

# Disaster Brings Hope: A Challenge To Live Life

Dan Nelson

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"These are the best of times, these are the worst of times" is the compelling phrase Charles Dickens uses to open his now infamous Tale of Two Cities and it seems astonishingly fitting today. Recent weeks have seen such tremendous tragedy in terms of despair and loss of human life and these weeks have pulled humanity together with a heart to reach out more than I can ever remember. With television images of tear-laden mothers, fathers, and children crying out for their lost loved ones, the anguish of devastation is felt the world over. So many victims of the disastrous tsunami have had their lives completely ripped apart and yet we're seeing hope. As food and supplies are flown in and put into the hands of the hungry, one by one we are seeing a glimmering sparkle return to the eyes of shattered people. Brokenness is turning to resilience, desperation to diligence as donations flow and hammers are being swung in the beginning efforts of building anew. Some are already seeing a light at the end of a long dark tunnel, buildings and infrastructure will be made better than before, but even more important, life will be lived again, but with a deeper appreciation by all of us for the sanctity of human life.

Catastrophe is not limited to events abroad for this week we experienced our own localized natural disaster costing us dearly. As storm devastation destroyed both lives and property, so many of us are affected in different ways. Even as I write, close friends are stranded from their homes while water and mud is being removed from highways and roads and rescue efforts continue in hopes of saving lives. Our agony pinnacled as our hearts wrenched over the families buried in the mud and debris as the mountainside collapsed in La Conchita. This is our own backyard and these are our neighbors. The pain is real and yet so is the expectation among many that the sun will shine again. Yes, here in one of the most beautiful places in the world, the sun will shine again.

We know that tragic events do happen and yet our responses seem to test us to the very core. The hearts of so many that have been broken are in turn getting up to help others. We are witnessing people loving others in a way that is real, tangible, and very evident as lives are beginning to rebuild together. This kind of self-sacrificing love is typified in Jesus Christ Himself. As we seek the benefit of others above ourselves, we are modeling our behavior after Him.

Although many won't recognize the source of their inspiration, the Bible teaches that attributes such as the kindness and compassion among humanity that is taking place around and amongst us are another of the good gifts from God. We are appreciating the precious gift that is human life. I think it is important that we do not quickly forget the lessons we are learning through these trials. Among them, is to appreciate the people in our lives today. Jesus made it clear that we should not wait until tomorrow or another day to enjoy the blessing of life, for tomorrow is promised to none of us. We are taught to live today, experience today, and love today. Yet so many don't really live. They breathe, work, talk, expend time, but not really live. These times are a wake up call for many. Jesus said, "I came to bring you life and that more abundantly". Let's live His way and really appreciate what we have been given today. Let's kiss our spouses with an ounce more passion and hold our children just a tad longer. Let's laugh a decibel louder and cry just a moment sooner. Let's pray with more fervency and worship God with a bit more gratitude for the blessings we enjoy every day. Let's follow Jesus and live.

Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. This article was published in 2005. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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## **Sunday Worship:**

**9:30am**

Oak View Community Center  
18 Valley Rd., Oak View

## **Mid-Week Study:**

**7:00pm Thursday**

Chapel by the Pines  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View