

# Misery – and Comfort

Amidst the joys and family togetherness that the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays bring, there is much sadness and loss this year.

Near our corporate headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee, are these tragedies:

- Six children were killed and several more seriously injured in a bus wreck on Talley Road in Chattanooga on Monday, Nov. 21. The 24-year-old driver, Johnthony Walker, was arrested and charged with vehicular homicide. He remains in jail.
- Tennessee's months-long drought and wildfire emergency culminated on Nov. 28 when hurricane-force winds sent unpredictable fires racing through the Gatlinburg area and beyond. The death toll stands at 14, and could rise, and more than 1,700 homes and businesses have been destroyed or badly damaged.
- An EF-3 tornado touched down in neighboring Polk County at 2:28 a.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 30, cutting a path 4.6 miles long and 155 yards wide, killing two people.

In addition to these local incidents, crews have finished searching the burned-out hulk of the "Ghost Ship" warehouse, site of the deadliest fire in Oakland, California, history, where 36 people died.

There is misery, misery, misery for the families and friends of victims of these situations of destruction and distress. The encouraging news, always, is how Americans so quickly and effectively respond with love, kindness and support to the hurting.

Many who find themselves in these difficult circumstances have depended on their faith to sustain them. They praise a loving God who brought them through a literal fire and, in other cases, provided the will and the energy to be able to go forward.

For those who have suffered such loss, the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays will never be the same. Out of these catastrophes come important reminders for all of us:



1. Cherish the times – including the comings and goings of daily activities – with loved ones. Our existence on this earth, however long, is fleeting at best. And we do not know what tomorrow, or even the next hour, brings. Don't fail to express your love, by word or actions, and do it often.

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2. Count every day a gift from God.
3. Depend on the Lord for strength when adversity strikes, and praise Him often for His blessings.
4. Understand that people – family, friends, acquaintances or even strangers – are more important than stuff.

The Bible assures us that God wants to help:

*Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me* (Psalm 50:15 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter