

When Your Whole World
CHANGES



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Building Your Spiritual
Resources during an
Uncertain Time

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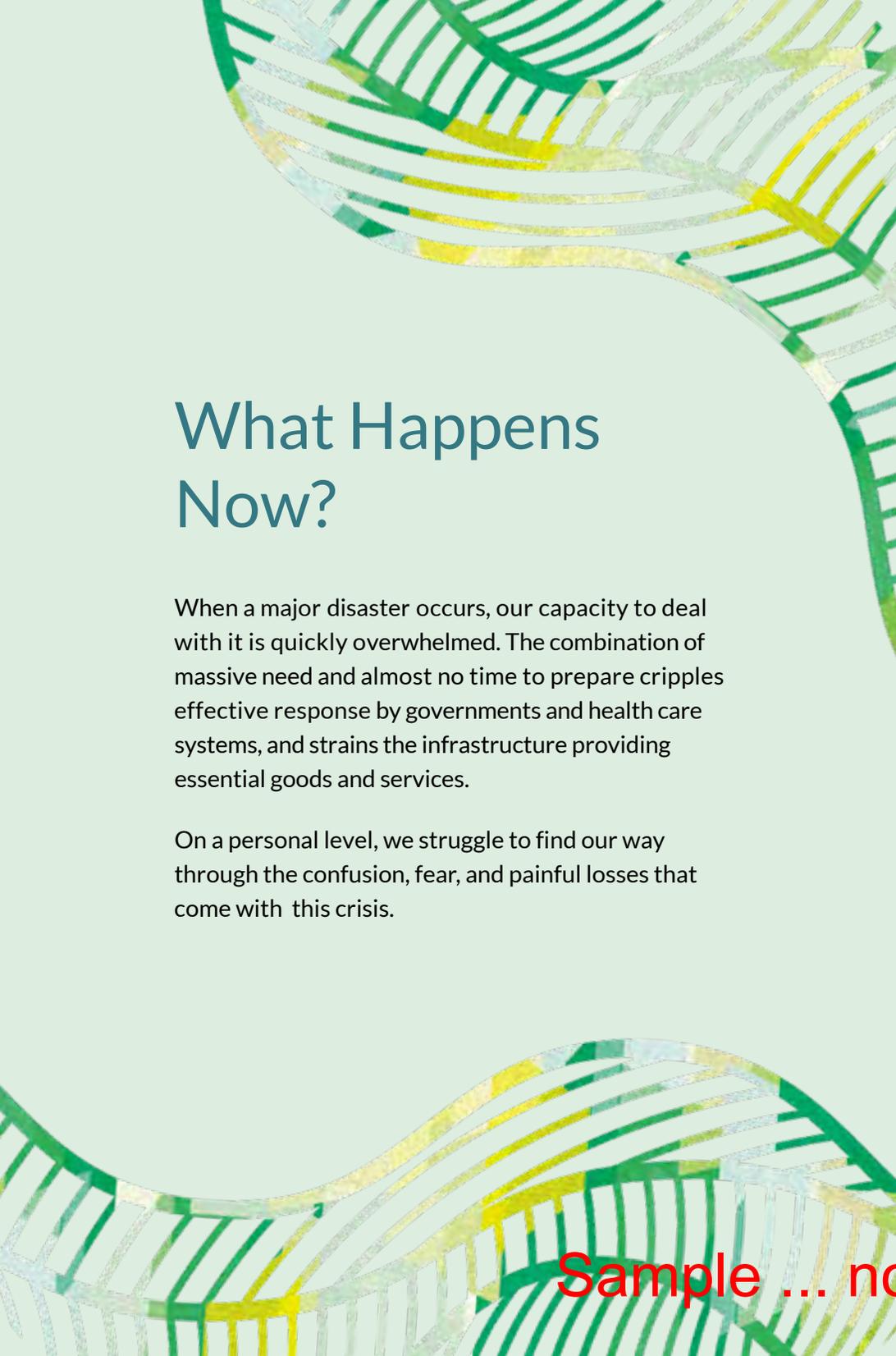
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This disaster has changed our whole world	

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What Happens Now?

When a major disaster occurs, our capacity to deal with it is quickly overwhelmed. The combination of massive need and almost no time to prepare cripples effective response by governments and health care systems, and strains the infrastructure providing essential goods and services.

On a personal level, we struggle to find our way through the confusion, fear, and painful losses that come with this crisis.

Few of us have faced a crisis like this. Most of us haven't had to cope with such dramatic changes to our daily routines. We haven't faced the uncertainty of changing circumstances on this scale.

This disaster affects our every thought, every decision, and every action every moment of the day. We have no idea what tomorrow may bring. We may wonder if the stories we see on television today will become our story tomorrow.

Amid such turmoil, we long for comfort, stability, and hope. The Bible, God's Word to humanity, is the story of God's faithful love for each of us in every circumstance. It can be a great encouragement during such times. It gives voice to our anger, heartache, fears, and hopes. It comforts us for today and strengthens us for tomorrow. It helps us to see beyond our immediate struggles to the eternal hope God brings to the whole of life.

These daily readings explore some of the common feelings and thoughts we may experience following a disaster.

Each reading includes a question or thought inspired by survivors of disasters and crises, a passage to read from the Bible, and encouragement to help you cope with the new challenges of daily living. The readings conclude with a thought or question for you to keep in mind as you go through your day or to use as a prompt for your journaling or prayer time.

May God bless you and keep you moment by moment, day by day, as you seek to follow Jesus faithfully even when your whole world changes.

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Help Me!

I'm stunned.

I had heard that surviving a disaster could be bad, but I never imagined it would be like this for me, my family, and my community.

It's a lot worse than I expected.

Even if we do everything right, I can't be certain that the people I love most will be safe.

What do I do now?

Where can I find help?

We've all seen news about disasters. The pictures and sound bites of earthquake zones, floods, armed conflict, famine, and epidemics give us a tourist-like montage of the chaos. But they don't begin to convey the uncertainty, loss, and pain these events bring to the lives of the people affected.

Coping with what lies ahead may take every bit of our strength and ability—and even more.

We aren't alone when we feel weary, weak, or inadequate. Others have needed help during difficult times too.

The following passages from the book of Psalms were written by King David, a man who was all too familiar with suffering and heartache. Perhaps he describes some of the feelings you're experiencing.

Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress;
my eyes grow weak with sorrow,
my soul and my body with grief.
My life is consumed by anguish
and my years by groaning;
my strength fails.

Praise be to the LORD,
for he showed me the wonders of his love
when I was in a city under siege.
In my alarm I said,
"I am cut off from your sight!"
Yet you heard my cry for mercy
when I called to you for help.
Psalm 31:9-10, 21-22

**What would you like to say to God
about the disaster you have lived
through and the impact it's having
on you today?**

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Feeling Vulnerable

So much has happened—and things continue to happen.

I can't stop the onslaught of bad news.
I can't even protect and provide for my home and family.

I feel so powerless and vulnerable.

The world doesn't seem safe anymore.

One reason disasters are frightening is because they are beyond our control. We may know what's happening, but we don't know how it will affect us or how long it will take to recover.



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We don't know when—or if—our lives will return to normal. For many of us, that uncertainty doesn't feel good.

When we're used to depending on our own ability and power to feel safe, we may feel especially vulnerable when a disaster takes that control away. But while we're powerless to help ourselves, God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, remains powerful and good.

We become strong as we connect with God, the life-giving power of the universe.

The LORD loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of his unfailing love.
By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.
He gathers the waters of the sea into jars;
he puts the deep into storehouses.
Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the people of the world revere him.
For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.

We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.
May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,
even as we put our hope in you.
Psalm 33:5-9, 20-22

The power and goodness of our almighty God can't be diminished by any disaster that befalls us.

In which areas of vulnerability will you trust God to be your help and shield?



No More!

I've had it! I can't concentrate on anything.

It's so hard to remember what people are trying to tell me. I'm utterly exhausted, but I can't sleep. I feel so nauseous I can't eat.

I'm irritated with everyone and impatient about everything. I just want it all to go away!

Dealing with a disaster or crisis is difficult in so many ways. Every part of life may be disrupted by what is happening. Our normal way of doing things doesn't work anymore. Getting anything done is a challenge, and there's so much to do that we don't know where to start.

Figuring it all out is very hard work.

Simply doing our everyday activities reminds us of what we've lost and the uncertainty of tomorrow. Grieving these losses and facing our fears is emotionally draining. No wonder we feel overwhelmed!

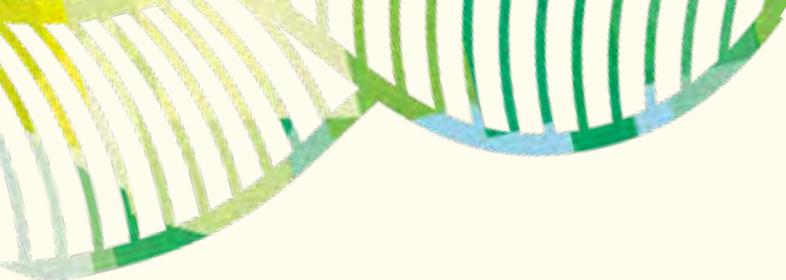
But we can be confident in this: God hears our distress and offers us his presence.

Listen to my prayer, O God,
do not ignore my plea;
hear me and answer me.
My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught.

My heart is in anguish within me;
the terrors of death have fallen on me.
Fear and trembling have beset me;
horror has overwhelmed me.
I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest.
I would flee far away
and stay in the desert;
I would hurry to my place of shelter,
far from the tempest and storm."

I call to God,
and the LORD saves me.
Evening, morning and noon
I cry out in distress,
and he hears my voice.
Psalm 55:1-2, 4-8, 16-17

In what ways do you seek God to be your refuge and strength during this time of trouble?



Is God Punishing Us?

When I have a moment to myself, I wonder why God has allowed this disaster to happen.

Is God angry with us?

Is God punishing us?

Some people say he is, and that we deserve this. That makes me feel guilty about what's happening.

Does God still love us, or has he turned his back on us?

The Bible tells us about a man named Job, who experienced one disaster after another. He lost every one of his beloved children, his financial security was wiped out, and he was miserably sick. Some of Job's friends insisted he must have done something very bad to cause God to punish him.

Job's friend Eliphaz even said:

Who, being innocent, has ever perished?
Where were the upright ever destroyed?
As I have observed, those who plow evil
and those who sow trouble reap it.
At the breath of God they perish;
at the blast of his anger they are no more.
Job 4:7-9

Imagine how Job felt after that bit of "encouragement"! But God said Job's friend was wrong. God wasn't sending tragedies Job's way. Tragic events and difficult times that bring great suffering can happen to anyone. And when those times come, we can count on God's continued love for us.

I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.
I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.
Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:
Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,
For his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
Lamentations 3:19-23

Fear that we have brought disaster upon ourselves is a heavy burden. Because of God's unfailing love for us, we don't have to carry that weight. We can find rest in the comfort of his love.

Share with God what his love for you means during this time.

DAY 4 ●

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Unstoppable Tears

I find myself crying at unpredictable moments.

It's bad enough when I'm alone, but when I cry around other people, I feel weak and embarrassed. I feel like I should explain myself, but most of the time I can't.

I just feel unbearably sad and frustrated.

It's not unusual to experience deep feelings of sorrow, anguish, or other emotions during a crisis.

Expressing these emotions, including crying, can be a healthy part of coping with and recovering from everything that is happening. And because of God's great love for us, we don't have to keep those feelings to ourselves; we can safely share our every heartache with God.

God deeply understands the reality of human suffering and invites us to cry out to him when we are suffering.

When we're upset, God feels our pain.

When we grieve, God grieves with us.

No calamity or emotional distress is beyond the reach of his redeeming love.

The hearts of the people
cry out to the Lord.
You walls of Daughter Zion,
let your tears flow like a river
day and night;
give yourself no relief,
your eyes no rest.
Arise, cry out in the night,
as the watches of the night begin;
pour out your heart like water
in the presence of the Lord.

My eyes will flow unceasingly,
without relief,
until the LORD looks down
from heaven and sees.

I called on your name, LORD,
from the depths of the pit.
You heard my plea: "Do not close your ears
to my cry for relief."
You came near when I called you,
and you said, "Do not fear."
Lamentations 2:18-19; 3:49-50, 55-57

God is on the side of those who suffer. We can trust him to draw near when we pour out the pain in our hearts to him.

What is your prayer of thanksgiving for God's presence in the midst of your pain?

DAY 5 ●

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