

The Storm Did Not Rot the Post — It Revealed It

Companion Workbook

The Rotten Fencepost™ Principle

by Kahu Phil Stephens

Rotten Fencepost Publishing

Copyright and Use Notice

© Kahu Phil Stephens. Published by Rotten Fencepost Publishing.

This workbook is a free companion to the teaching "The Storm Did Not Rot the Post — It Revealed It" and the wider Rotten Fencepost Principle. You're welcome to use it for your own reflection and study, and to share it with anyone who might need it.

Introduction

Aloha. If a storm has recently passed through your life — a real one, or the kind that comes as a job loss, a diagnosis, a broken relationship, a hard season — this workbook is for you.

It's easy to blame the storm for everything that fell. Sometimes that's fair; a storm really can cause damage on its own. But there's another possibility worth sitting with honestly: what if the storm didn't create the weakness? What if it simply made a weakness that was already there impossible to ignore?

This workbook won't tell you what your "rotten post" is — only you can find that, because it's specific to your own life and history. What it offers is the same method taught in the video: honest questions, in the order they'd be asked sitting across the table.

The Fence Post, Revisited

As a paniolo here in Hawai*■*i, Kahu Phil has watched a fence post stand looking perfectly good through months of calm weather. Then a hard storm comes through, and down it goes. It would be easy to blame the storm. But pull that post out of the ground, and you often discover the bottom didn't rot last night — it had been rotting for years.

The storm didn't rot the post. The storm revealed it.

There's a real difference between the cause of a problem and what merely exposed it. Suppose someone loses their job, and within weeks, everything falls apart financially. "Losing my job caused this," they say — and it mattered. But if there was no emergency savings, if debt had already been growing, if the household had no margin for years — the job loss didn't create those things. It exposed them. That's not blame. That's diagnosis.

We also tend to misunderstand stability. Because something is standing, we assume it's strong. A budget can appear to work simply because nothing unexpected has happened yet. A relationship can appear to work because nobody's talking about the difficult stuff. Standing is not always the same thing as being sound.

Cause or Exposure? An Exercise

Think of one real storm you've been through — not everything, just one. Take your time with this.

The storm I'm thinking of:

What fell apart, or what I could see going wrong (this is the visible damage — the "wire"):

The honest question: was this weakness created by the storm, or did the storm just make visible something that had already been happening for a long time?

If I'm honest, what had actually been true before the storm ever arrived?

The Choice You Still Have

This isn't about pretending every hard season carries a tidy lesson. Some things that happen are simply unfair — losses no one would choose, and no one should be told they happened "to teach you something."

But even when a storm isn't chosen, something else still is: even when I did not choose the storm, I can choose what I do with what it revealed. Once something has been exposed, there's a choice — cover it back up, or look at it honestly. Covering it back up is tempting, because once the storm passes, we want normal again.

But sometimes going back to the way things were is exactly the problem — because "the way it was" may have produced the very weakness the storm exposed. Surviving a financial crisis and returning to the same financial habits repairs nothing. Getting through a hard season without ever naming what it exposed changes nothing.

What would "covering it back up" look like for the storm you named above?

What would actually "looking at it" require of you instead?

Storms Reveal Strength, Too

It isn't only weakness that gets revealed. Maybe you've survived something you never believed you could. Maybe your family came together. Maybe you discovered you could live with less, or found abilities you didn't know you had, or your faith became real in a way it never had to be when everything was easy.

Two builders, one storm: one house built on rock, one on sand. The same rain fell on both. Only one stood — not because it avoided the storm, but because of what it was standing on. Before the rain, both houses may have looked exactly the same.

What did this same storm reveal that you're proud of, or grateful for — the strength side, not just the weakness side?

The One Question

If you're in a storm right now, this isn't a list of twenty things to do — it's one question: what is this revealing?

That's all. Don't try to rebuild your whole life today. Don't condemn yourself. Just look — at money, relationships, priorities, faith, health, how you use your time.

What is this storm revealing?

One honest next step — not a whole rebuild, just one thing you can actually do because you can now see clearly:

Closing

Find the cause. Pay attention to what the storm reveals. And don't put a rotten post back into the ground.

Mahalo for working through this with me. If it helped, I'd invite you to explore the wider Rotten Fencepost Principle at keapuniakeakua.faith/rotten-fencepost.

Aloha,

Kahu Phil Stephens