

Hurricane Irene Leaves Many Wondering 'Why?'

Hurricane Irene blasted more than 1,500 houses in New Bern, N.C., and left hundreds of millions in North Carolina damages, leaving homeowners with one main question.

In the time of disaster, it's common for the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team chaplains to be thrown many questions.

The search for answers almost universally has one thing in common—the question “Why?”

Rapid Response chaplain Jim Grumblatt has heard many of those “Why” questions during his deployment in New Bern as he ministers in the aftermath of Hurricane Irene.

“Why, God?”

“Why me?”

“Why now?”

“Why here?”

“To try to put yourself in a person's place is difficult, if not impossible,” Grumblatt said. “But just to be there and listen and spend time with those folks is oftentimes all they really need to get their focus back.”

Irene left a huge mark on the East Coast, with more than \$5 billion worth of damage and 46 deaths reported.

News reports claim Irene ripped more than \$400 million dollars worth of damage throughout North Carolina alone, mostly in tobacco farms that were completely or partially destroyed. The hurricane claimed at least six deaths in the Tar Heel state.

“We see broken lives, people who have lost everything,”

Grumblatt said. "All the stuff they've accumulated over a period of time—it's total destruction and total loss in the eyes of the people who are living here."

New Bern, a coastal town of about 30,000 people, saw more than 1,500 houses damaged from flooding and severe winds.

Rapid Response Team chaplain Kelly Burke was able to share the hope and love of Christ to many of those affected in the town.

An emotional and deeply spiritual task, Burke knows if he tries to minister on his own, he will always come up empty.

"If we do this in ourselves, we are going to crash and burn," he said. "But if we go in His strength, if we go in His spirit, if we go in His name, if we take the burdens from the people and just lay them at the Father's feet, we are able to be sustained."

Burke shared with one gentleman who professed to know Christ as his Savior, but had struggled with being outspoken about his faith.

"But after the visit, he told me he now will see an elderly woman raking her yard and he'll go help her rake it," Burke said. "There's a pastor who I talked to who has a whole new vision not just for his church but for his community."

Burke calls the impact of Irene and the spiritual awakening that is occurring on N.C.'s Outer Banks a "ripple effect."

"Even if you throw the smallest pebble into the water it creates that ripple that keeps going out and out and out," he said. "I see a spirit of revival being born here and I pray it sweeps through this county, this state and this country."

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