

Disaster-Ridden Japan in Store for More Trauma

Immediate aid is being determined and released for Japan to keep survivors surviving. When assessing the aftermath of an earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear scare, immediacy is vital, but experts agree it will not fully solve the problem.

The psychological effect of this triple-threat disaster is bound to last for years to come.

Many experts agree that these recent events will undoubtedly trigger a wave of depression throughout the country. In an article with "PsychCentral," Psychologist Dr. Magda Osman says that the effects of feeling out of control during the natural disaster, combined with the inevitable aid lull that takes place a few months after any disaster, could easily trigger severe depression.

Others agree that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) will set in, especially as a result of the nuclear plant explosions. Dr. Joan Anzia, Professor of Psychiatry at Northwestern, told ABC News, "The distress from the nuclear threat is very different; an 'act of God' like an earthquake is different from a man-made disaster. With a man-made disaster, there's more of a feeling of betrayal by your government, and betrayal traumas have, in some ways, a heavier impact."

Reports indicate that Japan is prepared to provide psychological aid for an earthquake or similar catastrophe, but not for a disaster of this magnitude. "Typically, we see rates of about a third of those affected by the trauma, but with these three traumas, earthquake, tsunami, and radiation, the rates of PTSD are likely to be incredible," says Joseph Scotti, professor of psychology at Eberly College of Arts and

Sciences.

Unable to meet the need that will inevitably explode in coming weeks, the Japanese government will need help providing psychological aid. The notion of assisting is exciting for Biblica, a ministry which knows Japanese will find true hope in help grounded in the love of Christ.

“Right now in the early days after a disaster of this magnitude, of course it’s the shelter, food, water that people are in need of. But in the weeks and months to follow, there’s a time where there’s a perfect opportunity for what we call ‘spiritual and emotional care,’” explains Rich Blanco, vice president of Outreach for Biblica.

“People who’ve lost everything are just really going to be seeking how they rebuild their lives, and that’s where Biblica steps in with God’s Word in very appropriate formats to bring hope to a hopeless situation.”

The format Blanco refers to is three simple booklets which provide comfort and counseling in view of Christ. “When Your Whole World Changes” is currently being translated into Japanese and provides help through all of the psychological stages of grief. Users are encouraged to journal on extra pages to work through their thoughts in their timing. “Survivors” is essentially the children’s edition of the first booklet.

“Beside Quiet Waters” could bring vital assistance to anyone who experienced the quake or the tsunami. “When people experience a disaster like this, often they’re not sleeping well, they’re waking up scared, and there’s the fear of another tsunami or earthquake,” explains Blanco. This booklet helps people deal with their anxiety by turning to Christ for comfort and trusting in God.

All of these booklets are Christ-centered. Despite the fact that Japan has been traditionally non-Christian, Blanco says

disasters like this one provide unique opportunities for openness. People will be looking for answers, and these booklets could provide necessary first-steps to emotional and mental healing, but ultimately spiritual healing as well.

Experts say that psychological responses too quickly can be devastating for trauma sufferers. Some may not be ready to rehash their experience for quite sometime. Biblica's response allows people to go at their own pace, to read, and to journal when they feel ready and comfortable.