

THE PERFECT MESSENGER

January 9, 2016

After the tornado in Moore, OK, ripped through Plaza Towers Elementary School on May 20, 2013, first responders rescued several children and returned them to the safety of their parents. But they also faced the gut-wrenching task of pulling the lifeless bodies of seven children out of the wreckage of the school. Many of these first responders were themselves parents of young children and could not help but be deeply affected by the experience.

About two weeks after the tragedy, chaplains from the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team organized a group session and memorial, just for the firefighters and other first responders. Many of them came, some of them with very mixed emotions.

Meanwhile, in another part of the city, a father was taking his little girl to the park for some much-needed play time. She was a first grader at the Plaza Towers school that was hit by the tornado. Together they ran up and down in the park and enjoyed time together on the playground.

On their way back home, the little girl told her Daddy she wanted to go to see the firefighters at the memorial meeting. Daddy wasn't sure that was such a good idea, but his little girl seemed insistent, so they drove over to where the first responders were gathered.

When the little girl got out of the car, she skipped playfully into the middle of the firefighters' meeting and made her way to the very front. Then she turned around and began looking intently into the faces of the firefighters with her bright, clear eyes. Soon she stopped, looking into the face of one particular firefighter.

"Take off your sunglasses." she said.

In response, the whole group of firefighters, who had been following the little girl's every movement, removed their sunglasses. Every eye was filled with tears.

"You're him!" the little first grader exclaimed to firefighter in front of her. "You're the one who saved me!"

For every firefighter gathered that day, in the midst of so much destruction, loss and grief, God sent the perfect messenger to help them refocus on the positive outcomes, and

to remind them that what they had done mattered. Their efforts had not been in vain. The reason for them doing what they did was standing right in front of them.

So often, when tragedy strikes, our first reaction is to blame God, thinking that He sent the tornado of destruction into our lives. The truth, as Elijah learned in 1 Kings 19, is that we often won't find God in the chaotic destruction of the winds, but in the still small voice that comes along, sometimes days later, to let us know that He was with us when the devastation hit, He's with us now, and He will be with us as we pick up the pieces and move forward.

At a time and place in your life when you seem to lose all hope and purpose, God can send the perfect messenger to restore hope and instill renewed purpose in your life. Ask Him.