

When Disaster Strikes

In the wake of this tragedy, let's send a wave of Christ's love to Sri Lanka.

Unprecedented devastation occurred the day after Christmas when a tidal wave hit several Asian and African countries. News reports say the fifth worst earthquake in more than 100 years took place in the Indian Ocean, causing what the Japanese call a tsunami—a wall of water—that hit the shoreline along thousands of miles. Hardest hit were Sri Lanka, Thailand, India and Indonesia.

The death toll continued to rise in late December. As I write this, FOX News says 114,000 have died. That number may double due to the spread of disease from contaminated water. The immediate needs are for medicine, clean water, food and shelter for the homeless.

International aid is beginning to flow in. But so much is needed that it is mind-boggling. In giving his condolences to the suffering nations, President Bush urged Americans to support relief efforts.

That's why I decided to issue an urgent plea. Though governments and large international organizations are making a difference, the church must respond too. We need your help to meet the needs of Christians in one of the hardest-hit areas.

When disaster strikes we invite our readers to respond through our nonprofit partner, Christian Life Missions. We channel 100 percent of the funds raised to the affected area, and we pay overhead costs.

You gave generously when there was famine in Sudan and when terrorists struck America on 9/11. Now I am imploring you to help in a way the government agencies won't—by aiding churches.

With such a great need, we've decided to focus on Sri Lanka. An island nation off the tip of India, Sri Lanka has a population of 19 million. One million of its people are now homeless.

We have trusted sources who say that of the hardest-hit countries, it's safest to work in Sri Lanka because there's a greater chance aid will reach those who need it.

Sri Lanka is also a country in which Christians make up only 8 percent of the population. We reported in last month's issue about the persecution the church endures there. But those who know the situation say this has resulted in a strong church with mature leaders.

We have made contact with Godfrey Yogarajah, the head of the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka. His organization needs \$300,000 for food and medicine.

Not only are Sri Lankan Christians giving food, they are also offering counseling and prayer support for the thousands who lost loved ones. Government agencies can't offer that.

The tsunami struck on Sunday morning when most churches were meeting. In churches near the coast, many pastors and church members lost loved ones.

The evangelical fellowship includes several hundred Pentecostal churches belonging to the Assemblies of God, Foursquare Church and the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission as well as other, smaller groups. He plans to specifically help these groups, recognizing that the money must go first where the need is greatest.

For the first month, we have pledged to funnel all donations to Christians in Sri Lanka. We will monitor the situation and consider helping other nations as we get more information.

It is time to give generously. I urge pastors to take up an offering in their next service and to encourage their congregations to bless Sri Lanka in a big way.

When you send your donations to Christian Life Missions, we will rush the money to Sri Lanka. We will also provide e-mail updates about the project.

The Sri Lankan church needs \$300,000. If every reader of Charisma gave only \$1, think of the impact that could be made. But I hope many will give much more.

You can give quickly by going to our Web site ([http://www.christianlifemissions.com](#)) and donating online, or you can mail your donation or the offering from your church to Christian Life Missions, P.O. Box 952248, Lake Mary, FL 32795-2248.

In the wake of this tragedy, let's send a wave of Christ's love to Sri Lanka—in the form of a generous blessing. You can be confident that your money will go quickly to those who need it most.

Stephen Strang is the founder and publisher of Charisma.