

# Children's Ministry Helps Kids Understand Why Tragedy Happens

Natural and man-made disasters leave thousands in desperate situations and humanitarian workers tirelessly attend to their basic needs, providing food, shelter, clothing and other essentials. Is this enough? Are such supplies all these victims need to make it through the crisis?

Child Evangelism Fellowship thinks there is another important angle that needs to be addressed—a desperate need to understand why God lets tragedies happen.

“When tragedies occur children ask the same questions adults do: ‘Why did this happen? Does God care?’” says Harry Robinson, vice president of International Ministries at CEF. “The emotional and spiritual pain they experience is as intense as the pangs of hunger. CEF wants to reach these children and provide them with the answers that will bring real emotional and spiritual healing. And strengthening them spiritually helps them endure the physical hardship of the crisis.”

One of the best ways CEF has found to reach children has been through the distribution of its booklet called “Do You Wonder Why?” The booklet was written in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist bombings. A small team was sent from CEF to New York City to meet with firefighters and pastors to learn from their experience in order to craft a succinct and appropriate booklet for children. Its message conveys the Christian understanding of tragedy: its roots in humankind’s collective choice against God, the hope of the gospel and the wonder of a God who loves them, watches over them and will never forsake them.

CEF works to distribute these booklets to as many children as possible—and as quickly as possible—in the wake of a crisis. For example, booklets are currently being distributed in the tornado-struck areas of Alabama. And 20,000 booklets arrived in Joplin, Mo. last week. In the aftermath of Katrina, CEF distributed over 500,000 booklets to victims of that tragedy.

Overseas, CEF is also well positioned to help. In Hawaii and Alaska, CEF has stockpiled 20,000 booklets each. With a presence in 176 countries, CEF can reach almost all of the populated world. When a disaster occurs in a foreign country, the booklet is quickly translated into the native language and printed where necessary, sometimes at the CEF Headquarters in Warrenton, Mo., as was the case after the earthquake hit Haiti in 2010; sometimes in the affected country as in Christchurch, New Zealand or Eastern Japan both devastated by earthquakes earlier this year.

While these booklets are designed for children, they are not the only ones who benefit from them. In January 2010 after the earthquake in Haiti, CEF distributed over 32,000 booklets. It was not just the children of Haiti who benefited. One parent told a CEF worker, “You should not only give those [booklets] to children! We as adults need this too! I have been struggling with emotional despair since after the earthquake, blaming God for what happened. I stopped praying and going to church. But this booklet answered my questions! Please, do not only give it to children, we need to know too. Thank you!”