

God Is With Me

A Family Guide to Living After Disaster



A TRAUMA HEALING INSTITUTE RESOURCE

God Is With Me: A Family Guide to Living After Disaster

By Margi McCombs PhD

With thanks to contributors Lorraine Foute MA and Harriet Hill PhD

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This is a Bible-based resource to help parents and children cope in times of uncertainty, especially after a disaster. It is informed by best practices in mental health as well as two decades of experience using trauma healing materials worldwide with Christian churches from every tradition. *God Is With Me* is designed for families with children ages 8-12 but can be adapted for other ages.

This resource may be used on its own or paired with material in ***Beyond Disaster: A Survivor's Guide for Spiritual First Aid*** (ISBN 978-1-58516-292-5; ABS item 124851).

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Visit **BeyondDisaster.Bible** for resources on disaster recovery in several languages. If you have questions, contact **info@traumahealinginstitute.org**.

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God Is With Me

A Family Guide to Living After Disaster

 AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

Philadelphia

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Note to Parents & Caregivers

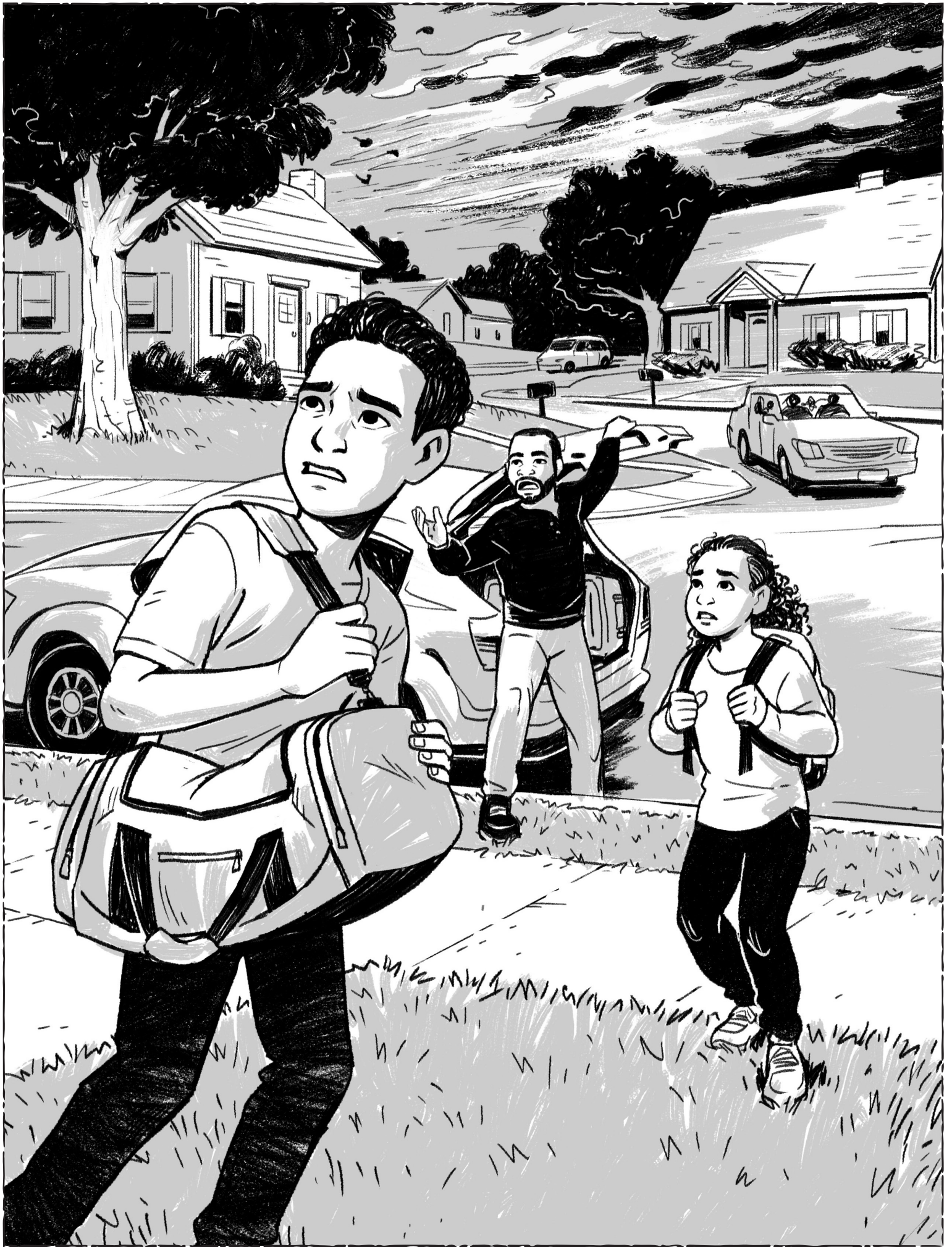
This booklet is intended to help you help the children you love to feel safe during this time of uncertainty and change. You may be spending more time together these days, feeling the stress of disruption and anxiety, and wondering how and when your lives will return to normal. Your children are feeling the same way.

We invite you to use this guide in a way that fits into your family's natural rhythm. There are four lessons that you can schedule in any way that seems best for you. It is designed to be self-guided and to be used by parents and caregivers without requiring specific training.

Our *"Tips for Parents and Caregivers"* on page 51 may be helpful as you work with your children, offering insight and suggestions that will promote a sense of safety and healing of the heart wounds caused by trauma.

We pray that you know God's peace even in the midst of this crisis.

The Trauma Healing Institute





What Just Happened?

Hurricane!

Eric!” Eleven-year-old Eric stopped kicking the ball at his feet when he heard his dad’s voice. Dad sounded serious. “What’s happening?” Eric asked.

“Come inside now.” Dad pointed toward the sky. “Do you see that huge black cloud? The storm we’ve been hearing about for a couple of days has picked up speed. I just got an alert on my phone that said we need to get to safety, and we need to go now!”

“Go where?” asked Eric as he picked up his ball and jogged toward the house.

“Well, the weather service says the storm has become a dangerous hurricane. The winds could tear up buildings. They are telling us to evacuate.”

“Evacuate? You mean we need to leave our house?” asked Eric.

“Yes, and we don’t have much time,” Dad said. “We have to get to the shelter quickly. I’ve already talked to Mom, and she’s not going to have enough time to get back to this side of town, so she will have to go to another shelter.”

“What about Ella?” asked Eric. His nine-year-old sister was usually reading a book somewhere, but he hadn’t seen her for a while.

“Ella is getting her things together now and I need you to do the same,” said Dad. “You can only take your most important things—whatever will fit in your sports bag. And don’t forget your toothbrush.”

The next few minutes were rushed and confusing. Dad found their emergency bag in the closet they kept full of supplies just for times like this. Eric and Ella quickly stuffed clothes, books, snacks, electronic tablets, and chargers in their bags.

Minutes later they were in the car, joining their neighbors in a long line of traffic. Suddenly the wind picked up and rain hit the windshield in big splatters. Heavier and heavier the rain fell, and now the wind was so strong that Dad was gripping the steering wheel, working hard to keep the car on the road. The sky had become very dark.

“I’m scared, Dad,” said Ella. “How much farther to the shelter? Do you think Mom is okay?”

“It is right around the corner. As soon as we get there, I will call Mom to make sure she made it to the shelter near her.”

When they arrived at the shelter, they grabbed their bags and hurried through the wind and rain to the big doors. Hundreds of people were trying to get in the building. Finally, they were able to get inside. Dad found three empty cots lined up together and they dropped their bags on the floor.

“Whew!” Dad exclaimed. “Thank God we got here in time!” He took out his phone and dialed. A minute later, relief showed on his face. “Mom’s safe, too,” he said.



Let's Talk About It

1. Why was Eric surprised that they had to evacuate?
2. How do you think Eric and Ella were feeling when they were packing their bags?
3. How do you think they were feeling on the way to the shelter?
4. Can you tell about a time that you were surprised by something terrible happening around you? How did that make you feel?



Activity

Our Most Important Things

When big, scary things happen, everything around us begins to change very quickly. You might even need to leave your house like Eric and Ella did.

Questions to discuss:

- If you had a few minutes to gather your most important things to take with you, what would they be?
- If you have had to evacuate your home, what did you take with you, or what did you wish you had taken with you?
- How did it feel to have to decide quickly what things were the most important for you to take?
- Did someone help you during that time?

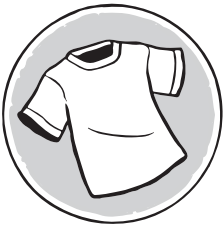
Option 1: Play a memory game!

1. Have everyone sit in a circle.
2. Take a few minutes to think about your most important things.
3. Someone starts by saying, "I am [name] . If we had to leave our house, I would take [thing] ." Fill in the blank with one of your most important things.
4. The next person in the circle says, "I am [name] . If we had to leave our house, [name] would take [thing] and I would take [thing] ." Fill in the first blanks from the person who just took their turn, and add one of your own most important things.

5. Every person around the circle must remember what each person's most important things are and then add their own.
6. Each person should add a new item. Try not to repeat items that have already been said.
7. Try adding hand motions as you go! For example, pretend to brush your teeth when you say, "my toothbrush." See if everyone can remember both the name of the item and the hand motion that goes with it.

Option 2: Write a list of your family members and each one's most important things. You could also use a separate piece of paper to draw this activity in pictures.

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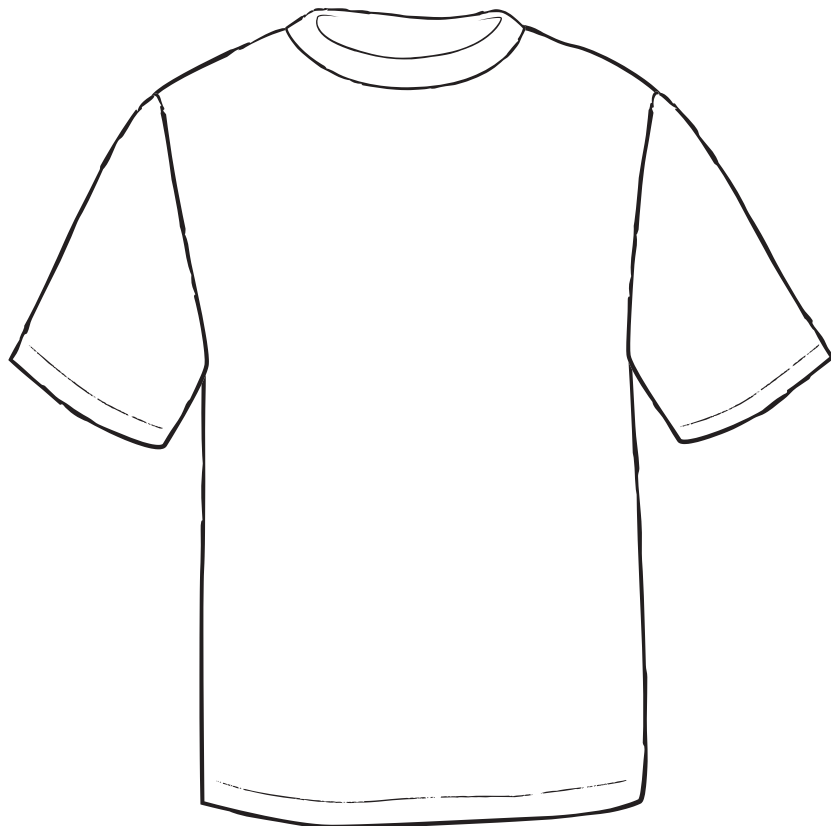


Activity

“I Survived” T-Shirt

Stop to think about how you have survived all that has happened to you. You have come through a lot of changes and probably through some difficult and even scary situations. All along, God has always been with you, even when it hasn't felt like it. Can you remember things that happened and people who were with you that helped you know that God was with you?

Design a t-shirt that lets people know you survived! Use crayons, colored pencils, or watercolor paints to create your design on the t-shirt below, or use the larger one on page 55, or use a separate piece of paper.





God's Promises God Sees Me

Have you ever made a promise to someone? Has anyone ever made a promise to you? We try very hard to keep our promises! Did you know that God *always* keeps his promises? That's because God is perfect, full of truth and love.

In the Bible we can find more than eight thousand of God's promises to us! In each of our lessons in *God Is With Me*, we will learn one of God's important promises.

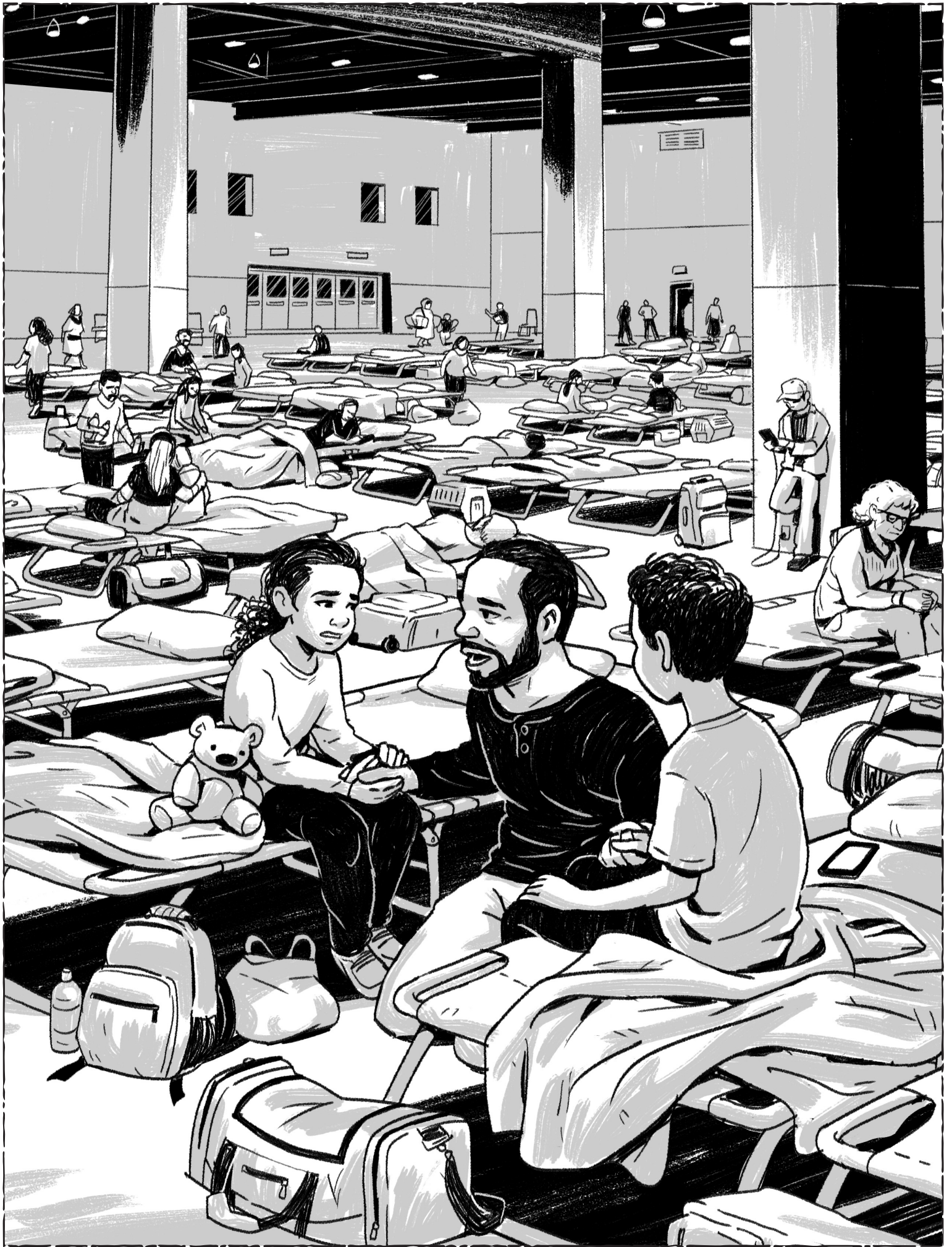
It is normal to feel afraid when scary things are happening. God knows when you are afraid. **He sees you!** The Bible says, "*The LORD watches over all who honor him and trust his kindness*" (Psalm 33:18). That's a promise!

Hagar was a personal maid that served the wife of a rich man named Abraham who lived thousands of years ago. Hagar made the man's wife very angry and so Hagar was afraid and ran away into the desert all alone. But the Bible tells us that the angel of God found her and comforted her. Then Hagar said, "You are the God who sees. I have seen him who looks after me!" (You can find the story in the Bible in Genesis 16:7-13.)

When you are afraid, remember that God is always with you. He sees you and he is watching over you.

Let's Talk to God

**"Thank you, God, for seeing me and watching over me.
When I am afraid, I will trust in your loving kindness.
Please help me to trust you more. Amen."**





Why Am I Feeling This Way?

A Hard Night

As the wind howled outside the shelter and rain poured down on the roof, Dad, Eric, and Ella huddled together next to their cots. The excitement of packing up, leaving their house, driving through the storm, and finally arriving at the shelter was wearing off. Now they were filled with questions.

“How long will we need to stay here?” asked Eric. “Will they have food for us? What can we do while we wait for the storm to pass? What if the hurricane is so strong that it rips the roof off this building? Are you sure Mom is okay?”

“Let’s sit down and talk about this,” Dad suggested. “First, the reason we are here and not at home is that this building is constructed to stand up to severe storms. The people in charge here have a plan to take care of us and they will do the best they can. But we need to be patient and brave and take care of ourselves and our neighbors as much as we can. There sure are a lot of people here, aren’t there?”

“I have an idea,” said Ella. “What if we were like scouts and looked for ways we could help out? Maybe there are little kids here that I could play with so they wouldn’t be so scared? And Eric, I bet there are kids here your age who would love to play games with you on your tablet.”

It felt good to have something to focus on besides the storm raging outside. “Just stay where I can see you,” Dad reminded them both. “But that’s a great idea, Ella. Let’s see what you both can find to do.”

An hour later, the smell of food being served made Eric’s stomach growl. Soon they were waiting in line to get sandwiches and bottles of water.

As the evening wore on, families began to prepare for the night. The mood in the shelter became more tense as tired babies, children, and parents tried to make the best of a difficult situation.

“I don’t think I will ever get to sleep tonight,” said Ella with a big yawn. “I’m tired, but I have so many thoughts going around in my head! And I love babies, but as long as I hear them crying, I can’t sleep. And it feels like everyone is looking at us! And the lights are so bright it feels like daytime. This is awful.”

“I know this is hard for you,” said Dad quietly. “Take your toothbrush and toothpaste to the bathroom and wash your hands and face. And remember to wait your turn patiently. There are many people trying to get ready for bed, just like us.”

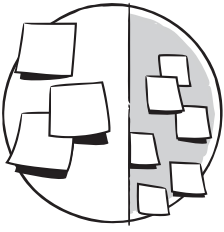
Eric, Ella, and Dad were just settling down on their cots, trying to get comfortable under the scratchy blankets they had been given, when they heard what sounded like a freight train outside. Louder and louder it roared, as the storm became even stronger. The building shook a little and the big entry doors rattled. “Dad, I’m really scared now,” said Eric.

Dad sat on the floor between their cots and held their hands in his. “Let’s pray,” he said. “God knows how scared you feel, and he is surely with us. Remember the story in the Bible when Jesus was in the boat with his friends during a terrible storm? He commanded the wind and the waves to be still, and they obeyed! He’s also with us and with Mom right now. Let’s thank him for that and let’s pray that we all get through this night safely.”



Let's Talk About It

1. Why did Ella's idea about being helper scouts help them feel better?
2. Eric asked some important questions. What other questions would you have had if you were in that shelter?
3. What did Dad suggest they do when they heard the loud, scary noises? Why?
4. Can you tell about a time when you were really scared? What did you do to calm your fear?



Activity

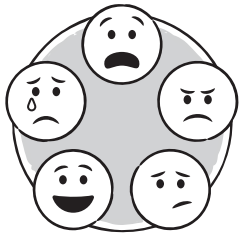
Don't Have, Do Have

How is your life different now than it used to be before these hard times? Change can be hard, and many changes all at the same time can be very hard. It is normal to feel sad, worried, angry, or afraid when a lot of things change, and especially when they change for the worse.

Maybe these changes have made us lose things, relationships, or freedoms we were used to having before the crisis. It is good to talk about what we have lost and how we feel about that.

1. Give each member of the family a small stack of sticky notes (or small pieces of paper and tape).
2. On each sticky note, write one thing you like to do, something you enjoy having, or a person you love to be with (young children can draw pictures).
3. Find a window or a place on a wall that you can stick these notes to.
4. When everybody is finished, have each person share what they wrote on their sticky notes.
5. Now look at your sticky notes and find any things you no longer have, can no longer do, and people you can no longer physically be with because of your current situation. Put those sticky notes in a separate group on the window or wall. These are the things you have lost for now.

6. Give each person a chance to share the things they have lost. As you name each loss, share with your family how it makes you feel.
7. Finally, everyone should take a turn naming the things that they still have, the things they can still do, and people they love that they can still be with.



Activity

Naming Your Feelings

It is good to talk about how you felt when scary things were happening to you and your family, and how you feel now when you think about that time. Did you know there are no wrong feelings? God created everyone with the ability to feel different things at different times. Let's see how many of those feelings you can name.

1. Write these words that describe feelings on a large piece of paper: Angry, Disappointed, Sad, Frustrated, Worried, Lonely, Hopeful, Confused, Afraid, Happy, and Guilty. Leave space at the bottom for additional words.
2. Tape the paper on the wall or put it on a hard surface like a table or the floor.
3. Give each person a different colored marker, crayon, or colored pencil.

4. Make sure everyone knows what each of these feeling words means.
5. Each person should take a turn to go to the paper and draw a circle around the feeling word or words that best describes how they felt when big scary things were happening to them, or how they feel now when they remember what happened.
6. Write in additional feeling words as needed for anyone who names a feeling that is not already on the paper.

Questions to discuss:

- Did anyone name the same feelings as other members of your family?
- What was the most common feelings your family named?
- What are feelings that are normal for people going through hard times?
- Why do you think it helps to talk about your feelings?



Activity

Fight, Flight, or Freeze

Did you know that God made you with instincts? Your body is ready to respond quickly and automatically when stressful things happen to you, just like you pull your hand back fast when you touch something hot.

The strongest of these instincts is called the “Fight, Flight, or Freeze” response. As soon as our brain senses any danger that might threaten our survival, it tells our body to respond in one of these three ways.

Sometimes these reactions help us escape real danger, but sometimes our automatic reactions are too strong or don’t fit the situation. Also, when we’re using only our survival instinct, it can be hard to think well or make good decisions.

It can help to know how you respond to stress so you can recognize when it is happening and choose a better or more healthy response.

Here are some ways you can identify these three responses to stress:

FIGHT

- Raising your voice
- Arguing
- Kicking or screaming
- Tightening muscles
- Clenching fist

FLIGHT

- Running away
- Being restless
- Breathing rapidly
- Doing anything to get away
- Feeling trapped
- Pounding heart

FREEZE

- Holding your breath
- Feeling disconnected from feelings
- Unable to talk or make decisions
- Feeling like you can't move
- Daydreaming
- Feeling numb

Act it out!

1. Choose a body stance for each of these survival responses. For example, for “Fight,” stand with your fists in front of your face and clenched as though you’re ready to fight, and make an angry face. For “Flight,” stand with your fists clenched but in a running stance and make an afraid face. For “Freeze,” put both hands in front of you with palms out and make a shocked face.
2. Form a circle.
3. Practice the body responses to “Fight,” “Flight,” and “Freeze” by someone calling out these words and everyone performing the right body stance.

4. Have someone read the following short scenes that describe someone's response to a dangerous or uncomfortable situation they faced.
5. After each scene, each person should perform the "Fight," "Flight," or "Freeze" body stance that shows how the person in the story responded to danger, based on the description of the person's behavior.

Situation Stories

1. Mary must leave school early, but gets up from her desk too fast and her books fall all over the floor. The other children begin to laugh. She crouches down to pick them up, quickly stuffs them in her backpack and runs out the classroom door.
2. John is riding his bike down the street when a car comes from behind him and drives by close enough that he loses his balance and falls. He is not hurt, but he jumps up and screams at the driver.
3. Paul is walking home from school when he sees a group of bullies coming his way. He knows they will give him trouble, but he stops in his tracks and just stares at them, unable to move.
4. Jennifer is at the fair with her family but becomes separated from them. She sees a group of mean girls from school coming toward her. She quickly changes her direction and hides until they are gone.
5. The teacher calls on Peter to come to the board in front of the class to solve a math problem. He tries but is unable to do it. Instead of sitting down quietly, he says in a loud voice, "I don't care. I hate math anyway!"

Questions to discuss:

- Which of these three survival responses do you use when you're stressed? Which ones can you see in other people?
- Can you tell about a time when you felt in danger and you responded in one of these three ways?
- Why is it important for family members to know how each other usually responds to danger?
- What can we do to help each other calm down?



God's Promises God Hears Me

Did you know you can talk to God anytime, anywhere? He hears you!

In our story, what did Dad suggest they do when the storm noise became scary? Another word for talking to God is prayer. The Bible tells us that God says, *"I will answer their prayers before they finish praying!"* (Isaiah 65:24). That's a promise!

The Bible has many stories about people praying to God for help and God helps them! Jesus is God's Son and came to earth as God in human form. When he was on earth, he lived in Israel. One day, a blind man named Bartimaeus heard he was coming to his village. As Jesus was passing by, Bartimaeus called out to Jesus, asking for him to restore his sight. Jesus healed him! (Read the whole story in Mark 10:46-52.)

Just like blind Bartimaeus, you can ask God for all that you need.

When you are afraid, remember that God is with you. He hears you and answers your prayers.

Let's Talk to God

"Thank you, God, for hearing me when I pray. Help me to remember to call on you when I am afraid. Amen."





What Can I Do to Feel Better?

What a Mess!

“Wake up, kids,” said Dad as he gently shook their shoulders.
“They’re serving breakfast soon.”

Eric and Ella opened their eyes. They were still in the shelter.
They were surprised they actually slept!

“Will we be able to go home soon?” asked Ella.

“We’re waiting to hear from the authorities about when it is safe
for us to leave,” said Dad.

Finally, in late afternoon, the announcement came: the electricity
was out in some places in their town, but they were free to go!

Dad, Eric, and Ella grabbed their bags and moved toward the exit.
It took a while to get out of the building because there were so many
people, but at last they were in their car and heading home.

The sky was still cloudy and gray, and a light rain was falling. It was
quiet in the car as they drove home. Everything seemed strange.
Traffic lights were not working, stores were closed and boarded up,
and the streets seemed empty and sad. They couldn’t believe what
they were seeing. Roofs had been torn off some of the buildings,
some of the light poles had been snapped in half, pieces of walls

and roofs and fences and glass littered the streets. In some places, it looked like the storm chose just one side of the street to destroy while the other side of the street wasn't much damaged.

"Wow," Eric exclaimed. "What a mess! How is this ever going to be cleaned up and made like it was before? I'm scared to see our house—what if it's completely gone?"

"And how will we find Mom?" asked Ella, with tears in her eyes. "It makes me so sad to see our town like this. I hope my friends are okay."

They held their breath as their car rounded the corner of their street. "Our street is one of those strange places where the storm chose sides," said Dad. "It looks like we are very fortunate that our house is on the side of the street with less damage."

When they arrived at their house, they got out of the car slowly and carefully. A huge tree had fallen on the roof and there were smaller tree branches and debris all over their yard. There was a hole in the roof where the tree crashed into it, right above Eric's bedroom. "My room!" he yelled. "I bet everything's ruined now. Why did it have to be my room?"

Just then, Ella saw Mom's car driving slowly toward them. "Mom!" she screamed with joy.

Mom got out of her car and quickly drew them close for a group hug. "I am so happy to see you!" she exclaimed. "I know that tree on the roof looks bad and I'm sure it has caused a mess in the house. And look across the street! Our neighbors have lost so much more!"

They went into the house together. "I know you want to see what happened to your room, Eric," said Dad. "But wait for me to go with you. We will need to get someone to help us look at the situation and decide if it's safe and how we can get the roof rebuilt. Right now we need to get a tarp to cover that hole."

The electricity was not on, so Mom and Ella started gathering flashlights, candles, and oil lamps from different parts of their house to be ready when it got dark that night.

“We can use our camp stove to cook dinner tonight,” Mom suggested. “We have cans of soup in the pantry.”

“And Eric can sleep in my room in his sleeping bag, just like we’re really camping,” said Ella.

At bedtime, Dad gathered the family together. “I think we need to thank God for bringing us safely through the storm and pray for those who have lost so much,” Dad said. “Eric, I’m so glad you were not in your room when that tree landed on the roof! That would have been terrible. Ella, can you get my Bible from the table? I want to read you the story that I mentioned last night about the time that Jesus calmed the storm.”



Let's Talk About It

1. Why were Eric and Ella surprised that they fell asleep in the shelter?
2. What were some of their worries as they were driving through town?
3. How did the family make the best of their situation?
4. Can you tell about a time when your family comforted each other during a hard situation? What made you feel safe?



Activity

Telling My Story

A good way to help you feel better is to tell your own story about what happened to you. Telling your story to someone or a group of people you trust will help you heal from pain inside you that might still be there because of what you have been through.

Sometimes it is hard to talk about those things because you may have big feelings about them, or it is a complicated story with lots of details. One way to make your story easier to tell is by dividing it into three parts. We can do this by answering three important questions:

1. What happened?
2. How did it make you feel?
3. What was the hardest part?

Use the three spaces on the next page (or create your own spaces on a piece of paper) to answer these questions. You can write your story in words or draw it in pictures. When you are finished, you may want to talk about it with someone you trust.

Every member of the family should write or draw their own story. You might be surprised to see that even though you all went through the same scary thing, you have very different memories and feelings about it. Do not force anyone to share their story; instead, gently invite them to do so if they want to.

It helps to hear each other's story.

What happened?

How did it make you feel?

What was the hardest part?



Activity

The Worry Box

Most people feel anxious about things they can't control and things they are afraid may happen in the future. It helps to talk about our worries with each other.

1. Find a box or large jar.
2. Family members should sit around a table if possible.
3. Each member of the family should say one or more things they feel worried about.
4. Put a stack of small pieces of paper or notecards in the middle of the table.
5. Everyone should write one thing that they are worried about on each piece of paper (young children can draw a picture) and put papers in the box (or jar).
6. Set the box aside. Assure children that you will do something with these worries in the next lesson.
7. Remind everyone that they can always add more worries to the box anytime they feel like it. Put paper and a pencil next to the box wherever you decide to place it.



Activity

How Can I Help?

It helps us feel better when we find ways to help someone else. There is always something you can do for a friend, family member, or neighbor that will encourage them and help them feel less alone. What can you do?

Here are some ideas. What other ideas can you add?

- Offer to walk the dog
- Help clean up a yard
- Plant some seeds in a pot and give the plant away
- Do your sister's or brother's chores
- Make a greeting card to encourage your neighbor
- Offer to play with your neighbor's younger children
- Offer to wash someone's car
- Weed or shovel for a neighbor
- Read a book to someone
- Teach someone something new
- Send a cheerful video message to faraway friends
- Write a poem or a joke on a notecard and leave it by your neighbor's door
- Fill a jar with candy for another family
- Write encouraging chalk messages on the sidewalk
- Donate food to the local food pantry

Decide which of these ideas—or other ideas of your own—that you can do. Write each of them on a piece of paper and put the papers in a box, basket, or jar. Do one right now! Then, challenge each other to pull a paper once a week to see how many acts of kindness your family can contribute to others!



God's Promises God Knows Me

Did you know that God knows everything about you? He even knew you before you were born! King David wrote a song about this in the Bible—Psalm 139. Here is some of his song:

You have looked deep into my heart, LORD,
and you know all about me.

You know when I am resting or when I am working,
and from heaven you discover my thoughts.

You notice everything I do
and everywhere I go.

Before I even speak a word, you know what I will say, and
with your powerful arm you protect me from every side.

The Bible says, “*The person who loves God is known by him*”
(1 Corinthians 8:3 GNT). That’s a promise!

Because God is so good, we can trust him to know us and love us completely, no matter what! He knows we are not perfect; he forgives us when we do wrong, he is happy when good things happen to us, and he is sad when we are hurt. The Bible tells us all these things and much more about God.

When you are afraid, remember that God knows you and is with you and understands how you are feeling.



Let's Talk to God

“Thank you, dear God, for knowing and loving me completely. Help me to trust you with my whole life. Be near me, I pray. Amen.”





Is God Still With Us?

Now What?

After another night of restless sleep, the next day dawned bright and clear. Blue skies and sunshine filled the morning, but it still felt strange. It should have been a normal day of work and play, but everything was different.

The roof had a hole in it, everything in Eric's room was ruined from water getting in, the electricity still wasn't on, and the neighborhood was a big mess. The sound of chainsaws filled the air.

"Where do we even start?" asked Eric as he sat at the kitchen table munching on an energy bar.

"Well, I think we start with checking on our neighbors," answered Mom. "I'm wondering about that family across the street, the mom and two little kids. They just moved here and I don't know if they have family close by. Half of her house is just gone! Let's walk over and see if we can help. Maybe she's there and trying to sort things out by herself."

While Dad and Eric went to find people to help with the tree on the roof, Mom and Ella went to the street. They saw their neighbor sitting in her car and staring at her ruined house. A little boy and a little girl sat quietly in the back seat, their eyes wide.

“Hello,” Mom said. “You’re Jennifer, right? We live across the street. We are so sorry about your house!”

“Yes, I’m Jennifer,” she answered. “And I don’t know what I’m going to do.” A tear rolled down her cheek. “I don’t even know where to start.”

“It’s too much to think about how to solve all the problems right now,” said Mom kindly. “Let’s start with the most important things. Are you hungry? Do you have a place to stay tonight? If not, we are happy to share our place with you until you get things sorted out. Come on—let’s go over to our house and talk about it.”

The little ones climbed out of the car and they all walked back across the street. After the young children were settled with Ella and Eric, Jennifer, Mom, and Dad began making plans and thinking through the problems they faced. It turned out that Jennifer’s sister lived in the next state. She was planning to travel there, but first she needed to work out the situation with her house and belongings.

“We might be crowded here for a little while,” said Dad, “but we’re happy to help you out.”

“And I’m happy I can do something to help, too,” said Ella, from the floor where she was reading a book with the two children.

Suddenly, lights came on in the house. The electricity was back!

That night, when everyone had enjoyed a simple dinner and decided where they would sleep, they gathered in a circle on the living room floor.

“Let’s go around the circle and say two things: one thing that was hard for you today and one thing you’re thankful for,” suggested Dad. Everyone had a chance to share what they were thinking. Even the little ones had something to say.

“We have a lot of work to do, and it will take many weeks to get it all done,” said Mom. “But one thing we know for sure. The Bible says that no matter what happens to us or how bad things get, we know that God is still with us. His love never fails, and we are never, ever alone.”



Let's Talk About It

1. With so much to be done, why did Mom want to start by checking on their neighbors?
2. Why did Mom say food and shelter were the most important things?
3. Can you tell about a time that you and your family were overwhelmed with many problems at the same time? What was helpful for you?



Activity

Peace, Be Still

In our story, Eric and Ella heard about a time when Jesus calmed a big storm. The Bible tells us that Jesus is God’s Son. When he came to live among us, Jesus looked like an ordinary person. Even his closest friends and followers at first thought he was only another man. In this story, they begin to realize he is much more than that. Let’s find out what Jesus did in a scary situation when everyone around him was worried and afraid.

Read the story below. It is from the Gospel of Mark in the Bible. Just before this story, Jesus had been teaching huge crowds of people all day long, and he was exhausted.

And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

Mark 4:36-41 NRSV

Talking Points

- The Bible teaches that Jesus is both man and God. As a man he was tired, but as God he has power over the wind and the waves (Psalm 104:5-7; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16).
- Jesus's friends were in awe after the storm because they realized how powerful Jesus is. They didn't understand yet that Jesus was God with them.
- Whenever we're afraid, we can call on Jesus to help us.
- God is with us right now.

Act It Out!

This is a fun story to act out. Using your imagination and your bodies to act out this story can help you understand it in a deeper way.

Get the whole family involved. Don't forget to add sound effects! Find props for the boat and the cushion, and costumes for the friends, the wind, and so forth. Decide who will play these roles:

- Narrator
- Jesus
- Friends of Jesus
- Wind and waves (optional)

Someone could be the director, while someone else can create a video using their phone. Everyone says their own lines and the narrator reads the rest of the story from Mark 4:36-41.



Let's Talk About It

Ask these questions to the people who played each part.

“Friends”: How did you feel ...

1. when the wind blew hard and the waves came breaking into the boat?
2. when you found Jesus asleep in the back of the boat?
3. when Jesus commanded the wind to be quiet?
4. when he asked you why you were afraid?

“Wind”: How did you feel when Jesus rebuked you?

“Waves”: How did you feel when Jesus told you to be still?

“Jesus”: How did you feel ...

1. when the disciples woke you up?
2. when you saw the problem?
3. when the waves calmed?

All: Did you realize anything new about this story when you were acting it out?



Activity

Give Your Worries to God

Set up a small cross in a convenient place where your family can sit around it. Place the Worry Box in front of the cross. Decide which adult or older teen will be the leader of this activity.

Ask, “Why do you think we put our Worry Box by the cross?” When everyone has had a chance to answer, read the following verse.

The Bible says, “*Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.*” (1 Peter 5:7 NLT).


Now read the following, or express these ideas in your own words:

“This cross is a symbol of God’s love for us. God sent his Son Jesus into the world to heal us in every way: our bodies, our minds, and our souls. Jesus is in heaven even now, praying for us!”

“We can bring all our worries to God. He has told us not to worry, and yet he knows how hard it is for us. We will keep our Worry Box as long as we need to. You can add your worries to it anytime you want. And we can keep giving them to God, even if it is many times a day. He is always ready to hear us.”

“Just as Jesus was in the boat with his friends during a scary time, Jesus is and will be here with us during these difficult times. These are his words in our situation, too: Peace! Be still!”

“What other things might God be saying to us?” Let family members answer. Then read one or more of these Bible verses:

 Be still, and know that I am God!
Psalm 46:10 NRSV

Don't be afraid ... Take courage! I am here!
Mark 6:50b NLT

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you....
Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let
them be afraid.
John 14:27 NRSV

I will never leave you or forsake you.
Hebrews 13:5b NRSV

“Let's ask God to help us let go of our worries as we give them to him.” Pray a simple prayer with your family as you give your worries to God and ask for his comforting presence with you during this difficult time. (For example, “God, we give you all our worries. Please give us your peace. Amen.”)



Activity

Emergency Supplies

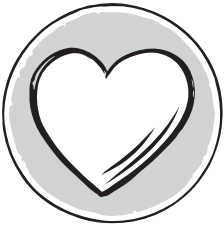
We always trust in God, but it is wise to be prepared before emergencies happen. Eric and Ella's family had a bag in a safe place filled with supplies to be used in case they had to leave their house quickly. What do you think they included in their bag? (See page 53 for a suggested list of emergency supplies.)

Play a game!

1. Tape a large piece of paper to the wall and assign someone to write a list of the emergency supplies your family will suggest during this game.
2. Find a box or basket and place it at one end of the room, about ten feet/three meters away from where your family is sitting.
3. Give each member of the family four or five small pieces of paper and a pencil or pen.
4. Each person should write (or draw) one emergency supply item on each piece of paper.
5. After writing the item on the paper, each person should crumple the paper up into a tight ball.
6. When everyone is finished writing and crumpling, take turns throwing the paper balls into the box or basket.
7. When all the balls are in the box or basket, take turns going to the collection and choosing a ball to smooth out. Say the supply item out loud and guess whose paper it is.
8. Write each supply item on the list on the wall.
9. When all the balls are read, look at the emergency supply list your family has made.

Questions to discuss:

- Why did you include each of these items?
- Are there any other ideas that you have now for items that were not mentioned?
- How will you collect these items and what will you put them in?
- Where will you keep your emergency supplies?
- How does it make you feel to know that your family is more prepared for an emergency evacuation?



God's Promises God Loves Me

Can you think of someone that you love very much? What are some of your feelings about that person?

- You don't want anything bad to happen to them
- You love spending time with them
- You feel happy when you are with them
- You want to do things for them

That is how God feels about you! He created you. God loves his creation and is sad when his creatures are hurt or destroyed. When bad things happen to us, it can be hard to believe that God still loves us. But we can trust that the words of the Bible are true.

The Bible tells us, "*God our Father loves us. He is kind and has given us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope*" (2 Thessalonians 2:16a). In fact, the Bible tells us that "*God IS love*" (1 John 4:16).

When Jesus was on earth he had a special group of friends called his disciples. One day he said to them, "*I love you just as the Father loves me*" (John 15:9a GNT). That's a promise! Jesus says the same thing to you today.

When you are afraid, remember that God loves you and will always be with you.



Let's Talk to God

“Thank you, dear God, for loving and caring for us no matter what happens. Help us to live in your love in such a way that we can love and care for others. Amen.”

GOD'S PROMISES



GOD SEES ME

But the Lord watches over all who honor him and trust his kindness.

PSALM 33:18 CEV



GOD HEARS ME

I will answer their prayers before they finish praying.

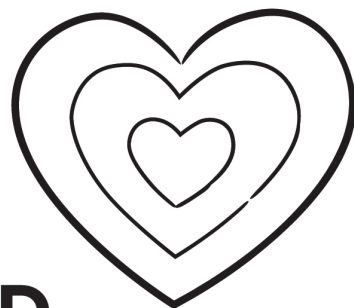
ISAIAH 65:24 CEV



GOD KNOWS ME

The person who loves God is known by him.

1 CORINTHIANS 8:3 GNT

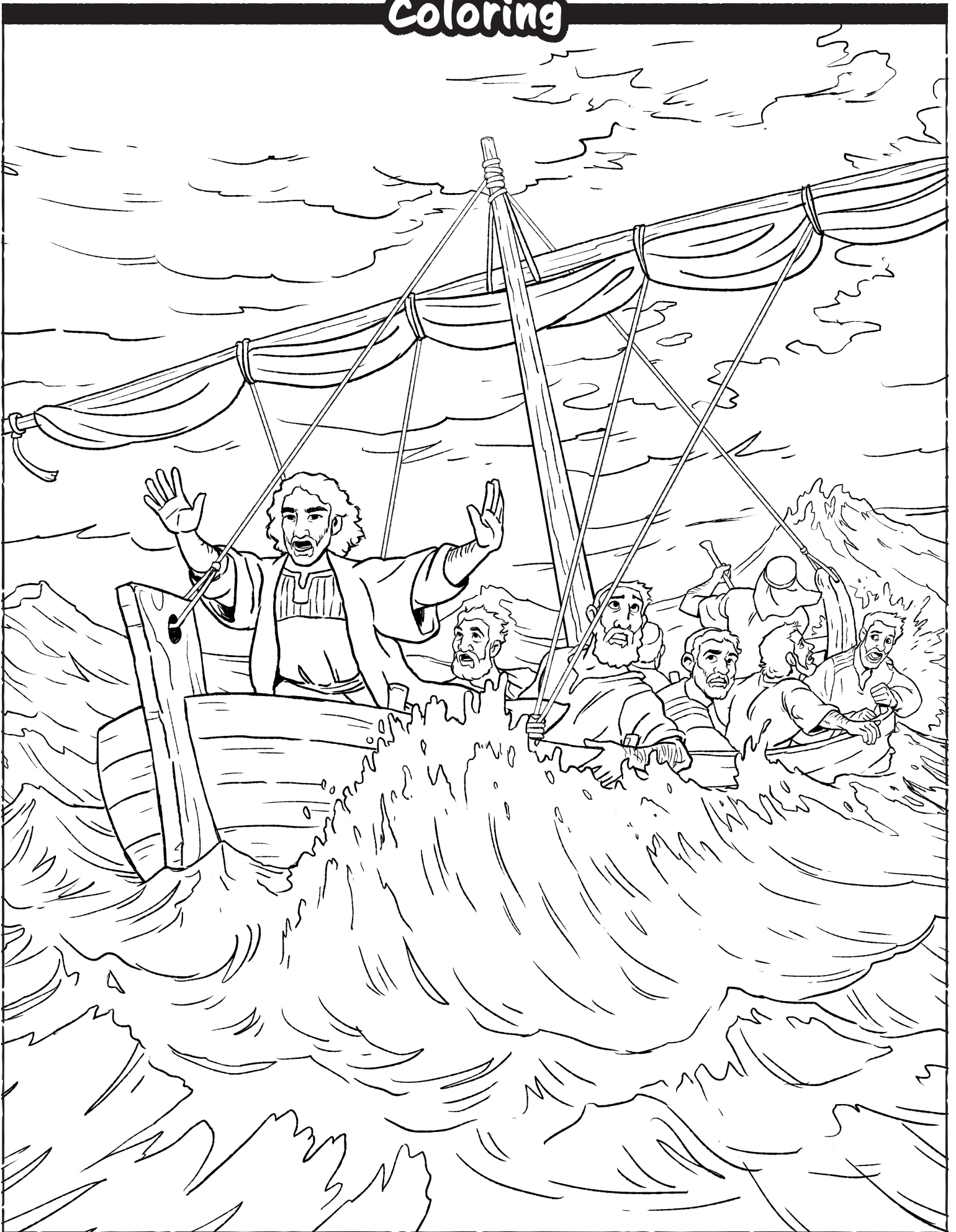


GOD LOVES ME

God our Father loves us. He is kind and has given us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:16a CEV

Coloring



Tips for Parents & Caregivers

Your children have survived a big, scary event, and it is likely that they are experiencing many different emotions because of it. Fear, anxiety, depression, anger, and other feelings combine to create inner insecurity and outward behavior that can be difficult for them and for you.

Here are some insights and suggestions that may be helpful during this troubling time.

- Children are affected by trauma as much as adults, but they may show it differently. Small children may not have words to describe how they feel and 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.
- Traumatized children often exhibit troublesome behavior that is difficult for caregivers who are also overwhelmed by their own pain. Irritability, aggression, crying, nightmares, and so on are normal and temporary responses to trauma.
- Remember that children take emotional cues from the adults around them. When you take good care of yourself and remain calm and positive, your children will find it easier to do the same.
- Re-establish routines for your children as quickly as possible to reduce the feeling of chaos caused by the disaster.
- Sometimes children mistakenly connect unrelated events to their own behavior and then feel that they caused a bad experience for others. Assure children that the disaster is not their fault.
- Children need to know that they are not alone. Try to maintain connections with friends and family members outside of your household who know and love your children.

- Restore a sense of control and order by finding ways for children to participate in your family's progress toward normal. Give children small responsibilities and tasks that help the entire family.
- Be cautious about the media your children are exposed to. Restrict their exposure to television and radio news that may re-traumatize them and increase their feeling of being unsafe. If they are exposed to troubling media reports, help them interpret what they are seeing or hearing and help them express their feelings about it.
- Structured activities can help children feel safe. Begin or build up family prayer times in the morning and evening; consider a time for Bible reading and reading stories together.
- When you are able to return to more normal family living, create an emergency supply kit and a plan for your family to follow in case you are faced with a disaster in the future. Having these provisions will help to re-establish a feeling of safety and security for your children.

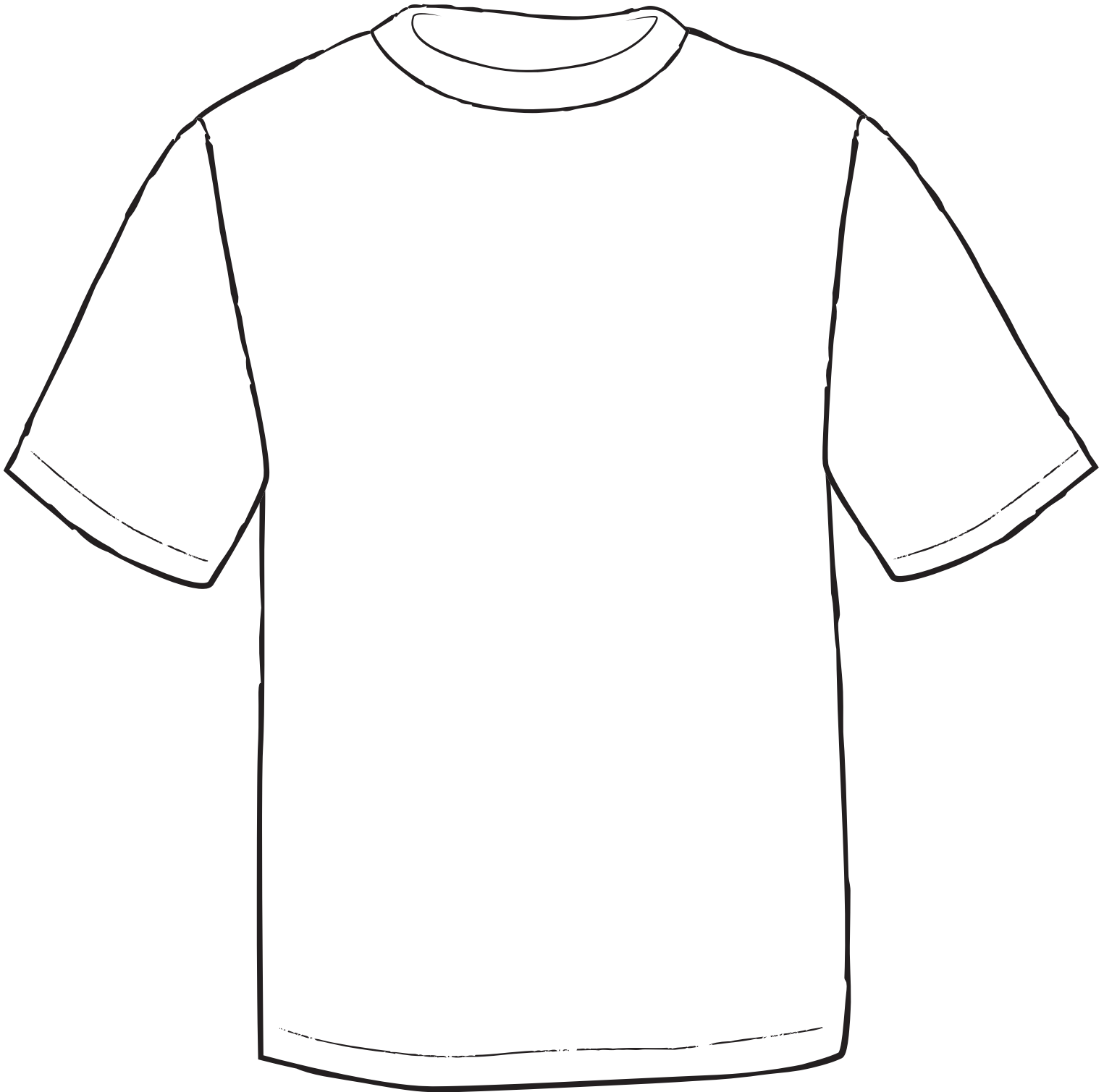
EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

We pray you will never have to use an emergency supply kit! But it is wise to be prepared. Here is a list of suggested supplies to gather and put in a safe place. Some of these items may not be available, but having a few things set aside will give your family some measure of security. Check expiration dates on food and medicine, and keep those items fresh.

- Water (1 gallon/4 liters per person per day, for 3 days)
- Canned food
- Can opener
- Basic medicines
- Flashlight
- Batteries
- Matches (place in waterproof container)
- Whistle (to alert emergency responders)
- Blankets
- Extra change of clothes for each person (diapers if you have a baby)
- Rain protection
- Toiletries (toilet paper, soap, hand sanitizers, toothbrushes, toothpaste)
- Basic tools (hammer, screwdrivers, plier, wrench)
- Pocket knife
- Copies of important documents (identification cards, insurance cards, birth certificates)
- Emergency contact numbers
- Paper & pen
- Backpacks to carry everything in (one per family member able to do so)

- Place everything in a waterproof container and store your kit in a cool, dry location if possible.
- Make sure everyone in your home knows where it is.
- You may want to add a few small toys or books to entertain and comfort children.
- Remember to rotate food and water in your emergency kit every six months, check batteries and medication for expiration dates, and change out the children's clothes to accommodate their growth.
- Consider making an evacuation plan. What will you take? Where will you go? How will you find each other if you are separated? Make sure each member of the family is familiar with the plan; practice it together to make sure.

"I Survived" T-Shirt





**Trauma Healing
Institute**

God's Word Restoring Lives