

God in the Midst of Disaster

On April 27, 2011, tornadoes ravaged parts of the southern United States, particularly in Northern Alabama. Families saw homes and businesses completely wiped out by a series of storms that produced winds in excess of 200 miles per hour. The response of the men, women and children in the areas hit the hardest has been one of surprisingly unshakeable faith.

Ironically it took a tornado to unite members of differing, and many times opposing, views of faith such as Christians and Muslims. One such union was brought about when Macolee Muhammed, a Muslim, was offered assistance from a Southern Baptist. "If you came here to help, the only person who sent you was God," Macolee told reporters.

In these smaller southern communities churches often serve as community centers, meeting halls and even voting centers. Thus it is no surprise that when disaster strikes the churches are once again the centers for the organization of relief supplies to the victims. They distributed water and food along with Bibles to those experiencing shock over the total destruction of their homes and livelihood.

While religious relief efforts have been strong, the doubts of the devoted are still present in the region. Deacon Calvin Thomas of the Victory Baptist Church in Rainsville, AL said, "I do have questions about why some people were taken, but those are questions I can't answer. I just know we're all in God's hands."

Impromptu church buildings were being constructed to house those coming to worship amidst the damage and despair that surrounded them. Peggy Blevins of Rainsville expressed her faith in the midst of doubts by saying, "I don't understand why he takes some people and leaves others. But I thank him just the same for protecting us."

While the storm itself was shocking perhaps the greatest miracle of all was the steadfast faith of the men and women who looked tragedy in the face and were able to emerge worshipping their God, whoever that God might be.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. It is ironic that tragedy often strengthens ones faith. Why do you think this happens?**
- 2. Do you think it is possible to have faith and still have unanswered questions about the goodness of God?**
- 3. When men and women of different faiths come together to support one another in situations of tragedy, do you think God is pleased? Why or why not?**