

Charismatic Pastor: There's a Blessing in the Superstorm (Sandy)

Right after Hurricane Sandy hit New Jersey a year ago, Mike Rosado, pastor of Fervent Church in Hoboken, N.J., found himself sleeping on the floor of his in-laws' house, wondering how his three-week-old, resource-strapped church could help people in the local community make it through what he called a "curveball" of a storm.

"Hurricane Sandy hit really hard," he says. "Power went out. People were left outside, living in a rough state. People were even outside grilling food on the stoop just to survive."

Also known as "Superstorm Sandy," this destructive storm was the largest Atlantic hurricane on record and the second-costliest hurricane in U.S. history. The immediate aftermath left the city of Hoboken on the banks of the Hudson River stunned and in desperate need of humanitarian aid.

The Fervent Church pastor, who had moved to New Jersey less than a month earlier to launch the new church, says compassion for the community surged within him, catapulting him to cry out to God. Amid the devastation and while fighting raw feelings of helplessness and confusion, Rosado learned important lessons that have deepened his level of trust in the Lord.

On the one-year anniversary of the megastorm that rocked the Northeast, a New Jersey pastor reflects upon five lessons—in his own words—that stick with him even as his New Jersey-based church thrives with high growth, its membership now including people the church served during the toughest days in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.

1. "God is faithful to send help in unexpected ways."

Just as the scarcity of resources looked the worst, Rosado received a phone call from Chad Braswell, associate pastor of Metro Church in Marlborough, Mass., committing money to help buy supplies to help the victims of the hurricane.

Soon afterward, two more churches from outside the state—Free Church in Chicago and the Champion Center in Seattle—contacted Fervent Church to pledge financial support. Amazed, Rosado says he saw the hand of God move through the generosity of others.

Within 48 hours, thousands of dollars poured into the relief effort that Rosado and Fervent Church were then able to launch. They bought supplies in south Jersey and transported them on rented U-Haul trucks to north Jersey to meet the needs of the victims.

“God made a way where there seemed to be no way,” he says.

2. “Good can come out of a storm.”

In an ironic twist, the storm afforded the opportunity for Fervent Church to go into the streets, meet people and build relationships.

“I couldn’t charge my iPhone, so I had to talk to people face to face,” Rosado says.

The team from Fervent Church fed people with food but also spiritual encouragement rooted in love. Many of the people Pastor Rosado and his team met during the days after the hurricane now attend Fervent Church regularly.

“One girl came to Fervent Church because we fed her parents for five straight days,” Rosado says. “And now she is participating as a leader in our children’s ministry.”

3. “If you steward well what God gives you, more is coming.”

Soon after Hurricane Sandy, another church gave its building to Fervent Church, enabling the church to become a two-campus

church within months of opening. The church now has 220 members.

Rosado sees this favor as a sign of affirmation about the way the team at Fervent Church handled the financial resources it received in the hurricane's aftermath and the responsibility it demonstrated in taking care of victims of the hurricane. Because those in the church were faithful with what God gave them to steward, God increased the church's ministry in an accelerated way, he says.

4. "When it doesn't feel like He is working, focus on the fact that God is always good."

Rosado, who witnessed the goodness of God at work following the storm, says, "We need to declare, 'You're a good God, and You won't leave us high and dry.'" Those days were not a time for murmuring and complaining. Doubting and questioning God's motives would have only slowed down the team and likely would have resulted in inaction.

The pastor doesn't feign to know all the answers, but what transpired around Hurricane Sandy showed him a lot about trusting God.

"When it doesn't look like God is working according to our timetable, our agenda or our methodology, we still need to believe that He is working for our benefit," he says. "Because He is."

5. "The most important thing on any adventure God puts you on is to follow His peace."

Rosado discovered in the midst of the worst storm he had ever experienced how he could rely on the peace of the Lord Jesus that truly does pass all understanding.

"There was a strange sense of peace," he says, recounting the days after he received those phone calls with generous pledges for provisions.

When the waves of challenging circumstances were surging and crashing around him, this New Jersey pastor kept his eyes on Jesus.

“There are times when we may question God, especially during a storm, but even when emotions say something else, we need to follow His peace, man. Follow His peace,” he says.

Before Hurricane Sandy, Rosado was focused on launching Fervent Church “in a big way.” After the hurricane, he was refocused on “a big God who loves people in a big way”—which is now the essence of the church. As crazy as it may sound, Rosado admits, what unfolded from the storm was what he calls “a blessing in disguise.”

Today, Rosado is an emerging leader among young pastors in the northeast region of the United States. Having been through the storm (literally), he now speaks at conferences and church events to recount the story of how God showed up to feed the hungry, comfort the fearful, mend the broken and save the lost in the aftermath of a storm for the ages—through emboldened, “fervent” Christians fully committed to serving others.