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**RAIN**

***Pastor Richard Fox***

When I was a child I liked the sound of rain on an iron roof. When it thundered down it would drown everything else out and I felt like I was cocooned in the sound of the rain. It used to help me settle in to a cosy warm bed and sleep.

The rain was also great for the paddocks around our house to help feed the dairy cows. This in turn meant my dad didn’t have to worry about watering the paddocks so much and he had more time for us as a family. Also, with less watering, there was less power used which meant farming costs were down (and pocket money was up!)

We need rain and water for many things. For watering the garden, washing clothes and dishes, and for drinking. Water is an essential part of life. We couldn’t survive without it. We need it to grow things like vegetables and crops so that we can eat. Rain is essential for life – ask any farmer.

But when there’s a lot of rain, water can become very powerful. Even too powerful. When it rains too much, it can create a wall of water hurtling down a river or over a dam and anything in its way is swept away or smashed. When rivers swell and towns are flooded, destruction occurs to property, livelihoods and even life. And often there’s not much that can be done to stop the flooding and damage. We can see images of floods that cover countryside, towns and even suburbs. Floods can cause destruction and loss and it’s often during these times we may try to make sense of it all by asking: Why the destruction? Why me? Where’s God? And how can I get through this and cope with the aftermath?

Rain is often welcome, especially by farmers. Even when the rain occurs out of season, farmers are generally appreciative of rain. Rain gives life through the water it spreads on the land and gives water for us to drink and live on. But rain, lots of rain, can cause floods and destruction.

When we see the effects of floods on TV or are personally affected, we can feel shocked. We feel for the people who get caught in the flood and whose lives are threatened. When property and livelihood are destroyed we feel empathy for the people affected. The stories of tragedy when someone dies as a result of the floods can hit us deeply. I can’t help stop and think of the people being affected by these disasters when they occur. To lose someone you love can be unbearable.

When trying to make sense of it some people ask if God is judging them. Are the floods some kind of divine punishment or retribution? What have I done wrong?

So what does God actually say, and where is he during these times?

God shares with us in the bible that he doesn’t want to condemn the world but to save the world. God has compassion for people, especially people who are hurting. Experiencing tragedy in life, especially from a natural disaster like a flood, doesn’t mean that you are worse or better than anyone else.

God understands that we live in a broken world and he comes to help and guide us through. God calls us to look to him for help because he is compassionate and gracious, abounding in love and faithfulness. God wants to save us and we see that in his son, Jesus. In Jesus we see the ultimate compassion of God. God willing to come into this world as one of us to save us and rescue us. So when we face times of destruction, God is here to help us through.

Experiencing the loss of property, livelihood and life can be devastating and unbearable. The grief and sadness can be too much and you may wonder if you’ll ever be happy again. The clean-up and adjustment to the challenges can take time. A long time.

Thankfully we are not alone. Jesus said that he would always be with us. Although we may not always see him, feel him or realise that he is there. At times we may even question him and his love for us. But he has promised to always be with us and guide us through. Even if we feel angry with God.

You may think it’s not right to be angry with God, well, the bible is full of stories of people expressing their anger to God – Jesus, God’s own son even did that on the cross, when he cried out “Why have you forsaken me?” It’s ok to be angry with God, to ask your question - why? God wants you to share your questions and pain with him because when we acknowledge our pain God can help heal our pain, our sadness and our grief.

We can cry out to him in prayer. We can let go and give our grief to him. We can give whatever we are feeling or experiencing over to him and ask him to help us through. No matter what stage of grief you are dealing with. Everyone grieves differently at different times. Some are in a stage of denying their grief. Some are angry. Some are trying to bargain their way out of it while some are sad or even depressed. Going through the roller coaster emotions of grief can be difficult and at times, you are the only person who knows what you’re feeling. But with God’s help and opening up to his love and support, you can reach a place of acceptance and be stronger from the journey.

Not only does God work through prayer. He also works through a close friend, family member, and someone who cares. God gives us his love through the loving actions of people around us. God uses people and community to help support each other. By leaning on each other for strength and support we can ride through the devastating effects of natural disasters and come through the grief together.

The power of rain is very influential in our lives. It gives us life through drinking it and by also growing our food. Farmers depend on rain. I can’t recall many farmers complaining about the rain. The absence of rain is far worse to them than the presence of rain – even if it floods. Communities and countries live and die by the presence of rain. Rain can be life giving but rain can also be destructive.

When you experience a natural disaster like a flood it’s easy to give up. The fallout from it and the grief that you go through can be tough. But by persevering through it with God’s support and guidance, God grows our character and gives us hope. Hope that no matter what comes our way or what we are going through, God can get us through it. He can bring new life from the destruction. A new day and a new hope of life with him.



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