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DROUGHT AND RAIN

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I like hearing the rain on a galvanised iron roof. I grew up on a dairy farm and hearing rain was a comforting sound. It used to get so noisy that you couldn't hear yourself think but it also cocooned you in noise so you fell comfortably asleep.

The sound of rain also meant that the paddocks were being watered so there would be water and feed for the cows. Rain was our vital friend.

Now living in the city, rain is still just as important. We all need water for the garden, washing and 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.

When it doesn't rain the effects are drastic. Drought destroys farms and livelihoods and break your heart and spirit.

In the other extreme, too much rain brings destruction too. The power of floods can also destroy farms and livelihoods. So whether its drought or floods, the impact that water has in our lives is crucial.

Droughts and 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 survive?

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 the loss of rain, or lots of rain, can cause devastation and destruction.

When we see the effects of droughts and floods on TV or are personally affected, we can feel shocked. We feel for the people who get caught in the disaster 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 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 these disasters 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 and experiencing tragedy in life. When we experience a natural disaster like a drought or a flood, this doesn't mean that you are worse 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 devastation and loss, 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. 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 drought or 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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