

Small Group Guide

TORNADOES AND THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF GOD

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

May 1, 2011

Job 1, Luke 13:1-5

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word through His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time. Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to revisit the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications in our lives:

Sermon Outline

TORNADOES AND THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF GOD

Job 1; Luke 13:1-5

What Do We Need To Remember?

- These tornadoes remind us that this world is **unpredictable**.
 - Suffering is usually **surprising**.
 - Life is never **safe**.
 - Death is unavoidably **sure**.
- These tornadoes remind us of the **penalty** of sin which plagues **all** of us.
 - Our **sin** is universal.
 - Our **suffering** is inevitable.
- These tornadoes remind us to **repent** and be reconciled to God.
 - **Turn** from sin.
 - **Trust** in Him.
- These tornadoes remind us of the **sovereignty** of our God.
 - The sovereignty of God is the only foundation for **worship** in the midst of tragedy.
 - God's sovereignty assures us that He is in **control**.
 - God is **with** us.
 - God is **for** us.
 - God's sovereignty reminds us that Satan has been **conquered**.

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- God's sovereignty guarantees us that one day suffering will **conclude**.
- Ultimately, tragedy on earth can only be understood rightly from the **perspective** of heaven.

- These tornadoes remind us of the **urgency** of our mission.
 - Life is **fleeting**.
 - People are **perishing**.
 - Eternity is **coming**.

How Do We Need To Respond?

Message Summary

This past week, the southern part of the United States experienced the second deadliest day of tornadoes in US history as more than 200 tornadoes wreaked havoc on everything in their path. While the land around the Church at Brook Hills did not experience major destruction, communities only miles away are suffering great losses. In response to these events, today's sermon explores how tornadoes and other disasters—both moral and natural—help us remember the reality of sin around us and God's unwavering trustworthiness. Job 1 and Luke 13:1-5 provide a starting point for exploring the truths of today's message. As we watch news reports and see pictures of the tornadoes and the devastation of their aftermath, we are reminded that this world is unpredictable—just like Job's suffering and the events Jesus referenced in Luke—the murder of the people offering sacrifices, and the bystanders killed with the tower fell. Suffering is usually surprising, life is never safe, and death is unavoidably sure—difficult truths that should remind us that all of our things cannot guarantee our safety. Tornadoes might not have destroyed our houses, but they could. This is reality.

These tornadoes also remind us of the penalty of sin that plagues us all. As was the case with Job, suffering is not always because of sin—and Jesus' response to the events in Luke 13 further supports this truth as He warned the people: "Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:4-5). Everyone sins, and everyone suffers. Sin always leads to suffering and death. Therefore, these tornadoes remind us to repent—to turn from sin and trust in Christ. In the Book of Job, at the conclusion of the book, righteous and upright Job saw God, despised himself, and repented. In Luke 13, Jesus did not offer a philosophical argument for why the tragic events happened, but He told people to repent. God uses suffering to lead us to hate sin more.

These tornadoes remind us of the sovereignty of our God, which is the only foundation for worship in the midst of tragedy. He is in control, and He is always with us and for us. Satan has no power that God cannot supercede; Satan has been conquered, and one day suffering will conclude. Ultimately, tragedy on earth can only be rightly understood from heaven's perspective, as in the Book of Job. As the readers, we see the conversation that took place in heaven, but Job never saw that. We do not know the "why" behind suffering, but we do know God's character and that He works all things together for good for those that love Him (Romans 8:28).

These tornadoes remind us of the urgency of our mission. Life is fleeting; all people are "a mist that appears for a little while and then vanish . . ." (James 4:14). People are perishing while eternity is coming, and when we realize the reality of hell for people who are without Christ, we realize that we must spend our lives making the gospel known! In response, the Church spent time in prayer for the disaster relief workers, those who have lost loved ones, the churches affected, the pastors performing funerals, the church members reaching out and grieving with hope, the lost—that they may come to know Christ, and for ourselves—examining our own hearts for areas we need to repent. We were challenged to give of our finances and resources, and to go.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review the Head (What does God want me to know?), Heart (What does God want me to value?), and Hands (What does God want me to do?) aspects of the message.

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- During your typical day, do you think of the world as predictable or unpredictable? How does your answer affect the way you make decisions? How does it affect your values, such as your time, money, relationships? How do your values need to change?
- When have you been surprised by suffering? How did your relationship with God grow or halt? What did you learn?
- Read Hebrews 9:27. How does remembering that death is unavoidably sure change the way you value people and things?
- How do people often compare those who suffer to those who have been spared? Read Luke 13:1-5. What does Jesus say about comparing in that way?
- Had everything you own been taken away in the storms last week, how would you rebuild? What does the way you rebuild say about your values?
- Dr. Platt stated that God uses suffering to lead us to hate sin more. How do unbelievers view the purpose of suffering? How can we as believers help them understand suffering in light of a good God?
- Why is God's sovereignty the only foundation for worship in the midst of tragedy?
- In what ways have you been comforted by the truth that God is always with us and for us? (See Romans 8 and Job 1:12.)
- Would you describe your perspective on the world as earthly or heavenly? What implications does a heavenly perspective have on how you view suffering?
- How is knowing Christ through His Word foundational to the way you respond to disasters?
- When you see pictures or videos of the suffering brought about by the tornadoes, or as you have been to the ravaged regions to help, how is your sense of urgency to share the gospel spurred?
- How has this tragedy and the truths of today's message led you to personal repentance?
- How do you see God already at work in the midst of suffering? How can you help? How can you pray?

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of the message. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from the message?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from the message, what does God want you to value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this message?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength in the application of these truths and for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel.

Weekly Prayer Focus ... (from the worship guide)

- **Lives and Church:** *In light of the damage and loss this past week, pray that people would know the God who is present in our pain and sovereign over our suffering.*
- **Local:** *This week we are praying for families of graduating students. We are also praying for Oak Mountain Baptist, Wayne Williams, Pastor.*
- **Global:** *This week we are praying for the Faulkners, our LongTerm missionaries in East Asia.*