



Recently there have been a host of natural disasters. This is not new. However, the intensity is.

Children may be somewhat anxious about what this could mean for them and their families. Natural disasters can happen when the places where we live are in the path of extreme acts of nature. Acknowledging the reality of disasters, praying and assisting those in need, and talking through steps you can take as a family to survive a disaster can help to reduce this anxiety.

Elizabeth's Story

FLORIDA

When Hurricane Irma hit Florida, seven-year-old Elizabeth and her five-year-old brother and three-year-old sister were huddled with their mother in the middle of their home. The wind sounded like a freight train. It wasn't long before the power went out and they sat in the dark as the wind howled. The rain, coming down sideways, would come and go and blast the side of their home. The noise was deafening and unceasing. Elizabeth felt like the storm would soon destroy their home and she began to cry along with her brother and sister. But her mom cradled all three children in her arms and said, "Look at me."

Her mom led them in prayer time and time again as the wind from the hurricane pounded their home for over 24 hours. Elizabeth wondered if it would ever end. At times Elizabeth and her brother and sister

would sleep, but their mom stayed awake and watched over them. Their mom said God never slept and God was watching over them too.

"LOOK
AT ME."

Finally, the rain stopped and the wind died down. The storm was over, and although their house was damaged, it was not destroyed. They all smiled and cheered and thanked God the storm was over, then slept for a while out of exhaustion.

When they went to church on Sunday, everyone stayed together in the sanctuary. Even through the church roof was damaged, no rain has entered the sanctuary. Children hugged their parents tightly while smiling at friends who were okay and all gave thanks to God. Elizabeth's church began to work on a recovery plan to help families in their community who lost loved ones or had damage to their homes.



Reflection:

There have recently been hurricanes in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico. Look on a map to find the location of these places. Some people lost everything in the hurricanes. What would you be most sad to lose? Why? How did Elizabeth's mom help her children? Why is it important to have someone to talk to? How can we help others by listening to them?

Responses:

WHAT COULD WE DO IN CASE OF:

FLOODING: Move to higher ground, evacuate, don't walk or drive through flood waters, call for help, make an emergency plan.

TORNADO: Go to a pre-designated area in a building or a small windowless room on the lowest level, below ground in a basement, or closet, or interior room away from window, doors, corners, and outside walls. Get under a heavy table if possible, cover your head, and neck with your arms and cover your body as best you can with a heavy coat or blankets. Make an emergency plan.

EARTHQUAKE: If outside move away from buildings, street lights and utility wires. Stay in the open until the shaking stops.

If you are indoors, drop to the floor, and under a sturdy table. If there is not a sturdy table nearby, cover your face and head with your arms and crouch in an inside corner of the building or house. Do not try to move through or exit a building or house during the earthquake. Do not use elevators. Make an emergency plan.

HURRICANE: Evacuate if possible, cover all windows with wood, bring movable objects indoors. Do not stay in a mobile home. If your home is not on high ground go to a shelter. Stay in interior rooms way from windows. If flooding occurs move to higher floors.

FURTHER IDEAS:

- Make an emergency kit
- Make a family communication plan
- Know your surroundings. Are you in a flood zone? Where is the high ground? What are the evacuation routes?

Cooperative Game

ENCOURAGEMENT: Have children sit in a circle. Turn out the lights and if you are able, play sound of wind and storm. Explain that each person will get a chance to offer a word of encouragement or offer an idea of how they might encourage someone during a disaster.

RESPONSE: Pass out paper and art materials and encourage everyone to make a card for someone who is lonely or feeling sad because they have lost their home, or perhaps their friends because they have had to leave. Sometimes we can help others by what we give but other times it can be by sharing words of God's love and encouragement to them.

PRAYER FOCUS: Let's pray for the people in Florida, Texas and Puerto Rico who have lost their homes and loved ones. Let's pray for the families to be able to re-build and recover from the hurricanes. Let's thank God for those who did not lose their homes. Remind the children that their giving helps provide shelter, food, clothing, medicine, and school supplies to the people who have lost everything in the hurricanes.

REMIND CHILDREN

- God is always with us just like Jesus was with the disciples during a storm.
- Disasters do not happen often.
- Having a plan and knowing what to do will help to keep us safe.
- Helping others when there has been a disaster is one way of loving like Jesus.