

# Be Thou Prepared..., Thou and all Thy Company...and be Thou a Guard

May 20, 2015, By Kelly Gneiting

(Taken largely from “When Disaster Strikes“, a Jan 1982 article by Marvin K. Gardner)

*“And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying... Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them.” –Ezekiel 38:1,7*



5 June 1976. Marilyn Gee of Sugar City, Idaho, was unloading grocery sacks when a neighbor ran into her kitchen with the news that the Teton Dam had burst. “Get your kids and get out. There’s no time to take anything with you!”

Marilyn screamed at the kids to get in the car. “I figured we would be gone three or four hours so I grabbed some oranges and bananas, a box of graham crackers, some diapers for Shawn,

and my purse. We pulled out of the driveway, not dreaming we would never see our home again in one piece.”

Their home was washed away in the flood’s fury. They found it days later—a pile of debris smashed into some trees.

13 May 1980. Darrell Thomas was watching the sky outside his home in Kalamazoo, Michigan, for signs of a predicted tornado. It began to sprinkle and the sirens started wailing. Suddenly he heard a strange sound, his ears popped, and the house began to vibrate.

The lights flickered as the family huddled together under a heavy oak desk in the basement. “We heard two thuds,” says his wife, Bev, “and then everything seemed lighter. My husband raced up the steps. When he came back, he announced that our attached garage was gone. It took less than three minutes to level the neighborhood.”

9 February 1971. Walter Sorensen, a Los Angeles fireman, was on duty. The rumble of the earthquake that hit at 6:00 A.M. woke up his wife, Carol, and their three children before the shaking began. “The children were screaming, but I couldn’t hear them,” Carol remembers. “I tried to get out of bed but was thrown back. When I finally made it to the door, I couldn’t get through because the dresser had been thrown against it. I pushed it away, but it rolled back and smashed against the door again. This went on for several seconds (it seemed much longer), and I finally got the door open. I stumbled over fallen debris into my daughter’s room. Then we went into the boys’ room and rejoiced together that no one was hurt.”

Probably no one ever feels completely ready for disasters. They usually hit suddenly, and then it’s too late to prepare.

But preparedness helps them feel more secure and cope more successfully with the trauma.

### **Coping Temporally**

Temporal preparedness starts with a year’s supply of food, clothing, and, where possible, fuel. Basic foods and nonfoods are the first priority—grains, dry milk, sugar or honey, salt, oil, dried legumes, garden seeds, water, bedding, clothing, first-aid and cleaning supplies, and fuel. Then the supply should be expanded to round out the diet and ensure a proper nutritional balance—including foods the family normally eats and likes. Items such as axes, stoves, lanterns, shovels, and battery-powered radios are also important.

Paul and Jean Kreiner of Sylmar, California, were glad they had a year’s supply when the earthquake hit. While others were standing in line for two or three hours every day to buy food and necessities, “I didn’t go to a store for a month,” Jean says.

Their biggest problem was water shortage—all their water containers broke in the earthquake. (They’ve since discovered that cans and bottles packed in cardboard boxes with cardboard dividers suffer little damage if not stacked too high.) “I was really glad for all the plastic utensils and paper cups and plates we had on hand because most of our dishes were broken and we didn’t want to waste water washing the ones that were left.”

The Kreiners learned other storage tips from the earthquake: (1) Store supplies in various locations in the house so if one part is damaged you still have something left. (2) Have some food available that doesn’t have to be cooked, and a variety of other foods—dehydrated, frozen, and canned. (3) Keep on hand a supply of medicines your family uses regularly, and some consecrated oil. If you wear glasses, have a spare pair, well-packed to prevent breakage.

Many other families have been grateful they had some supplies on hand. Alva L. Duvall of Moses Lake, Washington, says that for three days after Mount St. Helens erupted

there wasn't much traffic in or out of the city and grocery stores ran low. "As far as I could determine," he says, "our community didn't go without food. But nearly everyone found themselves short of one thing or another. It gave us an insight into just what we'd need if something like this went on for a long period of time."

*"I found that the mental security of having a year's food and fuel supply was even more important than the physical security," says Ruth V. Tingey of Lincoln, Massachusetts. "If our year's supply had been destroyed, then, having been prepared and having helped others to have their supply of food, I would have felt free to ask for their support, and they would have given it without bitterness."*

By following the counsel of Ezekiel 38:1,7 many, unable to use their own storage, may still receive the benefits of a year's supply—that of friends and family who come to their rescue.

### **Coping Emotionally**

When the headlined tragedy is over, the real struggle begins. Uncertainty about bills and repairs and safety can cause emotional problems, as can the stress of cleanup. People waiting in lines for food and supplies can become irritable and angry.

Fortunately, however, many families and neighborhoods find that disasters bring them closer together instead of pulling them apart. They find great comfort and strength from being together and working out the problems. And little by little, they learn how to cope emotionally with the reality of their circumstances.

They check first to see that everyone is safe. "We counted our blessings when we counted our families and found that no one had received any major injuries," says Edwin Sundquist of Sylmar, California. "Not once did we cry over the broken dishes, the antiques, the damaged property, the homes that needed much repair, or the many inconveniences caused by having no electricity, water, telephones, or gas."

Of course some aren't lucky enough to find everyone all right. At such times it's important to support them with love and encouragement and to allow them a chance to grieve.

Some families shift priorities as a result of disaster. "We had moved into our home just a year before the earthquake," says Jean Kreiner, "and had spent a lot of time and money making our dream home as nice as we could. But after losing so much in the earthquake, we've changed our values. Our home is comfortable, but we've chosen to spend our money on other things.... I still can't bear to spend a large amount of money on anything breakable. The family and eternal values are the only things that really matter."

Careful attention should be given to comforting little children who have been frightened. The attitude of parents greatly affects the children. As parents gain strength and confidence through prayer, their children also grow. "I have more confidence in myself to handle an emergency because of our experience," says Mrs. Kreiner. "And the two older children have said at times of personal difficulty, 'Well, if I lived through that earthquake, I guess I can handle this too!'"

Playing "what-if" games (what would you do if there were no water, what would you do if you heard our fire alarm go off in the middle of the night, etc.) can help the whole family learn from their experience and prepare for future disasters. And teaching family members to let each other know where they are at all times can increase feelings of security.

During times of disaster, the extended family often draws near, sometimes traveling many miles to be with and help loved ones—or taking them into their homes for food and comfort. Neighbors also seem more willing than usual to help each other. Together they clean up debris, dig mud out of homes, rebuild, clear volcanic ash off each other's driveways and roofs, and share meat and frozen goods.

*"They tended the children while we cleaned up after the tornado," says Beckie Johnson of Cheyenne, Wyoming. "They brought in food until the electricity was back, and helped us rebuild the house and fence."*

And true patriots typically don't limit their help. "When they came with gas saws to help us out of our mess," Bev Thomas recalls, "they just moved right on down our street helping everybody else. Later our neighbors asked if we knew who those men were that cut the trees from their roofs and garages and then moved on."

After the earthquake in San Fernando Valley, a church leader, Mr. Edwin P. Sundquist, immediately went to the homes of his assistants and worked out a plan to check on everybody in their congregation. "Since the phone system had been destroyed," he says, "this meant a personal visit to each home. Many of the roads were impassable, and it was difficult. But by the end of the second day, every member had been accounted for. Their needs were assessed, and we organized our resources to give aid."

Besides offering physical help, church and community members give each other moral and emotional support. "Even though Henry Walker had a lot of damage to his home," says Carol Starr of Sylmar, "he and his wife had people over to visit and have refreshments. It really helped to socialize with others who had the same problems, as frightened as we were."

After the Teton flood, Marilyn Gee's church community met every evening for instructions and advice. "Sometimes the spirit of being together and being directed brought tears to my eyes. People would stand at the doors, look in at our meetings, and

listen to us sing. Many were amazed at how the flood victims accepted things and could smile and joke in spite of the mess. It was that unity that kept everybody going.”

### **Speaking of Preparedness...**

In 1979 a personal and family preparedness survey was sent to 600 members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 60 U.S. wards. 78% of the people responded, most of them active members of the Church. Here are some of the findings (in 1981):

The following chart compares recommended amounts of basic supplies to what the average member has stored:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Recommended Per Person</b>	<b>Average Stored Per Person</b>
<i>Grains</i>	360 lbs.	147 lbs.
<i>Powdered milk</i>	75 lbs.	16 lbs.
<i>Honey/sugar</i>	60 lbs.	29 lbs.
<i>Salt</i>	5 lbs.	4 lbs.
<i>Water, 14+ days</i>	14 gallons	23 gallons

“The inventories of food storage were analyzed using a computer program ... to determine their nutritional content. The results of the analysis showed that members are not storing a full year’s supply of most needed nutrients. Furthermore, ... most family storage programs provide a very imbalanced supply of needed nutrients. ...

“If a family’s production and income were cut off by emergency circumstances such as a lost job, illness, natural disaster, etc., the average family completing the survey would be able to live for the following number of weeks on each of the commodities listed.”

<b>Storage Item</b>	<b>Average Supply Would Last</b>
<i>Food</i>	26 weeks
<i>Fuel</i>	5 weeks
<i>Clothes</i>	52 weeks
<i>Water</i>	2 weeks
<i>First-Aid Supply</i>	8 weeks