

**O**n a nippy 40-degree day in late March, a powerful 26-foot inboard motorboat left Lake Chelan's Cove Marina about 2 p.m. with eight of us on board: my brother Glenn's family of three; my husband, Warren, and me, along with our daughter Pam; and another couple. We were taking a short ride to spot wild animals along the shore.

The men passed the binoculars and searched the mountains for deer, cougars, bears, or mountain goats. We snacked and admired the summer homes nestled at the foot of the rugged Cascade Mountains. My young niece and our small daughter giggled and played at our feet. The engine throbbed in the background as we relaxed and talked in the cabin of the boat.

"See on your left? That's Twenty-Five Mile Creek Campgrounds," Glenn said. "Behind it is the last road back to civilization. Up ahead you can see what they call, 'The Straits.' The area is notorious for severe winds and high waves. Since the lake remains calm today, we'll keep going. Maybe we'll see some wildlife yet."

## Past Safety Harbor

We glided past Safety Harbor, built to shelter boats caught in winds sweeping down from glaciers high in the mountains. Thirty-five miles beyond it lay rugged wilderness surrounding a small town accessible only by boat, on foot, or by floatplane.

Suddenly our boat, the fastest on the lake, sputtered and quit. The wake died behind us, leaving an eerie silence. Already the sun had dropped over the top of the craggy mountains, taking the temperature down with it. I glanced around. "Where are the oars and blankets?" There were none! Seems the last time they were taken off the boat, someone failed to return them.

We needed to get to shore, build a fire, and warm our babies and us. The men tried in vain to start the engine. I cuddled Pam, and prayed.

My resourceful brother and my husband used the boat hook and a fish skinning board as paddles to inch the boat forward. They seemed to struggle forever before we reached shore. When we arrived, there were no cabins, no people, and no roads.

As the night grew colder, the men scrounged for wood and built a fire on the bank. We warmed some water, added the last food we had, bits of smashed up doughnuts, and fed the babies.

Since it was next to impossible to ascend the steep mountains

with two girls under the age of eighteen months, Glenn announced, "I'll walk to the nearest ranger station and get help. It will probably take two to three hours."

"I'll go with you," his friend said.

I felt gratitude toward my husband for staying with us and the two toddlers and keeping the fire going.

The temperature kept dropping. As we warmed our front side, our backside chilled. The damp lake air penetrated our light jackets.

Sometime later we heard a noise. What was it? Glenn and his friend reappeared. "Did you get lost?" someone asked.

No, they hadn't gotten lost, but a creek in a steep canyon stymied them. It was so cold that the stream iced the rocks. The men decided to return to our campsite.

## At risk

We discussed the pros and cons of remaining where we were. "We can't climb out, so should we attempt to hand-feed the carburetor and see how far we can get?" Glenn asked. It was worth a try. We climbed back into the lifeless boat.

"You gals stay in the front and keep the babies up there," Glenn said. "You could pray for us, too. This might be a little tricky."

The men siphoned gas out of the boat's tank; Glenn carefully poured it into the carburetor and touched the starter. Fire flashed and he jumped away! The engine shuddered, started, took us a short distance, and then died. He repeated the process several times.

Gas fumes permeated the cabin of the wooden boat. I waved my hand in front of my face and wished for fresh air. It soon became apparent the process was far too dangerous for the small return it gave us.

The blackness enveloped us, and the fumes gradually dissipated. The moon peeked over the mountains, and my husband and I bunked in the cabin with our little daughter snuggled between us, our arms, legs, and lightweight jackets over her to provide warmth.

Someone said, "I'm going to freeze to death before we are rescued!"

Perhaps that was a possibility, but I remembered Joshua 1:9: "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." We did, however, remain stranded on a 55-mile-long lake, the third deepest in the nation.

Maybe it wouldn't have bothered me so much if I hadn't almost drowned as a teen.

Finally, just before dawn, a tiny, distant light flashed toward the shore and then onto the lake. "Look, Glenn. Could they be looking for us?" My brother flashed the boat light, signaling we needed help.

The light immediately started to grow larger, and soon the sheriff's boat pulled alongside and offered us blankets, hot coffee, and hot chocolate.

"The lady from the Cove Marina noticed that you had not returned by dark," the sheriff said. "So she called us and said, 'They didn't take supplies to spend the night anywhere and I'm worried about them because the temperature keeps dropping and they have a couple of toddlers with them.'"

They gave us a heater and as we and the cabin warmed, we stopped shaking. We chatted and dozed while our rescuers towed us to safety. When we arrived at the marina, ice had formed two inches thick on the bow of our boat.

The next day I read in the newspaper, "'Eight Rescued from Disabled Boat Drifting on Lake Chelan.'

"Warren, listen to this. 'The temperature dropped to the teens during the night.' No wonder we felt like we were freezing. We were!"

## Behind our rescue

As we entered our church on Sunday, a friend stepped up to me and asked, "Joyce, did you need special prayer Friday night? The Lord woke me in the middle of the night with an urgency to pray for you. I prayed for you for quite a while. Were you in trouble at that time?" I told her the whole story, and we rejoiced together over God's power, love, and care.

Although I still have a healthy respect for water, I've learned no matter how dark or deep life's waters get, God, like the captain of a ship, waits ready to rescue us when we cry for help.

In Psalm 50:15 our Lord invites and promises, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

He did. And I do. ■

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