

Praying in the Middle of Senseless Tragedies

By Sandra Higley and Lani Hinkle

When we hear about yet another random act of violence, our first response is usually to pray away the pain or pray that this will never happen again. But how can we pray beyond the fear and shock, beyond the most obvious needs, for the issues of the Kingdom?

Hopefully, some of the following points will be a springboard for your prayers in the wake of tragedies that defy human understanding and are becoming more and more frequent.

Praise

Though it is difficult, start with praise. Focus on God's character.

- Praise God that He is sovereign, that He has ultimate control over it all, and that nothing takes Him by surprise (Is. 45:5-7).

Petition/Intercession

- Ask God to use this situation to bring unprecedented spiritual openness to people affected by the tragedy, and ask Him to show His face to them.
- Ask God to bless the ministry that will be thrust upon the church(es) or community affected by the tragedy. Ask Him to empower them with a powerful witness when they are called upon to speak about or reflect on the situation.
- Ask God to stand against the enemy's attempts to make families experience unresolved anger or guilt over the loss of loved ones.
- Ask God to focus the minds of public officials on the need for prayer and to provide people who will continue to pray for the situation.
- Ask God to equip leaders who will be called upon to mentor and minister to people in the aftermath of tragedy (Heb. 13:20-21).
- Ask God—for yourself and others—for a passion and love for Christ that drives out fear (1 Jn. 4:18).

Thanksgiving

- Thank God that the enemy has made a tactical error since persecution/trial has always strengthened the Church, and that God will use for good what Satan has intended for harm (Gen. 50:20-21).
- Thank God for the people who will be drawn to seek God's face because the overwhelming nature of the tragedy leaves them nowhere else to turn (Jon. 2:1-9).

- Thank God for a vivid reminder of your own mortality and vulnerability, asking Him to prepare your heart and spirit for a faithful response when you are faced with tragedy personally.
- In the case of martyrs: thank God for the blood of martyred victims, whose number will reveal God's ultimate glory (see Rev. 6:9).

By Sandra Higley and Lani Hinkle, used by permission. Originally appeared in Pray! Magazine, Issue 15, 1999.

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