



# *Beyond Disaster*



A SURVIVOR'S GUIDE FOR SPIRITUAL FIRST AID

## WHAT'S INSIDE

If you have survived a disaster, this booklet can help you with **practical ways** to care for yourself and your loved ones. It also can help you recover emotionally and spiritually from the trauma you experienced.

■ *The Bible passages in this booklet can be a source of comfort and hope as you go through the process of healing.*

### **If you're feeling overwhelmed ...**

Start with the practical tips on page 6.

These are the best ways people have found to deal with shock. Save the rest until you are ready.



You can read this booklet and **reflect on it on your own**, but the experience will be even more helpful if you are able to go through it with a friend or small group.

*Beyond Disaster: A Survivor's Guide for Spiritual First Aid*

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# *Beyond Disaster*



A SURVIVOR'S GUIDE FOR SPIRITUAL FIRST AID

## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Spiritual first aid helps people recognize common spiritual and emotional reactions to disasters. Like physical first aid, it is intended to start an ongoing process of care. This guide can point people to skills and resources that will aid in recovery. It uses principles and exercises adapted from the program model of the Trauma Healing Institute.

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## START HERE

Your world may have turned upside down. Here are some basic practices that will help you recover more quickly.

- Do your best to take care of your body, by trying to eat well, get enough sleep, and exercise. If you have trouble sleeping, getting more exercise or doing more physical work during the day may help reduce stress and allow you to sleep better.
- Look for ways to connect with others, even if you feel like being alone. It will help you recover. Isolation will slow your recovery.
- Be willing to ask for help if you need it, and to accept the help that is offered.
- Reestablish routines where you can, especially with children. This reduces the feelings of chaos the disaster created.
- Complete small projects and tasks. This can help restore some sense of control and order.
- Avoid making major decisions, as much as possible. Be aware of how you are using alcohol, sleep aids, or other things to cope.

After a disaster, you may not want to pray or read the Bible for a while. Don't let that add to your worries. It is a normal reaction and does not mean that you have lost your faith. Other people will pray for you, and God understands, as the verse below reminds us. Give yourself time to recover.

*Just as parents are kind  
to their children,  
the LORD is kind  
to all who worship him,  
because he knows  
we are made of dust.*

■ **Psalm 103:13-14 CEV**

You may have many practical problems and fewer resources than you had before the disaster. It can be hard to think clearly after a disaster. Your situation may feel hopeless and the way you would like to solve your problems may not be possible right now.



As you try to resolve the many problems you are facing, it may help to discuss the following questions with someone. This can help you to think through your options and plan your next steps.



## For Reflection

1. What resources do you have?
2. What have you already tried? What was helpful or not helpful?
3. What are some other things you could try?
4. Who might be able to help you, even a little bit?
5. What seems like the most helpful next step?





# Why am I feeling this way?



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## REACTIONS TO DISASTER

If you have gone through a traumatic experience, you may feel like you were knocked off your feet emotionally and spiritually. This is normal.

The writer of Psalm 42 tells God it feels like “chaos roars at me like a flood” (Psalm 42:7). Sometimes people try to seem strong on the outside and hide the chaos they feel on the inside. This can slow your progress. It’s healthy to be honest about how you are feeling about yourself, about others, and about God.

*Accepting  
what  
happened  
will help  
you to heal.*

1. When things go wrong, **you may look for someone to blame**—yourself or someone else. This is a way of making sense of what happened, but it isn’t helpful. Accepting what happened will help you to heal.
2. **You may feel guilty** that you survived the disaster while others did not, or that you suffered less than others. This is a common response.

**God cares  
for you.**

What happened was not your decision. God has a purpose for the remainder of the days given to you, and he cares for you.

*When my bones were being formed,  
carefully put together in my mother's womb,  
when I was growing there in secret,  
you knew that I was there—  
you saw me before I was born.  
The days allotted to me  
had all been recorded in your book,  
before any of them ever began.*

■ PSALM 139:15-16

*“For only a penny you can buy two sparrows,  
yet not one sparrow falls to the ground  
without your Father's consent. As for  
you, even the hairs of your head have all  
been counted. So do not be afraid; you are  
worth much more than many sparrows!”*

■ MATTHEW 10:29-31



Whatever your level of trauma, it is your pain and it hurts. Even if others were affected more by the disaster than you were, don't try to convince yourself that your pain doesn't matter.

*Accept your feelings each day and ask God for what you need.*

You may have gone through the same experience as others, and yet your reactions may be quite different. There is no need to compare. Personality, resources, relationships, finances, past experiences, and other factors all affect how we respond.

And don't be surprised if you react differently from day to day, or if stronger reactions surface later after the initial shock fades. Accept your feelings each day and ask God for what you need.

Whenever we feel worried about how we'll make it through the day, we can ask God for what we need, as Jesus taught us to pray: "Give us today the food we need" (Matthew 6:11).

*The thought of my pain,  
my homelessness, is bitter poison;  
I think of it constantly  
and my spirit is depressed.  
Yet hope returns when I remember  
this one thing:  
The LORD's unfailing love  
and mercy still continue,  
Fresh as the morning, as sure as the sunrise.  
The LORD is all I have,  
and so in him I put my hope.*

■ LAMENTATIONS 3:19-24

- 3. You may feel ashamed** about the way you are reacting to the disaster. And you may feel embarrassed that you must accept help from others for basic needs like clothing, food, and water. This often happens when you are used to taking care of your own needs or if you were usually the one helping others. Remember that it is not your fault you are in this situation. Others likely do not think less of you for having difficulty. And God is not ashamed of you. Allowing others to help you

can strengthen your relationships and even help you make new ones. You may also find yourself beginning to rely more on God than before.

*In you, LORD, I have taken refuge;  
let me never be put to shame.*

■ PSALM 71:1 NIV

## REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

Besides the feelings already mentioned, it is common for people to be traumatized by the experience of a disaster. People typically react to trauma in three main ways:

- 1. You may relive the experience**, either in nightmares or in flashbacks during the day. When this happens, accept the feelings and remind yourself of the truth: you are not in the traumatic situation again. You are here, now.
- 2. You may find yourself avoiding things** that remind you of the event. These may be places, smells, people, media, or topics of conversation.

Avoiding can make your world very small. To avoid feeling the painful emotions, you may stop feeling at all and become numb inside. Or you may use drugs or alcohol, or work all the time, or eat too much or too little. The writer of this psalm wanted to avoid his terrifying emotions: he wished he had wings like a dove to fly away and find rest.

*I am terrified,  
and the terrors of death crush me.  
I am gripped by fear and trembling;  
I am overcome with horror.  
I wish I had wings like a dove.  
I would fly away and find rest.*

■ PSALM 55:4-6

Notice how you are feeling. When you want to avoid something—a place, smell, person, topic, or feeling—try to use some of the calming activities described in Section 2 of this booklet. Little by little, when you are calm, you can begin to face some of the things that are so difficult for you.

**3. You may be on alert all the time**, because you are more aware that bad things can happen suddenly. You may feel tense and overreact to things. At times, your heart may beat very fast. You may have trouble sleeping. You may be startled by loud noises. If you are on alert all the time, you will wear out your body. You may have physical effects like stomachaches, headaches, or other illnesses. Be patient and do your best to care for yourself to help your body heal. If you feel a wave of panic washing over you, try to concentrate on something peaceful and slow your breathing. Count your breaths or focus on objects around you that are not connected with your fears, such as floor tiles or the branches of a tree. This can help you stay present and calm.

*Pay  
attention  
to your  
feelings.*

After a disaster, you may be more emotional than usual or act in ways that are simply not like you. And with all this going on inside, you may find it difficult to concentrate. You are not going crazy. These are normal reactions

to trauma. However, if your reactions are so strong they keep you from carrying out your responsibilities, find someone who can help you, like a pastor, a counselor, or a doctor.



## For Reflection

1. How has the disaster changed your life?
2. Which of the typical reactions to disaster and trauma are you experiencing?
3. If you have children, in what ways have they changed since the disaster?

## WHAT HELPS CHILDREN?

Children are affected by trauma as much as adults are, but **they may show it differently**. Small children may not have words to describe how they feel, and they may think they are responsible, even though this is illogical. They may go back to behaviors they grew out of long ago, like bed-wetting or thumb-sucking. They may be fearful and clingy. They need to be comforted. Help them to recognize that these behaviors are normal and temporary responses to trauma.

### **Children also react to the adults around them.**

Their recovery from trauma will be more difficult if caregivers are overwhelmed by their own pain.

Caregivers may misunderstand children's needs after a disaster. They may think children need to be disciplined more or may punish them out of frustration. They may think that children should be seen and not heard or that children will bounce back without help. Such responses make things worse. Children need to be reassured and listened to. They need to express their emotions, in words, in art, or in play.

In this Bible story, Jesus shows how much he values children and that they deserve special care and attention.

*Some people brought children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples scolded the people. When Jesus noticed this, he was angry and said to his disciples, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I assure you that whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." Then he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on each of them, and blessed them.*

■ **MARK 10:13-16**



# *How can I calm these strong emotions?*



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## ▶ CALMING YOUR EMOTIONS

After a traumatic experience, you may feel very anxious, angry, or afraid. You may never have had such strong feelings before. You can learn how to calm these emotions so they don't control you. Here are some ways.

- 1. Do something small that engages your mind, like calling a friend to see how they are, taking a walk, or playing a game.** Allow yourself to do these things as soon as you notice strong feelings rising up in you. This is not wasting time; it will help you heal.

*Do something you enjoy with other people.*





*Do not forget your friends or your father's friends ... A nearby neighbor can help you more than relatives who are far away.*

■ PROVERBS 27:10

*Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up. But if someone is alone and falls, it's just too bad, because there is no one to help him. If it is cold, two can sleep together and stay warm, but how can you keep warm by yourself? Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone. A rope made of three cords is hard to break.*

■ ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12

## 2. Think of a scene that makes you feel peaceful.

It may be a scene from where you grew up, or a beach or forest. It may be a scene from a story about Jesus. You might remind yourself of God's love. Get quiet inside and imagine being in that scene. Go there in your mind whenever you begin to feel that strong emotions may overwhelm you.

*"The mountains and hills may crumble,  
but my love for you will never end;  
I will keep forever my promise of peace."  
So says the LORD who loves you.*

■ ISAIAH 54:10

- ## 3. Practice breathing from the diaphragm to calm strong feelings.
- Try to practice this for five minutes, three or four times per day. You may notice this takes effort at first. You may even become tired while practicing it. But continued practice will make this calming, soothing way of breathing easier and more automatic.

- Get into a comfortable position, either on a chair or lying down. With your knees bent, focus on the feeling of your feet or body touching the ground. Release any tension you notice in your shoulders, head, and neck.
- Place one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach, just below your rib cage.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach fills with breath against your lower hand. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.
- As you breathe out slowly through your nose or through pursed lips, feel your lower hand move back toward your spine as the air is released. The hand on your upper chest should remain as still as possible. Imagine this exhale takes with it any stress in your body.

*Practice  
breathing  
from the  
diaphragm.*

You can also do this exercise with children to help them calm themselves.

*May the LORD bless you  
and take care of you;  
May the LORD be kind and gracious to you;  
May the LORD look on you with favor  
and give you peace.*

■ NUMBERS 6:24-26

#### 4. Container exercise

Sometimes we can be overwhelmed by what we have experienced but we are not in a situation where we can express our feelings. This exercise can be helpful. Close your eyes, or just look down at the floor so you are not distracted.

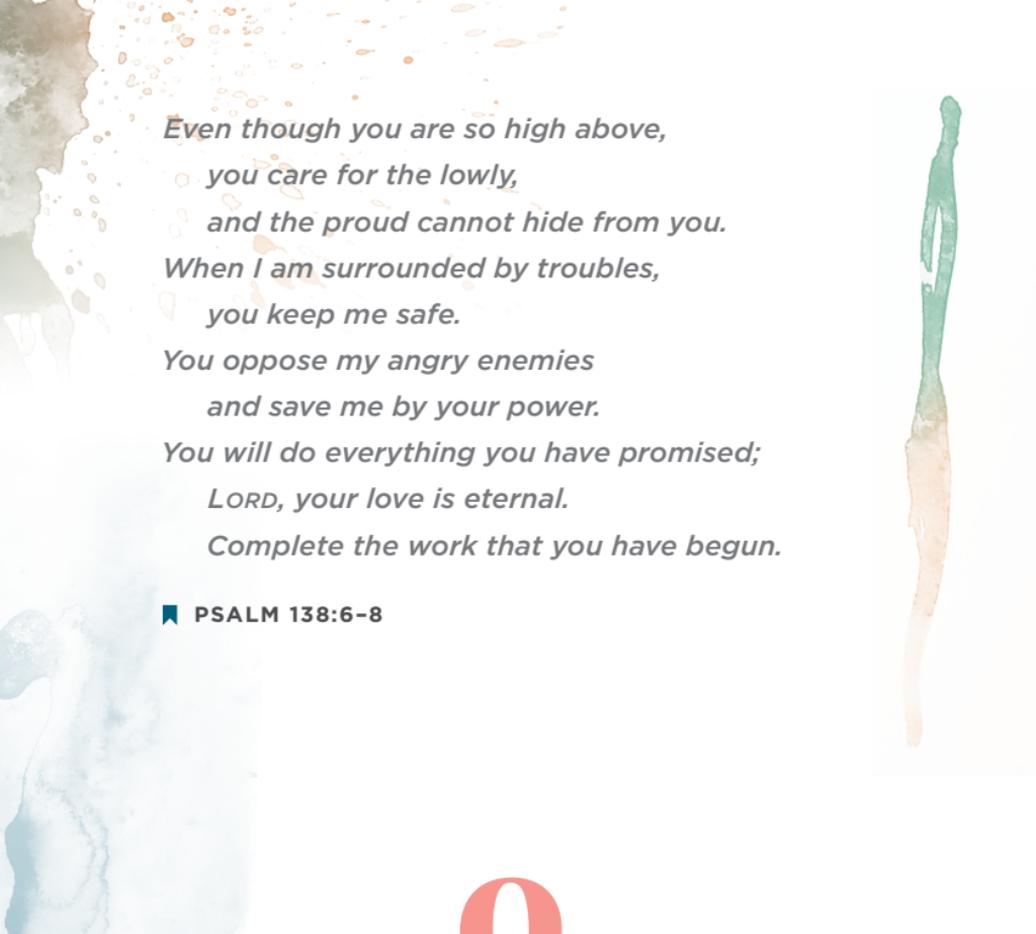
Imagine a big container. It could be a big box or a shipping container. Imagine a way to lock the container, like a key or a padlock.

Now imagine putting all the things that are disturbing you right now into the container: big things, small things—everything that is disturbing you. When they are all inside the container, imagine closing it. Now imagine locking the container and putting the key somewhere safe. Do not throw it away. When you are ready, open your eyes and look up.

Later, find a time when you can get quiet. Imagine that you take the key, open the container, and take out the things you have put inside one by one. If you can, do this with a person you trust who can help you talk about these things. Do not leave them in the container forever!

*Even if I go through the deepest darkness,  
I will not be afraid, LORD,  
for you are with me.  
Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.*

■ PSALM 23:4



*Even though you are so high above,  
you care for the lowly,  
and the proud cannot hide from you.  
When I am surrounded by troubles,  
you keep me safe.  
You oppose my angry enemies  
and save me by your power.  
You will do everything you have promised;  
LORD, your love is eternal.  
Complete the work that you have begun.*

■ PSALM 138:6-8

## Q

### For Reflection

1. What has helped you to relax?
2. Did the container exercise help you? If yes, how?





# Why do I feel so sad?



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## THE GRIEF JOURNEY

Most people feel deep sadness at some time following a disaster. A traumatic experience brings with it

*We need  
to grieve  
our losses  
to recover  
from them.*

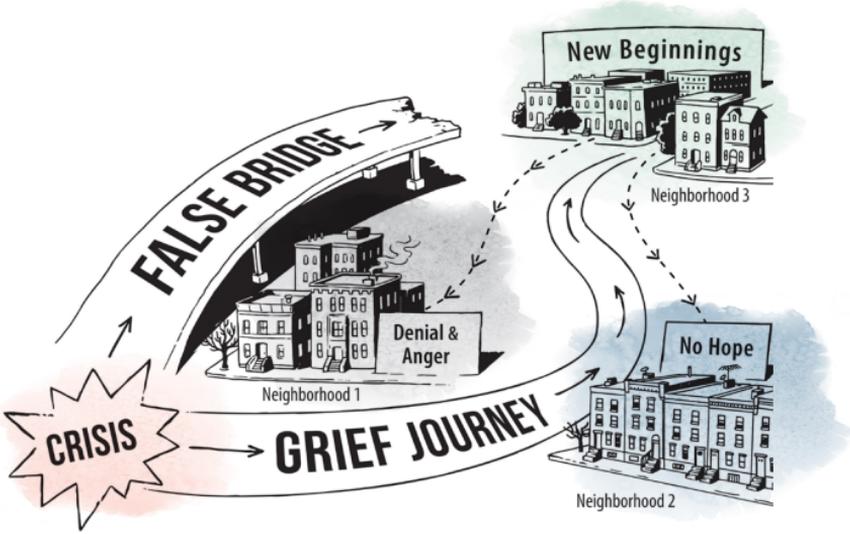
many losses. Whenever we lose something or someone, it is normal to feel sad, and that feeling may last for a long time. It can be helpful to understand that this is part of the grieving process. The book of Ecclesiastes says:

*Everything on earth  
has its own time  
and its own season.  
There is a time  
for birth and death,  
planting and reaping,  
for killing and healing,  
destroying and building,  
for crying and laughing,  
weeping and dancing ...*

■ ECCLESIASTES 3:1-4 CEV

We need to grieve our losses to recover from them. Grieving is like going on a long journey.

This illustration shows how you might feel along the way:



### **1. Neighborhood of Denial and Anger:**

You may be in shock and feel numb. You may deny that the loss happened. You may be angry at others, at yourself, at God. You may often be thinking “if only” you had done this or that, you could have prevented the loss. You may forget to eat. You may cry a lot.

**2. Neighborhood of No Hope:** You may lack energy, and not want to get out of bed or care for yourself. You may feel there is no reason for living. You may want to end your life, or kill the pain with drugs, alcohol, or some other addiction. You may feel guilty for the loss, even though you could have done nothing to prevent it.

### **3. Neighborhood of New Beginnings:**

You will feel new life inside you—energy, plans, hopes, wanting to be with others again. You remember what happened but don't feel the pain like before.

People, your culture, or voices inside you may try to get you to skip the hard work of grieving. They may say things

like, “Be strong!”

“Don’t cry.”

*It takes  
courage  
and energy  
to grieve.*

“Rejoice! Your

loved one is

with Jesus!”

These things can

lead you to try a

shortcut. We refer

to this as the “**false bridge**” because it promises to make your grieving shorter and less painful, but it will not bring you to the Neighborhood of New Beginnings.

To get to the Neighborhood of New Beginnings, you need to feel the pain of your losses.

Beginning again involves changing the parts of your old identity that are related to what you lost—for example, the mother of \_\_\_\_\_, the husband of \_\_\_\_\_, the owner of \_\_\_\_\_. Our minds are fast to understand this process, but our hearts are slow. It takes time for the wound to heal. Knowing that you are on a journey can help you be patient with yourself and others, but it won't take the pain away.

You may go back and forth between these neighborhoods as you grieve, and you may go at a different pace than others. This is normal. But if you feel like you have been stuck for a long time without making any progress, you may need help.

Grieving takes a lot of courage and energy. You may find you are exceptionally tired, like the person who wrote this psalm.

*I am worn out, O LORD; have pity on me!  
Give me strength;  
I am completely exhausted  
and my whole being is deeply troubled.  
How long, O LORD, will you wait to help me?  
Come and save me, LORD;  
in your mercy rescue me from death.  
I am worn out with grief;  
every night my bed is damp  
from my weeping;  
my pillow is soaked with tears.  
I can hardly see;  
my eyes are so swollen  
from the weeping caused by my enemies.  
Keep away from me, you evil people!  
The LORD hears my weeping.*

■ PSALM 6:2-4, 6-8

These things can help you grieve in a way that leads to healing:

- Talk about what happened and how it makes you feel. Express your anger and sadness.
- Understand that it is normal to grieve, and that the process takes time. You will not always feel like you do today, and your feelings may vary day to day.
- When you feel sad, think about what loss may be causing that feeling.
- If the body of a loved one cannot be recovered, arrange a service to publicly acknowledge the death and remember the person's life.
- Eventually, when you are ready, bring your pain to God. The more specific you can be about your losses, the better. For example, you may have lost a loved one, but also an income, companionship, respect, or security. Bring these losses to God one by one.



## For Reflection

1. Have you started on the grief journey?  
What neighborhood do you find yourself in now?
2. Have you gotten stuck in one of the neighborhoods? Did you try to skip a neighborhood?
3. Who do you feel safe to talk with about your grief?

## WHAT HELPS CHILDREN?

- Reunite families if it is safe to do so.
- Reestablish routines if possible.
- Listen to children's pain. Help children talk about their pain by encouraging them to draw and then asking them to explain their drawings to you.
- Tell them the truth about the situation in simple terms. Children know more about what is going on around them than adults realize. They tend to fill in missing information in whatever way makes sense to them.
- Younger children often can express their feelings through play rather than by talking; it helps them work out the pain they experienced. Parents can ask them about what they are playing and how they feel about it.

- Especially in times of trouble, families should find some time each day to talk together, to pray together about what has happened, and to learn encouraging or comforting Bible passages.
- Help teachers and school administrators understand what has happened to the child.
- Teenagers have different needs. They may need some privacy or time with their peers, especially after a traumatic event.
- Teenagers need to feel useful, especially when their family is going through difficulties. Doing things that help their family survive can remind them that they are valuable.



# *How can my wounded heart heal?*



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## DEALING WITH PAIN

Think of the pain in your heart like a heart wound. As the Psalmist says, the pain hurts to the depths of our hearts.

*But my Sovereign LORD,  
help me as you have promised,  
and rescue me because of the  
goodness of your love.*

*I am poor and needy;  
I am hurt to the depths of my heart.*

*Like an evening shadow  
I am about to vanish;  
I am blown away like an insect.*

*My knees are weak from lack of food;  
I am nothing but skin and bones.*

*When people see me, they laugh at me;  
they shake their heads in scorn.*

*Help me, O LORD my God;  
because of your constant love, save me!*

### ■ PSALM 109:21-26

Compare this pain in your heart with a physical wound, like a deep gash. How is a heart wound similar or different?

- A physical wound is visible.
- A physical wound is painful, and sensitive.
- It needs to be treated.
- Any dirt or bacteria needs to come out.
- If it's ignored, it may get infected.
- God heals but he uses people like mothers, nurses, doctors.
- It takes time to heal.
- It may leave a scar.

*We need to take care of the wounds of our hearts so we can recover.*

After a disaster, you need to take care of the wounds of your heart so you can recover.

To treat a heart wound, you need to express your pain. **Find someone you can tell your story to**, someone who is able to listen without making you feel worse. That person needs to keep what you share confidential, and listen to you without trying to fix you, or give you quick solutions, or compare your story to theirs. Choose this person carefully. Often people who have good intentions try to tell you how to fix a problem. You may need

to remind others when you need them to just listen and understand rather than trying to advise you.

*A person's thoughts are like water in a deep well, but someone with insight can draw them out.*

■ PROVERBS 20:5

*No one who gossips can be trusted with a secret, but you can put confidence in someone who is trustworthy.*

■ PROVERBS 11:13

Don't let anyone pressure you to tell your story if you don't feel comfortable or ready to do so. You

*You need to express your pain.*

may need to tell your story bit by bit over time. Like a bottle of soda that has been shaken, you may need to let out the fizz little by little to keep from overflowing. You may also need to *retell* your story many

times in order to accept what has happened and work through different parts of it. As you share, tell what happened, then when you're ready, move on to how you felt while it was happening, and finally focus on the part that was the hardest for you. Even Jesus shared his pain with his friends.

*Jesus took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. Grief and anguish came over him, and he said to them, "The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch with me."*

■ MATTHEW 26:37-38

You can also **express your pain by drawing**. And you don't have to be an artist! Just get paper and pen or markers, get quiet inside, and let the pain come through your fingers onto the paper. Don't worry about whether it is a good picture or not. Then think about what you see in the drawing.

Telling your story and being listened to sounds so simple, but it will help you heal. Hearing others tell their stories can help too, by reminding you that you were not the only one experiencing the

disaster. At the same time, it will help them heal, and you will be able to offer comfort to each other.

Here are **four questions** that you can use as you listen:

1. What happened?
2. How did you feel?
3. What was the hardest part for you?
4. Who or what helped you to start feeling safe?

Often as people talk about an experience, they begin to understand their own thoughts and feelings better. They may come to realize that how they have been thinking about the situation is not helpful. The Bible tells us: “Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts” (Proverbs 4:23).

Sometimes when we reflect on a difficult time, we become aware that God has helped us through it in some way. God also comforts our hearts and is the source of healing.

The Bible tells us that as we are comforted, we can become a source of healing to others:

*Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes! He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God.*

■ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4



## For Reflection

1. Did the listening questions help you clarify your feelings? Did they help you think differently about your experience? Explain your responses.
2. How did it feel to tell part of your story to someone else?



# *How can I relate to God in this situation?*



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## TELL GOD HOW YOU FEEL

Be honest with God! Tell him exactly how you feel. He already knows, so talk about it with him. Do you feel God broke his promise to protect you from evil? Do you feel abandoned by him? Angry? Pour out your pain to God.

There are many examples of people expressing their feelings to God in the Bible. These are called “laments.” Did you know that there are more lament psalms in the Bible than praise psalms?

In a lament, people call out to God and tell him their complaint. “Why didn’t you protect me? Where were you? How long will this suffering last?” They tell God what they want him to do—sometimes just that he look at what has happened. Sometimes they remind themselves of how God helped them in the past, or how God helped his people in the Bible. This can spark hope. Lament is often what faith looks like in hard situations. It is a sign of faith that God is listening, cares, and has power to help.

*Be honest  
with God.*

While a lament can do more, it has three basic parts:

- Address God
- Complaint
- Request

Of these three parts, the complaint is what makes it a lament.

Even Jesus lamented on the cross when he cried out a verse from Psalm 22: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (NIV). If Jesus told God about his feeling of abandonment, you can, too.

Read the psalm of lament on the following page. Do you see the three parts?

Find a time and place when you can get quiet inside and compose your own lament to God in writing or song. Pour out your pain to him, like the writer of the psalm did.



*How much longer will you forget me,  
LORD? Forever?*

*How much longer will you  
hide yourself from me?*

*How long must I endure trouble?*

*How long will sorrow  
fill my heart day and night?*

*How long will my enemies  
triumph over me?*

*Look at me, O LORD my God,  
and answer me.*

*Restore my strength; don't let me die.*

*Don't let my enemies say,  
"We have defeated him."*

*Don't let them gloat over my downfall.*

*I rely on your constant love;  
I will be glad,  
because you will rescue me.*

*I will sing to you, O LORD,  
because you have been good to me.*

■ PSALM 13



## For Reflection

1. What might keep you from lamenting to God?
2. How do you think lamenting could help you at this time?



# Looking to the future



0	Start here	6
1	Why am I feeling this way?	11
2	How can I calm these strong emotions?	23
3	Why do I feel so sad?	33
4	How can my wounded heart heal?	45
5	How can I relate to God in this situation?	53
<b>6</b>	<b>Looking to the future</b>	<b>59</b>

## CONTINUING TO HEAL

Your recovery from the trauma of the disaster will take time and go in stages. When you are in the middle of difficult times, it may feel like things will never get better—that the grief and problems will go on forever. Remember that in this world things are always changing, and changes can lead to something better.

Keep reviewing the list in the “Start Here” section at the beginning of this booklet (page 6). You may discover things that are helpful to you that you can add to the list.

### *Find ways to stay connected with others.*

When things have settled down, you can reflect more deeply on your experience. Consider joining a trauma healing group. If there's not a group in your area, invite others who have come through the disaster to form a small group. You might meet only once or set up a regular meeting schedule. You can help each other continue to heal when you share your experiences and ask

each other the listening questions in Section 4 (page 50). If you organize a group, be careful not to wear people out with long meetings or by having participants share so much detail that it upsets others. Healing comes little by little over time.

Whatever happens to you, God will be with you through it.



*God is our shelter and strength,  
always ready to help in times of trouble.  
So we will not be afraid,  
even if the earth is shaken  
and mountains fall into the  
ocean depths;  
even if the seas roar and rage,  
and the hills are shaken by  
the violence.*

■ PSALM 46:1-3

During difficult times, look for the ways God provides shelter and strength. Take time to remember the small and large ways God has helped you in the past.

And remember that one day, God will wipe away all tears and remove all suffering.

*He will wipe all tears from their eyes, and there will be no more death, suffering, crying, or pain. These things of the past are gone forever.*

■ REVELATION 21:4 CEV

Until that day, God invites you to express your feelings to him. He is always listening.

***One day, God will wipe away all tears and remove all suffering.***

Over time, your prayers may change, from prayers of lament to prayers of praise. And you may find yourself praising God one minute and lamenting to him the next. That's okay.

This song of praise from the Bible may  
inspire you to write your own.

*I love the LORD, because he hears me;  
he listens to my prayers.*

*He listens to me  
every time I call to him.*

*The danger of death was all around me;  
the horrors of the grave closed in on me;  
I was filled with fear and anxiety.*

*Then I called to the LORD,  
"I beg you, LORD, save me!"*

*The LORD is merciful and good;  
our God is compassionate.*

*The LORD protects the helpless;  
when I was in danger, he saved me.*

*Be confident, my heart,  
because the LORD has been good to me.*

*The LORD saved me from death;  
he stopped my tears  
and kept me from defeat.*

*And so I walk in the presence of the LORD  
in the world of the living.*



*I kept on believing, even when I said,  
“I am completely crushed,”  
even when I was afraid and said,  
“No one can be trusted.”*

*What can I offer the LORD  
for all his goodness to me?*

*I will give you a sacrifice of thanksgiving  
and offer my prayer to you.*

■ PSALM 116:1-12, 17



## For Reflection

1. What has helped you the most since the disaster?
2. What is the most painful part of life since the disaster?
3. What is one thing you can do to continue to recover from the disaster?



## MORE RESOURCES

Additional resources on disaster response and disaster planning are available for survivors, first responders, and churches.

*Online:* Visit **DisasterRelief.Bible** or **ABS.US/disaster**

*Phone:* In the U.S. call **1-800-32-BIBLE** and mention “Beyond Disaster.”

- Order additional copies and find digital downloads of this resource.
- Request Bibles for adults and children.
- Connect with trauma healing programs and disaster relief services in your area.



# LOCAL TRAUMA RESOURCES

Contact Name / Organization

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Phone

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Email

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**Trauma Healing  
Institute**



**AMERICAN  
BIBLE  
SOCIETY**