

Serving God in a Dry Season

While Hurricane Sandy's floods dominated recent weather headlines, a very different weather pattern has cost us more than the superstorm's \$50 billion in damages. The United States actually needs rain—and lots of it.

Forecasters say our nation is experiencing its worst drought since 1954. As of this week, 60.1 percent of the nation is in drought, with six states—Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Colorado and Iowa—entirely in drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. Lakes are drying up, crops are dying and ranchers are scrambling to feed their cows.

Some people figure this prolonged dry spell is just the result of cyclical climate patterns. Maybe so, but the Bible suggests that droughts and famines can be linked to **spiritual realities**. Sometimes the natural world reflects our spiritual condition. Man's **pride, greed, injustice and idolatry** can actually disturb nature.

When you consider how hostile our culture has become to God and biblical **morality**, it's no surprise we are in a recession—both economically and ecologically. (Note to all my green friends: Sin is actually very bad for the environment.)

The good news is that even in seasons of drought, whether physical or spiritual, God has a knack for getting His people through challenging times. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all experienced famine—yet they inherited a divine promise. Moses led God's people through a dry wilderness. David wrote psalms about the dry seasons. And it was during a prolonged drought that Elijah called down fire from heaven.

I'm not superstitious, so I have no fear of the number 13. While I do believe 2013 will be a challenging year financially, I see some silver linings behind today's storm clouds. As we enter this difficult time, remember what the

Bible says about drought:

1. It is a time to repent. Back in the old days people repented when the rain stopped. They feared God. They knew they couldn't rely on their sophisticated technology, scientific achievements or social engineering. The prophet Joel led the way when he wrote: "To you, O Lord, I cry; for fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness and the flame has burned up all the trees of the field" (Joel 1:19, NASB). When times are tough, make sure you are not offending God in any way. Turn from all known sin. Adjust your attitudes, starve your lusts and refocus on the Lord.

2. It is a time to seek the Lord fervently. Many of America's trees are in danger because of the current drought. The only tree that can survive drought is one that has roots deep enough to soak up water that lies far below the ground. Your ability to survive tough times depends on how deep you are willing to go with God. Shallow devotion isn't enough.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote about the righteous man: "For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit" (Jer. 17:8). Instead of fretting about the future, extend your roots farther than you ever have before. Seek the Lord and tap into the strength of His presence.

3. It is a time to worship the Lord passionately. Worship has a proven therapeutic effect on our souls, but it also has the power to change our circumstances. When times are tough, the tough start praising! If your situation looks bleak, don't fall into the trap of depression. You can worship your way out of this.

The prophet Habakkuk described a dark time in Israel when the fig tree did not blossom and there was no fruit on the vines.

Still, he chose to praise. He said: "Yet I will exult in the Lord; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:18). As you enter 2013, use the weapon of praise to conquer your anxieties, fears and doubts.

4. It is a time to expect supernatural supply. King David said the righteous would enjoy abundance "in the days of famine" (see Psalm 37:19). That doesn't make sense! How can we experience provision during a recession? It is possible because God's economy is not linked to this world's corrupt system. Just as the widow's oil flowed even when her bank account was dry, you too can know supernatural blessing even when the nation is dangling over a fiscal cliff.

Regardless of what the history books say about 2013, it can be a time for God's people to shine. Raise your faith level and expect a miracle.

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