

The Charisma Challenge

Each of us must respond to meet the needs of those hurt by recent hurricanes.

Hurricane Katrina may go down in history as the worst natural disaster to hit the United States. Hurricane Rita, striking soon after, increased the damage to the states along the Gulf Coast. Many of us have watched in horror the images of devastation on television and prayed for the millions of lives that were impacted. But we cannot simply say: “Be warmed and comforted” (see James 2:16); we must respond to meet the needs of those hurt by these disasters.

No matter what the government or organizations such as the Red Cross may do to help, it won’t be enough. And Jesus commanded us to do to others what we would want them to do to us (see Matt. 7:12).

So I’m issuing the “Charisma Challenge” to every church and individual Christian to do something to help. This is an unprecedented crisis that demands an unprecedented response.

As one who lived through three hurricanes last year, I can personally empathize with those whose lives were affected by Katrina and Rita. What my wife and I experienced was a fraction of what they went through. Still, having to clean up all the debris, going without electricity for days and dealing with insurance claims resulting from roof damage took its toll.

But what about the cities where all the buildings were destroyed for several blocks due to tidal surges? Or the flooding in New Orleans that forced the evacuation of the city

and resulted in many of the more than 800 deaths reported in that state?

Thankfully Christians responded. Churches opened their doors and hearts to the evacuees and sent crews to help clean up the damage. Even the usually cynical media sat up and took note. The initial requirement for food, water and clothing was met.

But the work of the church must go on.

Consider the plight of believers in New Orleans. Michael Green, pastor of Faith Church, found that not only was his church under water, but also his 1,500 members were scattered to 10 states. He estimates that up to a third will never move back.

His solution for how to continue is one from the early church—the people will meet in homes in multiple locations. The church will go on! But Faith Church's plight is repeated many times over in the area hit by Katrina.

If you were a pastor, how would you pay your church's bills if you were unable to hold services or collect offerings? If you had a ministry, how could you operate if you couldn't get your mail? And if you were a homeowner, how would you rebuild your home if your place of employment were destroyed and you had no job?

Flood insurance or money from FEMA isn't going to solve all the problems. Even if the church structures are rebuilt, the government isn't going to help churches rebuild their ministries. That's not the government's job; it's the church's job.

So here's my challenge to every reader: Let the church be the church! Do to those congregations in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Texas what you would have them do to you.

The readers of Charisma have already responded generously, and 100 percent of the money given has gone to help feed and care for the evacuees. But in the next phase we must help churches and fellow believers rebuild their lives.

The challenge is for you to find a church or a family to help, and to respond generously. I am suggesting that churches take up a specific offering for this purpose and that individuals give one day's pay. With nearly 250,000 Charisma subscribers and an average daily household income of \$213, that's more than \$53 million.

To find out where the needs are, you can go to the special Web site we have set up ([http://www.charisma.org/charismachallenge](#)). And if you can't connect any other way, give through Christian Life Missions, the nonprofit partner of Charisma. (Send donations to P.O. Box 952248, Lake Mary, FL 32795.)

We will give 100 percent of your donation to ministries on the ground helping those in need. We will also report on our Web site and in future issues how the money was spent.

Let's respond as never before to the victims of the hurricanes. I encourage you to give either through Christian Life Missions or through another ministry. Accept the Charisma Challenge today!