

News Story Summary

Earlier this month, days of heavy rain submerged large areas of Louisiana, killing at least thirteen people, prompting the rescue of tens of thousands, and damaging or destroying more than 60,000 homes. The Red Cross reported that it was the worst natural disaster in the United States since Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

Whenever a disaster like this occurs, Christian organizations rush to the scene to aid in rescue, provide shelter, provide food, aid in rebuilding, and provide spiritual guidance to victims. The Louisiana Baptist disaster relief website makes it clear why we do this. They state: “Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief is composed of individuals who are believers in Jesus Christ. Volunteers are under the imperative to minister to people and demonstrate God’s love as they share the message of hope in Jesus Christ.”

(<https://louisianabaptists.org/disasterrelief>)

(For more on this story, search the Internet using the phrase “Louisiana flooding.”)

Focus Attention

Share the news story. If you have someone in your group who has participated in disaster relief, have them share very briefly about their experience. Reread the quotation from the Louisiana Baptist website and ask those who have participated if the statement accurately states the reason for their efforts. Focus on the word “hope,” inviting group members to share a definition. Ask: *How does hope get tested in difficult circumstances? What are some things people draw upon for hope? How can one person’s hope be passed on to another person?* Invite the group to look for answers to these types of questions about hope as they study Peter’s words to a group of believers facing persecution.

Challenge

Remind the group of the news story. Point out that those victims, as well as everyone present in the group today, needs to discover hope, be assured of hope, and celebrate hope. Point out that this is only possible if hope is put in the right place (person), Jesus Christ. Encourage everyone to examine their hearts to see if they have placed that hope in Him. If not, urge them to talk with you after the group time to learn how they can do this. If so, urge them to share the wonderful gift of hope in Christ with someone in need.