

The Johnstown Flood

On May 31, 1889, a massive rainstorm filled Lake Conemaugh in Pennsylvania until its dam finally gave way. A wall of water 40 feet high traveling at 40 miles per hour rushed down the valley toward the town of Johnstown.

The torrent picked up buildings, animals and human beings and sent them crashing down the spillway. When the lake had emptied itself, debris covered 30 acres, and 2,209 people were dead.

At first, stunned by the loss of property and loved ones, survivors felt hopeless. But later, community leaders gave speeches about how local industry and homes could be rebuilt. This acted as a healing balm, and the survivors energetically got to work. Johnstown was rebuilt and today is a thriving town with a population of about 28,000.

The Bible tells us that when Naomi despaired over the loss of her husband and sons, her daughter-in-law Ruth refused to leave her. Instead, Ruth focused on God, her relationships and the future. God rewarded her faith by providing for them, and making Ruth an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you have suffered the loss of a loved one; most of us have. We struggle with the void that has been created, and seek a healing balm.

The best recourse is to look at the resources, blessings and relationships that remain, and trust God to use them. This can inspire the hope of rebuilding a new life.

--Beecher Hunter