

On the Path

Would you choose to walk a path obstructed by dozens of fallen trees? Looking at the daunting task ahead, would you turn around and seek an easier route? Or, would you do whatever it took to rise above the challenges? Would your answer change if you were assured God was at your side as you traveled that difficult path? These aren't hypothetical questions.

The tornado that ravaged YMCA Camp Hanes on May 24th affected every building in the camp. Packing 125 mile-per-hour winds, it cut a half mile wide path through the heart of the camp. An estimated 5,000 trees were ripped out from their roots, swirled around and then toppled to the ground. Roof shingles were found hundreds of yards from the building where they had been. With campers expected to arrive just 18 days later the camp was a disaster zone. Sounds like an unsurmountable task to recover in time for the summer camping season. On the contrary, it was a recipe for success as the community, other YMCA branches and even another YMCA camp rallied their support for the camp.



Every year Camp Hanes selects a theme for the summer months before the start of camp. In retrospect the theme sounded prophetic: "Follow the Path."

Was "the path" the track of a storm that ripped through the camp? The path of the camp's theme referred to how we live our lives in spite of the obstacles in our way. Inspired by a strong Christian faith, Val Elliott and Jen DeRidder saw this as an opportunity to emphasize that God guides our steps as we follow His path. Dozens of downed trees littered every path in camp. The trees provided obstacles but God's guidance overcame the hurdles. In a public TV interview Val said, "The tornado happened and we're going to rise above this. There are things that come up in life, but if you have a great attitude as you move forward and be resilient, you can do this." As evidence of God's presence and protection, Val pointed out that the camp chapel was covered with downed trees but, amazingly, all three crosses in camp withstood the devastating winds.



In spite of downed trees all around it the chapel cross remained undamaged.

The summer's theme of "Follow the Path" is based on a verse from Proverbs that says, *In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps (Proverbs 16:9)*. In his explanation of this verse Val Elliott says "Man makes his plans but the Lord directs his steps." No one knew that those steps would be more difficult this year. The foundation of Christian principles and teachings has enabled Camp Hanes to be a strong Christian influence on people's lives since its founding in 1927. This year was to be no different. In the aftermath of the tornado God is directing their steps to turn this disaster into an impressive demonstration of God's people working together.



We all face times in our lives when everything seems to be swirling around uncontrollably. If we live by faith we can be assured that God will be at our side, guiding our steps and being our source of strength. Like the three crosses at Camp Hanes, Jesus will help us withstand the storms of life. The path may be difficult but, with God's direction, we will rise above the challenges we face. God didn't promise an easy road but He did say He would be with us, always. Just Follow the Path and ask God to guide your steps.

Question: When your world seems to be turned upside down and the storms swirling all around you, can you turn to Jesus for strength?

Prayer: Dear Lord. We know you don't put storms in your life to test us. Instead, you calm the storms and are our strength during times of trouble. We pray that we can have the faith to turn it over to you. Amen.