

Study Guide: The Perfect Messenger

This study guide is designed for Christian families and Bible study groups to explore the narrative and biblical lessons presented in "The Perfect Messenger." It examines themes of grief, God's presence during tragedy, divine encouragement, and how God uses unexpected messengers to restore hope and purpose.

Executive Summary & Core Concepts

On May 20, 2013, a devastating tornado struck Plaza Towers Elementary School in Moore, Oklahoma. While first responders rescued several children, seven young students tragically lost their lives. Deeply affected by the trauma, firefighters and first responders gathered about two weeks later for a memorial and group session organized by chaplains from the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team.

During this gathering, a first-grade survivor insisted on visiting the meeting with her father. She walked into the group, asked the firefighters to remove their sunglasses, and identified the specific firefighter who had saved her life. This encounter served as a profound reminder to the first responders that their efforts were not in vain.

Key Biblical Takeaways

- **God's Presence in Devastation:** When tragedy strikes, people often react by blaming God. However, as illustrated by Elijah's experience in 1 Kings 19, God is often not in the chaotic destruction of the wind, but in the "still small voice" that reassures us of His presence before, during, and after the storm.
- **The Role of the Messenger:** In times of loss, grief, and despair, God can send a "perfect messenger" to help refocus our hearts on positive outcomes, restore lost hope, and instill renewed purpose.

Discussion & Reflection Questions

These questions are structured to guide deep conversation for family devotions or small group discussions.

Understanding the Story

1. What tragic event occurred on May 20, 2013, in Moore, Oklahoma, and how did it impact the first responders personally?

2. Why did the first-grade girl insist on going to the firefighters' memorial meeting, and what did she say to the firefighter who rescued her?
3. What effect did the little girl's presence and words have on the gathered firefighters?

Theological & Personal Reflection

1. The text notes that when tragedy strikes, a common reaction is to blame God for sending destruction. Why do you think people react this way, and how does the narrative challenge this perspective?
2. How does the passage connect the little girl's visit to the account of Elijah in 1 Kings 19? What does the "still small voice" represent when going through a personal tragedy?
3. Have you ever experienced a time when God sent an unexpected "messenger" or a quiet moment of reassurance to help you through a difficult period? How did it change your perspective?
4. What steps can a person or family take when feeling a total loss of hope and purpose after experiencing loss or destruction?

Comprehension Quiz

Section 1: Multiple Choice

1. On what date did the tornado strike Plaza Towers Elementary School in Moore, OK?
 - A) May 20, 2011
 - B) May 20, 2013
 - C) June 9, 2016
 - D) May 20, 2015

2. How many children lost their lives at Plaza Towers Elementary School during the storm?
 - A) Five
 - B) Seven
 - C) Twelve
 - D) Seven first responders
3. Which organization's chaplains organized the group session and memorial for the first responders?
 - A) The Moore Fire Department Relief Fund
 - B) The Oklahoma Emergency Management Team
 - C) The Billy Graham Rapid Response Team
 - D) Red Cross Disaster Services
4. What request did the little girl make to the firefighters before identifying her rescuer?
 - A) "Stand up."
 - B) "Take off your sunglasses."
 - C) "Close your eyes."
 - D) "Please sit down."
5. Which Old Testament passage is cited to illustrate finding God in a "still small voice" rather than in chaotic destruction?
 - A) Psalm 23
 - B) 1 Kings 19
 - C) Isaiah 40
 - D) Job 38

Section 2: True or False

1. [**True / False**] Many of the first responders were themselves parents of young children, which made the tragedy at the school deeply personal and emotional for them.
2. [**True / False**] The little girl's father initially suggested going to the memorial meeting because he thought it was a great idea.
3. [**True / False**] The blog post asserts that God directly sends tornadoes of destruction into our lives to punish us.
4. [**True / False**] According to the text, God can send a perfect messenger to restore hope and instill renewed purpose when you feel lost.

Section 3: Short Answer

1. What central realization did the little girl bring to the firefighters regarding their hard work and trauma?
2. According to the lesson drawn from 1 Kings 19, in what three stages of a trial does God assure us He is present?

Answer Key

1. **B) May 20, 2013** — The tornado struck Plaza Towers Elementary School on this date.
2. **B) Seven** — Seven children were pulled lifeless from the wreckage.
3. **C) The Billy Graham Rapid Response Team** — Their chaplains organized the session about two weeks after the tragedy.
4. **B) "Take off your sunglasses."** — She asked the group to remove their sunglasses so she could look into their faces.
5. **B) 1 Kings 19** — This passage references Elijah learning that God is in the still small voice.
6. **True** — The text states many responders were parents of young children and could not help but be deeply affected.
7. **False** — The girl's father was not sure it was a good idea, but the little girl was insistent.

8. **False** — The text clarifies that while people often blame God, the truth is that God is found in the still small voice bringing reassurance, not the chaotic destruction of the winds.
9. **True** — The text concludes by encouraging readers to ask God to send a messenger to restore hope and purpose.
10. **Answer:** She helped them refocus on the positive outcomes, reminding them that what they had done mattered and that their efforts had not been in vain.
11. **Answer:** God reassures us that He was with us when devastation hit, He is with us now, and He will be with us as we pick up the pieces and move forward.

Glossary

Term	Definition / Context in Source Context
1 Kings 19	The Old Testament scripture reference where the prophet Elijah learned that God is not in the chaotic destruction of the wind, but in a "still small voice."
Billy Graham Rapid Response Team	A ministry whose chaplains organized a group session and memorial for the first responders approximately two weeks after the Moore, Oklahoma tornado.
First Responders	The firefighters, rescuers, and emergency personnel who pulled survivors and victims from the wreckage of the elementary school.
Moore, Oklahoma	The city where a destructive tornado struck Plaza Towers Elementary School on May 20, 2013.
Perfect Messenger	An individual sent by God at a specific time and place—such as the young first-grade survivor—to restore hope, remind people that their labor is not in vain, and instill renewed purpose.
Plaza Towers Elementary School	The school struck by the May 20, 2013 tornado, resulting in the rescue of several children and the loss of seven young lives.

Still Small Voice	The quiet, reassuring presence of God that provides comfort and direction during or after chaotic and devastating circumstances.
--------------------------	--