

Special Lesson to Minister to Children about Disasters

(This is particularly good to teach if there has been a large natural disaster, either locally or in world news, since often even children have heard something about it and may already have questions or be fearful.)

Start with all age groups together, when a "special guest" (such as a teen dressed up as Noah or an animal) enters and tells the story of Noah's ark (Genesis 6-8), from his perspective. Then divide into classes by ages if possible (such as 3-5, 6-7; 8-10) and go to separate rooms with teachers. Each section of teaching lasts about 8-10 minutes, and should be adapted according to the age of the children, allowing for discussion.

1) Discussion (as appropriate for each age group)

Talk briefly about the story of Noah's ark, with emphasis on:

Noah believed in God and was obedient, even though EVERYONE else was wicked
God warned Noah that the wicked were going to be punished
Noah worked hard for 100 years building the ark, and warning the people in vain
The Flood came and killed all the wicked people, but Noah and his family were saved
God protects those who love and obey Him.

2) Pictures (of disasters such as house burned down, car wreck, tornado damage, flooding, tsunami...)

Ask who has ever seen a house destroyed by fire; a car wreck etc.

Let the children share stories about this for a few minutes (maintaining control!)

Ask them how it would feel to lose their house, clothes, toys; maybe they or a family member might get hurt...

Explain that some disasters can be avoided – fire alarms, fire drill in school; keeping car in good shape, not distracting driver...

Show pictures of other disasters such as tornado, volcano, earthquake etc and explain that some disasters can't be avoided. (Let older children name different types of disasters they may have heard about in the news and discuss them briefly). Talk briefly about any recent disaster.

Explain that these things have always happened throughout history around the world, but now, because of TV, video, computers and satellites, we can learn about them and see pictures almost immediately.

This can make us very sad to see what is happening to people in other places and it can also make us scared in case it happens to us!

3) Memory Verse "I will never leave you nor forsake you" Hebrews 13:5 (or other if you prefer)

With younger children, just get them to repeat it several times, see if boys or girls can say it louder, ask different children in the class to say one word at a time....

With older children who can read, play the beanbag toss game. Prepare the scripture written on a blackboard with each word covered up by a paper. Number the papers from 1-12. Let the children line up before a numbered cloth (or numbers inside squares marked on the floor). In turn, each child throws the beanbag to try to make it land inside a numbered square. If this is not accomplished, the child goes to the back of the line and waits to try again. Each time this is accomplished, the corresponding number is removed from the verse, until the whole verse is revealed and can be read aloud by the children. If time permits, get the children to continue to repeat the verse, as you gradually cover up odd words, until they can repeat it although all the verse is again covered.

4) Bible Stories

Talk about how God loves us and can take care of us. Ask if anyone can remember a story in the Bible about that – e.g. Daniel in the lion's den, 3 Hebrew children in the furnace, Joseph's brothers trying to kill him, Paul stoned and left for dead outside the city.....

5) Activity – What we can do to help the tsunami victims

Younger children – say a short prayer then draw pictures to send via a missionary or aid worker to the affected area; if this is not possible, let the pictures be a reminder in church or at home, to continue to pray for the victims.

Older children – read a testimony of a child's experience in the disaster (possibly from news source), discuss briefly, pray, then let each child make a picture or short letter to encourage the victims (as above), or make pictures to help remember to continue to pray. Possibly take up an offering if a special one is being taken up at the church.