

News Story Summary

A major storm, including a rare tornado, hit Los Angeles and other parts of California earlier this month. Up to eight inches of rain triggered flooding and evacuations, high winds blew down trees and roofs from houses, and mudslides and debris made several hillside homes uninhabitable. More than 100,000 customers in the storm area were without power. Though the rain was a welcome relief to the drought-stricken area, it caused major damage. The same storm wreaked havoc in San Jose where two parks had to be closed because of mudslides, in the state of Washington where many homes were blown into the ocean, and in Oregon where homes were destroyed by high winds.

Though the aftermath of the storm was devastating, people began to clean and restore their communities. Work crews used backhoes and other equipment to remove debris from streets so people could reach their homes. Utility crews worked around the clock to restore electricity. Some areas were able to return to normalcy as soon as two days after the storm.

(For more on this story, search the Internet using the phrases “storm damage in California” and “cleanup following storm”)

Focus Attention

As group members arrive, ask them to describe any personal experiences they may have had in a storm such as a tornado, earthquake, or thunderstorm.

Share the story of the major storm that hit California earlier this month. If possible, share one of the videos about the story, using the key phrases above.

Say: Many people experienced devastation because of the storm but their lives were soon restored as they labored together to clean and repair their communities. In today's lesson, the Israelites returned from exile to a Jerusalem that lay in ruins, but they began work to restore the altar and lay the foundation of the temple. Then they found time to celebrate God's blessings.

Challenge

Share once again about the destruction caused by the storm that hit California. Ask: *Do you think the people blamed God for the destruction of their homes? Do you think they gave credit to God for the restoration? Why or Why not? What should be our response when we face these types of events?*

Challenge group members to remember to thank and praise God even when they are going through trying events. Ask them to consider: *What can we do to always praise God in spite of circumstances? What is the value of things that may be lost when compared to God's love and mercy? How can we trust God's care in every circumstance?*

Lead in prayer, thanking God that He is a shelter in times of storms. Ask God to strengthen them for any difficult event that may come their way.