

What can I do?

- **Partner:** *We are excited to send Tice Huffman to use his gifts in helping rebuild an orphanage in Haiti (www.eternalhopeinhaiti.org). He will be there anywhere from 2 weeks to 2 months. If you would like to partner with him, send a check made out to Leroy Community Chapel with Tice Huffman in the memo.*
- **Send:** *Respond generously one of the several agencies in place, please respond generously (and wisely) to those raising funds for the long-term needs of Haiti. We support the Lemuel Ministries (www.lemuelministries.org), or go to the American Red Cross (www.redcross.org)*
- **Pray:** *Pray for our hearts, pray for compassion, pray for repentance, pray for revival, pray for action, pray for our families, community, and world. Pray for the Kingdom of God to grow! Will you please join us for our Prayer Summit on January 29th (7-9 pm) and January 30th (8-noon) at The Chapel.*



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Leroy Community Chapel



Teaching Truth in Tragedy



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I remember a movie where the children's fish had died while the family was away. Mom and dad called home to the house sitter and instructed her to go to the pet store and find another fish that looked as close as possible to the old one. They didn't want the children to know their fish had passed while they were gone. It's a natural (and God instilled) response of parents to protect their children. After all it *is* a big bad world out there and children learn soon enough how tough it can be--let's keep it from them for as long as possible, let them enjoy their childhood. But is that the best way to train children that the Word of God has something to say to tragedy?

The Psalmist writes in Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones." If the death of believers is precious to our God, why would we be afraid to talk to our children about it? *Death is a part of life.* A certain tower in Siloam had fallen and killed eighteen people tragically. A group of observers thought it must have been that those killed deserved it and justice had been served on their disobedience. Christ corrects their wrong thinking saying in essence, "tragedy strikes the righteous and the unrighteous," what matters is that you repent (Luke 13:4-5). *Tragedy is a part of life.* We come to understand that death and tragedy are not the focus of the mind of God, but repentance and relationship with Him. So is it really necessary to go out and get a new goldfish to hide tragedy from our children, or can we teach the truth that leads them to understand the heart of God in death and tragedy? Part of preparing our

children to be courageous champions of the cross is to turn them from evil, but not shelter them from truth. Earthquakes strike the godly and the ungodly, people have tragic accidents, and yet all our days are ordained by God (Psalm 139:16) ... nothing surprises Him. So how do we teach our kids about tragedy ... and at the same time protect their innocence? Here's a good start:

1. Don't make death a subject to fear. The writer of the book of Hebrews made it clear that death eludes no one (Hebrews 9:27). Fish die, grandparents die, and our kids too will die. We need to be careful not to make death a subject we avoid with our children. Talk to them about it with seriousness, but talk about it. Talk about it with sadness, but talk about it. Help them understand that for those who die in Christ, death is entrance into heaven. Impress upon them the greatest sadness is death for those who have not repented of their sin, and will suffer pain far greater than any earthquake or accident. Teach them about eternity.
2. Get sovereignty into their vocabulary. Jesus had a friend named Lazarus who died while Christ was occupied in other ministry. Lazarus' sisters knew the power of Christ over death and were upset that Christ hadn't come sooner. Christ was not caught off guard by His friend's death. In fact God isn't surprised by anything. He knows all things without question and nothing hinders His perfect will. He is sovereign. Sure it's a big word, and an even bigger concept, but a glorious one to teach our children. He controls the wind, knows the condition of grandpa's cancer, and has the hairs on your head numbered. With God in control even the greatest tragedies don't shake our faith, they just make us long for eternity.

3. Teach them of the compassionate heart of God. God doesn't punish people through tragedy. Sin finds its punishment in only two places ... the cross and hell. God's wrath meets His justice for His children on the cross, and for those who have rejected Him in hell after death. What's hard to understand is not how a good God could allow such tragedy in our fallen world, but how wicked men (all of mankind) could find mercy and grace from a holy God at all. Our God is gracious to save. He is a father to the fatherless. His heart breaks for the oppressed, the poor and abandoned. Our words shape our children's future understanding of the heart of God. If we teach them well, they will be even more prepared to embrace a God of compassion and love in the midst of a sinful and fallen world.

We can't keep our kids from experiencing pain and loss, seeing tragedy and injustice, but we can teach them the truth about how to understand this world with their eyes fixed on the next. Don't avoid the subject ... God will honor your earnest effort to help them understand the good and the bad.

For the Future of the Church,

Pastor Mark

