

IN FOCUS: Drought, depression and our churches

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The Dow isn't the only thing down these days. Now, we are hearing of increasing water shortages as a drought continues to plague much of Texas and other states. Recently, many homes were destroyed and hundreds of acres burned near Bastrop as a result of a wildfire fueled by winds and dry conditions. A report in San Antonio indicated the past 17 months have been the driest ever for that region. I keep waiting to hear about the locusts and frogs.

Where is God in the midst of these difficulties, and what is the role of the church? Who are the folks who have been hurt the most, and how can we help?

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Years ago in Korea, I heard a Baptist leader make a statement that was difficult for me to understand at that time. He said their church had survived persecution and poverty, and now they were facing their greatest challenge—prosperity. The child who receives the most attention from a loving parent typically is the one with the most pressing need. Church history reminds us revival comes during times of crisis, not in times of ease.

Now is the time for Christ followers to reflect God's hope and compassion that flows through the lives of believers to those in need.

Who are most affected by the current economic challenges? Who are the families in your church and community who have lost their jobs or houses? How are the ministries that reach out to the homeless and hungry affected? With increased demand, are the needs for volunteers and resources greater than before? How are folks coping with the stress of the threat of losing

their jobs or even of supervisors who must make decisions affecting the lives of friends and work associates?

What are the special needs of the elderly or single parents? Are medical conditions being neglected by some because of the loss of income? Who will feed the children who receive free lunches at school on weekends and during summer break?

How can our churches and Texas Baptist institutions reach out with the love of Christ?

- *Can we work with local food banks and provide food?*
- *Can we host job fairs or free clinics?*
- *What is our role in passing laws that provide resources for those in need or speaking out against legislation that would exploit the poor?*
- *How will we offer genuine community and worship for people who are desperate for hope?*

God has a promise for his people in 2 Chronicles 7: 12-15. "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people, and my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

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