

David Shibley: Recommit to Evangelism in Wake of Deadly Tornadoes

The recent devastation and loss of life caused by the tornadoes that ripped through Texas and Oklahoma this past week have been difficult to witness. For many of us, we will never fully understand what it is like to experience this kind of loss.

Calamities prompt us to ask, “Why?” There are no pat answers. A complete answer will come in heaven when all our questions will be fully resolved by our Father who loves us. Until then we may not be able to understand fully why such tragedies occur, but it’s important that we anchor our attitudes in Scripture. Here is just one heart attitude we should maintain: **compassion**.

Christians need to be the first responders in any crisis. God’s heart is for people. Every human being should feel a natural humanitarian impulse to help. But compassion is compounded in us as believers “because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 5:5, KJV). The Bible calls us to identify with those who suffer. We are to “weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15, NKJV).

Christians should lead the world in responding to human need—and we do. It is a dazzling testimony when Christians rush to meet the needs of all who suffer, no matter what their faith. A great example of this is seen in this article. At the same time, other religions are often sluggish in aiding their own adherents, if they respond at all. Our love speaks volumes. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

How should we respond to large-scale human disasters?

- **Pray for those who suffer.** Your prayers can reverberate to the ends of the earth. There is no distance in prayer. The Bible says to “open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die” (Prov. 31:8). Your prayers can truly make a world of difference.
- **Give generously.** An important way to show heartfelt compassion is by giving to help alleviate suffering. When disasters strike, we honor the Lord by giving financially to Christian relief organizations that provide humanitarian aid to the victims. Compassion is measured in tangible ways, such as giving and volunteering to help meet the needs of the victims of calamities. “As we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).
- **Pray that God will use this tragedy to bring people to Him.** Many survivors are groping for answers. Those without Christ not only have been stripped of life’s basic necessities, they also have no hope. In tragedy’s aftermath, many hearts are open to Jesus. He is the great “shelter in the time of storm” (see Ps. 61:2-3).
- **Recommit to the urgency of evangelism.** Suddenly lives can be snatched into eternity. This should press us to do all we can while we can to reach people for Christ. There is always a holy imperative in evangelism and missions. “Night is coming when no one can work” (John 9:4).

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled. ... Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (Ps. 46:1-3, 10).

Oklahomans and Texans, you are an impressive, well-spoken people. In every interview I see, you represent yourselves, your state and your God with such grace and strength. You're in our prayers.

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