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This Genesis Gem has an article you will want to read about natural disasters. Since we in south Florida realize we are in the midst of hurricane season, it may be a good time to look at the question, 'are natural disasters acts of God?'

ACTS OF GOD?

Insurance companies call them 'acts of God' – natural disasters that cannot be avoided. But are they? Is it possible that people on this earth, good and bad, are being punished for their misdeeds? To what extent, if at all, is God responsible for these horrifying happenings?

You don't have to look at hurricanes or tornadoes to be filled with fear and confusion about God's role in natural disasters. Every family on God's earth probably faces, on a regular basis, some personal tragedy that raises the same questions: Where is God when terrible things strike? Why doesn't He stop it? Cancer. A terrible car accident. Getting fired from a job. 'Small' tragedies can be as incomprehensible as big ones. Life is full of 'bad things waiting to happen.'

Who has Answers?

Different religions have different theories. Muslims believe that people who die as a result of natural disasters go to heaven-provided they call on God in the midst of their tragedy. I suppose that can be soothing. Buddhists have a different perspective because they are non-theistic. There is no creator. People are their own creation-so you create your own good or bad lives. Orthodox Jews believe God does

control nature, but it is impossible for people to comprehend why bad things happen.

NATURAL TRAGEDIES AND THE GOSPEL

So, what are we as Christians to believe? There are differing opinions. Hebrews 12:7 in scripture is where we find the clearest teaching on this. *"We are to endure hardship (including natural disaster) as discipline."* In verse 10 it says, *"Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we share in His holiness."* He is not punishing us.

HERE ARE A FEW SUMMARY POINTS THAT MAY GIVE US COMFORT:

NEVER blame God for disasters. The world has never been a perfect place, not since the Fall. It is not His judgment-that is yet to come. If anything, tragedies are merely a reminder that life is fragile and that the only enduring life available to us is to be found in spending an eternity with Him-a gift made freely available through Christ's sacrifice.

EMPHASIZE that God does discipline His children but His discipline is a mark of His love and compassion for our suffering, not an act of revenge. He disciplines not so much by sending tragic circumstances into our lives to punish us, but by not rescuing us from our mistakes

or bad choices. If I, for instance, cheat on my income tax and get caught, God isn't going to rescue me out of trouble. I have to reap what I have sown, and face up to the consequences of my sin. And in the process become more Christ-like. The bad things that happen are of our own making, but God through chastening, can turn it to our good.

REMINDE yourself and others that in the midst of this broken and suffering world, God longs to comfort us by sharing in our pain and suffering. He longs to be part of our grieving, and to bring healing to our souls. He is the companion who will never leave us or forsake us. Tragedy should motivate us to call a hurting world to embrace the comfort of God, because there is no other comfort to compare with it.

USE the opportunity that natural tragedy affords to offer comfort to those who suffer.

2 Corinthians 1:4 reminds us that God comforts us *"so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."* Help them to find something redemptive in their tragedy. *"Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."* (Hebrews 12:11). Every natural tragedy is an opportunity to witness to the compassion of our God.

This article was written by Dr. Archibald Hart and produced by the American Association of Christian Counselors.

Genesis Gems

Have you had unexplainable tragedy in your life? You may want to talk to someone at Genesis. We can walk with you, comfort and guide you. Call us at 239-939-5504.

Continuing to meet goals!

One of several Genesis goals for 2014 is to spark interest in our services through social media avenues. Counselors have been working diligently to gain a presence on Facebook and to update our website with a video.

We continue to reach out to local organizations, another one of our 2014 goals. In June we attended a meeting of the Hispanic American Council to get to know them and have them come to know us.

Be sure to check our website at www.gcformyers.com occasionally for the latest updates.



Why Are We Here?

Genesis Counseling of Fort Myers wants to make a difference in this community by offering counseling to everyone, yes, you read that right – everyone! How can we do that? We are fortunate to have several colleges and universities in the area that are training mental health counselors. In order for them to gain experience, they are given opportunities as interns at Genesis. Genesis brings in interns every semester to help these students learn. We can then pass this opportunity along by offering free counseling to those who need it! Need counseling, but don't have insurance or a means to pay for it? Contact Genesis right away at (239) 939-5504 to set up an appointment with an intern.

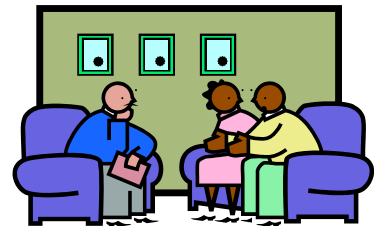
A testimonial...

Now what? I have really made a mess of my life and just found out that I have a rare and inoperable cancer. What else could go wrong? My entire family has distanced themselves from me over the years and I feel SO alone. I happen to be listening to the radio, heard an ad about Genesis and free counseling and thought I'd give them a call. Since I am unemployed, I knew I couldn't pay for counseling but I needed to talk to SOMEBODY! I was quickly scheduled to start with one of their interns and asked if I could come in twice a week. Time was running out for me. I already felt the extreme fatigue setting in, as the doctor told me would happen. I was able to come in for morning appointments and the student intern that I saw was such a comfort to me. It took me a while to tell her everything I was feeling but she was very patient with me. I couldn't help but notice that she seemed bent on telling me about her God, this Jesus that would always be there for me. I was not convinced until she broke out the bible and started reading from it. She then gave it to me. Was I surprised! She just handed it to me and asked that I read it at home. That was eight weeks ago. I am now no longer able to get to appointments at the Genesis office as I am confined to bed. On my nightstand sits the Bible the counselor gave me. I have prayed for Jesus to see me through my illness and last days. I first asked for forgiveness of my sins. Now I am committed to finish my life as Jesus would want. I read His word faithfully each day. I have invited family members to visit so I could explain my change of heart. Some have come, others have not and probably don't believe I could change. I was shocked

myself that my attitude could change so drastically! I will pray for them. I want to see all my kin in heaven for eternity. I hope they find a compassionate person like the counselor who listened to me. I have been blessed!

-so you know, it's not too late

P.S. 'so you know, it's not too late' has since passed away, but assuredly, there was joy in heaven when she joined the saints.



Want to change your lifestyle?

You don't have to be close to death to look at changing who you are. Couples have improved their relationships, families have become happier, and perspectives on life can change. Seek out a therapist and spend time discovering who you were meant to be in God's eyes.

Check out the article for this quarter on the previous page all about tragedy



A Recipe for You!

Healthy Watermelon Slushies

Puree 6 cup seedless watermelon in blender until smooth, pour into a shallow container and freeze. Let thaw slightly, then mash with a fork and spoon into cups. Ahh! Makes 4 servings in less than 10 minutes. And, SO easy!

Found on food-network website