

Faith and a Floating Couch: How a Couple Survived Hurricane Helene's Devastation

A North Carolina couple credits their survival through Hurricane Helene to a deep faith and an unlikely flotation device: their living room couch.

Howard Ray, a volunteer firefighter, and his wife, Lisa, say God helped them through the storm, which ravaged much of their community and swept through several states. The couple, who lost their home and belongings, are clinging to faith as they work to rebuild.

"I just want people to understand that you can't give up; you've got to push no matter what," Howard told Queen City News. "I don't understand. We shouldn't be alive; there's no way, it's all God," he added, describing how they held onto their couch as floodwaters swept their trailer off its foundation.

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As the hurricane's effects intensified, floodwaters rose quickly, filling the couple's trailer. Lisa recalls a moment of surrender when she sat on the couch, which ultimately became their lifeline. "I just had to sit down on that couch, and we floated out," she says.

Their journey on the water was perilous. The flood levels rose 25 to 30 feet, and the couple drifted on the couch until Howard instructed Lisa to grab onto a barbed wire fence for stability. Though the sharp fence injured her hand, it

provided a crucial hold. Eventually, they found shelter in a garage, waiting there for hours until the waters receded.

The storm took an emotional toll as well. During Lisa's hospital stay for her injuries, she learned that her friend, Michelle Quintero, a Madison County Sheriff's Office captain, had died in the flood. "I just collapsed," Lisa says. "She was a good person; she's a great mother. She had one grandbaby and one grandbaby on the way."

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Despite the devastation, the Rays remain resolute in their faith. Pleasant Valley Baptist Church has provided temporary housing assistance through a disaster relief fund, covering their stay at an Airbnb for the next year.

Howard's faith continues to guide him in the aftermath. "I know I might have lost everything, but that doesn't mean that I stop and that I've got to quit and just give up," he says.

Their resilience mirrors a biblical principle of faith in extreme trials. Proverbs 3:5 reminds us to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding." The Rays' faith and gratitude for life now serve as a testament to the strength they draw from God, even as they face the long road to recovery.

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