

National Guard, hospital had prepared for crash, pastor says

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SHREVEPORT, La. (ABP) — Both a National Guard unit that responded at the scene of a July 12 church-bus accident and the hospital where most of the victims were taken had recently received training for situations similar to what actually occurred, according to the congregation's pastor.

Greg Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., said in his July 19 sermon a detachment of the [Alabama National Guard's 2101st Transportation Company](#) that stopped on the roadside to rescue victims pinned under the overturned bus was preparing for deployment in January to Afghanistan. The bus was carrying members of the church's youth group and their adult chaperones to a camp in Georgia when it blew a tire and rolled over on an interstate highway near Meridian, Miss. The Guard unit happened to be traveling mere moments behind the accident.

National Guardsmen who lifted a church bus on its side off of crash victims were recently trained in how to upright overturned vehicles, says First Baptist Church of Shreveport's pastor.
(Photo courtesy of toomsubafire.org)

Just weeks earlier, the pastor said, unit members went through specific training for combat medical support that included how to upright an overturned military vehicle.

Hunt called it one of a number of "uncanny things" surrounding the accident that he doubts were purely a coincidence. Another the pastor noted was that he did not learn until visiting Rush Foundation Hospital in

Meridian the Tuesday following the wreck that the hospital recently revised its plan to handle disasters.

"They had gone through training, just completed it and then just had their readiness signed off on," he said. "And guess what the first day of the implementation of that new disaster policy was? Last Sunday [the day of the accident]. Coincidence?"

Hunt said neither the guardsmen nor the hospital staff were planning specifically for such a bus crash, but they were prepared for it when it happened.

Similarly, he said, Christians cannot pre-plan for every possibility in life, but they can prepare themselves for uncertainties with spiritual tools of faith, hope and love.

Hunt said some worshipers might have not been adequately prepared to handle the tragedy. "It may be that last week you found your faith really faltering," he said. "Who can blame you?"

"There are moments when those times come, but God is still present and will step into the circumstances," he said. "And he will teach us, and he will use these experiences to develop more of the skills of our faith."

"This last week we have learned this in spades, that life is fragile," Hunt told the congregation. "It can be here one day and it can be here one moment and the next moment it can be gone."

Even with precautions, Hunt said, accidents happen. "Despite our best efforts, milk spills, tires blow and buses roll over on the highway," he said.

Some people, he said, respond to that fact by withdrawing and trying to control their environment in an effort to eliminate every contingency.

"You and I simply cannot plan every conceivable alternative of what might

happen next," he said. "There's no way to do that. You go into lockdown if you try. You give up your 'yes' to life."

The other extreme, he said, is to give up hope.

"Accidents happen, but we don't have to respond to that by either locking ourselves down behind a fortress wall of vain security or waving the white flag of surrender and throwing ourselves on the mercies of fickle fate," he said.

Rather, he said, "We can throw ourselves into the arms of the all-powerful God, who superintends all of creation and every life circumstance and is bound and determined to bring glory to his name through the triumph of good over anything life can give us, and rest in him."

-Bob Allen is senior writer for Associated Baptist Press.

[Click here](#) for an audio webcast of Pastor Greg Hunt's July 19 sermon, "Of Mice and Men."

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