—in a barbaric place—unable to speak the people’s language, yet he kept moving up in leadership while on the island of Malta. It will be the same for you. When God’s hand is on you, He will keep elevating you to strategic leadership levels despite any attacks or negative circumstances.

From Storm to Platform

Another narrative in Scripture exhibits this type of power. It occurred just after Jesus fed five thousand people who had come to hear Him teach. He instructed the disciples to go in a boat across the Sea of Galilee as He went up to a mountain to pray. While they were out at sea, a storm came, and they were terrified. Jesus came down from the mountain and walked through the storm on the top of the sea. When He neared the disciples’ boat, they noticed Him, and thinking He was a ghost, they grew even more afraid. But Jesus said to them, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” Then Peter, one of the disciples, responded, “Lord, if it’s you...tell me to come to you on the water.” Jesus beckoned, and Peter walked on water.

Jesus was completely undeterred, unfettered, and unbroken by the storm that surrounded Him. Peter was too, as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. The waves continued to beat, the rain continued to fall, and the wind continued to hurl across the lake, but none of that had power over Him. He walked above it, and so did Peter. The storm became their platform!

Like Zeke, we can see God’s glory in the midst of the storm and find the strength to stand up in our destiny. Like Paul, we can demonstrate perception and insight, speak

with courage and confidence, and act with decisiveness and clarity. We can demonstrate supernatural peace, resilience, and power while others fret and collapse under pressure. We can emerge in the midst of the storm as the leaders God has called us to be. And, like the apostle Peter, we can turn our storm into our platform as we focus on Jesus and obey His word. Yes, Generation Z has been born into one of the greatest days of turmoil and upheaval the world has ever known. Yet, God is calling them to rise above the chaos and to lead in the midst of the storm.

Introduction: A Perfect Storm

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Chapter 1: A Generation Born to Lead: "Zeke"

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