

4 Ways Spirit-Filled Christians Must Respond to Hurricane Dorian

“Is that a truck upside down over there?” I asked, peering over rubble composed of broken trees in what used to be someone’s front yard. What was once a beautiful home was knocked completely off its foundation. A new red truck was completely upside down and partially stuck deep into the ground. Water pipes protruded from the ground, spewing out water even with the mains shut off. This once immaculate community had been devoured by the massive 27.8 feet storm surge from Hurricane Katrina—the highest storm surge ever recorded on a U.S coast.

Several locals told me that they were spending a great deal of time fighting insurance and utility companies. Insurance companies wanted lists and receipts for lost or damaged items, while utility companies still billed people for water and electric services in the vacant, storm-ravaged communities. One man said he received an astronomical water bill that he had to fight to get pardoned from. And while the devastation of Katrina is now historical fact, many are facing the overwhelming cleanup of Hurricane Dorian.

According to one news outlet, Hurricane Dorian has claimed the lives of seven people since Labor Day weekend, including that of an 8-year-old boy. The total count will probably continue to climb. The aftermath of Dorian’s ravaging trail may take months or years for some to get their lives back together. And in our fast-paced culture, in just a few weeks, many people will forget that Hurricane Dorian survivors are still hurting badly. Roughly 73,000 people live in and around Freeport, where a lot of the devastation hit. Hurricane Dorian went from a wind speed of 150 mph to 185 mph in just nine hours, gusting

to nearly 200 mph, making it the fastest wind speed intensity level ever seen in a hurricane storm. Dorian is the strongest storm to ever make landfall in the Bahamas. This monstrous storm ruthlessly pummeled the Bahamas, moving one mile per hour for 30 full hours. Horrific destruction is left in the wake of Dorian's path. Many are wondering: *Now what? What can be done? What should we do?*

I believe there are a few answers below that might help.

What Should Christians Do?

1. Give credit where credit is due.

The name "Dorian" comes from the Greek word that refers to the ancient Greek region of Doris or to the Dorians, who later colonized Sicily and southern Italy. Further studies and variances of the word bring up everything from "child of the sea" to "a gift." If Dorian really has a Greek root meaning of "gift," obviously this isn't God's sarcastic humor. Instead, this falls in line with what the Bible says in John 10:10:

"The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

And when devastating times come, it's easy to blame God or get mad at Him. We've all done it; once I was so mad at God that I said things a person—a Christian minister—should *never* say to God! But God didn't hit me with a lightning bolt; instead, He waited three days to respond back to me—and when He did, I was humbled, ashamed and moved to tears and deep repentance. This is the patient, loving God we serve. Those in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian will probably get mad and extremely frustrated at least once over the next couple months. Getting frustrated is a part of life, but remember, it's not God working against you, God is for you. It's Satan trying to destroy your life and community. Christians, we need to make sure we have our focus right. God brings hope in tough

times—and this is what the Dorian survivors need right now.

2. Pray long-term.

“Now I ask you, brothers, through the Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf” (Rom. 15:30).

One Christmas Eve, we came home to our lower-level apartment from our church’s candlelight service with our children all excited to open at least one gift, but we quickly realized that the sump pump had stopped working, and our home was flooded with several inches of dirty, freezing water. We had only been gone two hours! It was a total mess that took roughly eight full months to get back to normal. Carpets had to be pulled up and replaced, concrete cleaned, walls dried out and repaired. Everything that sat on the floor had to be removed and replaced or restored. We couldn’t open the windows in the dead of winter, so huge fans were placed in our apartment to dry and detox the air.

But life had to go on. We were still ministering and writing, and our kids were back in school. We received help in so many ways during that difficult time, and some even contacted us much later to say they were still praying. It was the people who remembered us even weeks and months later who really encouraged us the most!

This is what you’ll need to do for the survivors of Hurricane Dorian. Place it on your calendar if you have to, but keep praying for them long-term.

3. Engage in the basics.

“Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and bring the poor who are outcasts into your house? When you see the naked, to cover him and not hide yourself from your own flesh?” (Isa. 58:7).

Our family spent a month in a non-tourist, very rough area of the Grand Bahamas. We didn't vacation; we ministered, taught, preached, helped clean things, cooked and did outreach events for children. It was a lot of work, but it was amazing. We saw many lives changed. On two other occasions, I led several different teams to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. We arrived just after the final body counts were taken. We gutted homes, fed people, cleared properties, preached, taught, did worship and helped rebuild 21 roofs. It was *extremely* hot and humid, and I stopped counting the many mosquito bites. The stench of the aftermath was nauseating (to say the least), but we stayed.

Many other church groups helped rebuild after Katrina, and it impacted thousands within that region. Perhaps God is speaking to you about taking a trip to the Bahamas to help the restoration. Act on it! It will be one of the best decisions of your life, and you won't have to go far to find a ministry that will be going soon. If you can't take a trip, you could also give blood for the Red Cross or connect with a church that will be donating items for the Bahamas. Go through your closets and donate things you no longer use. Everyone can help.

4. Have Compassion

"Jesus went ashore and saw a great assembly. And He was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick" (Matt. 14:14).

I'm sure the prophetic airways will soon be bursting with encouraging prophetic words about the Bahamas and how in the midst of this devastation it will only get better. There will likely also be some "hellfire and judgement" words against the Bahamas because they somehow deserved it. Dorian is a natural disaster, and as we already established, death and destruction (including natural disasters) come from a fallen world, and the one behind them all is Satan, not God.

Keep in mind, writers and media gurus, that you're sitting at your desk in the comfort of your own home, writing to people who just lost everything. When someone is down—and I mean really down in life—they may not need another prophetic word or a “judgment word.” Rather, they need a shoulder to cry on or a listening ear. Be sensitive to what the Dorian survivors are going through. Most of all, love them! {eoa}

Andy Sanders has been speaking for 25 years. He has traveled extensively around the U.S. and other parts of the world. He is a prolific writer who carries both a prophetic and leadership-type message to the church. Sanders has a B.A. from Central Bible College and a master's and doctorate in Christian education from Freedom Seminary, graduating with honors. He is married to Cathy, and their family resides in Syracuse, New York.