Together we’re stronger than the storms

Find out how Christian Aid is helping people overcome disasters.
Ask pupils to close their eyes and think of a time when they felt weak, and a time when they felt strong. Explain that we’ve all had times when we felt weak and when we felt strong. If you like, you could tell them about some appropriate examples from your own life.

(Show slide 2) The charity Christian Aid is always looking for ways to make people feel stronger. Its job is to help change the lives of poor people around the world.

Ask pupils to think about what it means to be very poor. Not having enough food or money for basic things, for example. Christian Aid works hard to help people in this situation. But being really poor is also about things on the inside, things that we can’t see. Often those things have to do with how strong we feel. Christian Aid works to help people feel stronger inside. That might mean helping people to improve their health, or to get an education so they can read and write. And it also means making sure they are listened to properly by people in power.

(Show slide 3) This assembly is going to look at the story of some people who Christian Aid has worked with. These people live on an island in the Caribbean. They’re strong people, but they’ve been dealing with some powerful forces that have sapped their strength and made their lives really difficult. We’re going to find out about what they’re doing to help themselves feel strong again.

(Show slide 1) Start by asking the pupils which they think is stronger:

- Rock or ice
- Fire or water
- A mosquito or a person.

Allow a little time for pupils to think about and debate each one.

Explain that there’s no easy answer, because how strong something is depends on the situation and how its strength is used. For example:

- Most rocks are harder than ice and rocks don’t melt. But glaciers made of ice can carve huge holes in rock over time.
- Water can put out fire. But this depends on how strong the fire is.
- You or I could easily squash a mosquito. But in some countries mosquitoes carry a dangerous illness called malaria, which can kill a person.

Demonstrate this point by inviting a pupil up to play ‘rock, paper, scissors’ with you.

Or hold up a piece of paper and balance a heavy weight on it (a small plastic water bottle, for example). If you hold the paper out flat at its corners and balance the bottle on it, the paper will crumple around the bottle. But if you roll up the paper tightly in a column and place the bottle on top, it will balance. The paper hasn’t changed, but its strength has because it’s being used in a different way.

Download your assembly slideshow and film from caid.org/caw-schools
People living in Haiti have faced many problems. Eight years ago, there was a terrible earthquake which killed many people and destroyed thousands of homes.

Ask pupils if they know what an earthquake is. An earthquake happens when the huge plates that make up the surface of the Earth rub together, causing shock waves that make the ground shake. This earthquake was particularly destructive because many people living in Haiti are very poor, so their homes were not strong and many houses collapsed when the earthquake struck.

The island is often battered by bad hurricanes as well. Ask pupils if they know what a hurricane is. It’s a particularly strong storm, with incredibly high winds and heavy rain. If you live in a place where there are lots of hurricanes, it’s very important to have a good strong house to protect you from the howling wind and rains.

But that’s all very well to say! Most buildings in our country are built of bricks and very strong. But in many other countries around the world, people who are poor can’t use bricks to build their houses because they are too expensive. So they use all sorts of cheaper materials, such as mud, sticks, bamboo or plastic. But these materials are quite weak and that’s a problem if you live in a country like Haiti, where earthquakes and hurricanes happen.

Optional activity: Ask three pupils to come up to the front to build a little house. Give each of them a different building material: a pile of drinking straws, a pile of thin sticks, a pile of small plastic building bricks.

Tell the story of the Three Little Pigs. Explain that in this case, the big bad wolf represents a hurricane. The first little pig had to build his house out of straw, but the big bad wolf huffed and he puffed and he blew this house down. (You could blow down the straw house at this point.) The third little pig built his house out of bricks, and this house was stronger than all the wolf’s huffing and puffing and it didn’t fall down. (Show that it is very hard to knock down this house.)

You could repeat this activity to demonstrate an earthquake, with the wolf rattling and shaking to knock the houses down.

This story tells us that you need to build your house out of strong materials: you can see for yourselves the difference it makes! Of course, some people in Haiti have no choice because they can’t afford bricks, unlike the three little pigs. And they’re not threatened by big bad wolves, but by hurricanes and earthquakes that huff and puff or rattle and shake to knock their houses down for real.

Jephthe lives in Haiti. He’s eight now, but the devastating earthquake struck on his second birthday. His home was destroyed. Despite that terrible experience, Jephthe has grown up strong and full of life – he loves karate and playing football. His family now live in a house that was built by Christian Aid. It’s a good strong house, where Jephthe feels secure and where he loves to keep his room tidy and practice his karate moves!

Zaza also lives in Haiti. When a hurricane hit Haiti two years ago, Zaza was at home in her bed. Knowing their house wasn’t strong, Zaza and her family ran through the wind and the rain to a nearby shelter. The wind was so strong that it blew over many of the trees on Zaza’s part of the island - her family were soaked to the skin by the lashing rain and she only just escaped being crushed by a falling coconut tree. Once they arrived at the shelter, they were safe from the storm, but when they got back home, they found that the wind had blown the roof off their house.
talks about strong foundations, he’s not really
talking about house-building! He’s talking
about basing your life on things that matter,
and having faith in God. When we have inner
strength (and for some of us, faith), we’re
better at dealing with the difficult things that
life throws at us.

All of us will be faced with difficult things
sometimes, and with forces that feel much
more powerful than us. But remember, we’ve
all got an inner strength – and we can also
draw on other people, and if we choose to, on
God – to help us.

Christian Aid is a charity that’s inspired by
its belief in God to help people who are poor,
just as Jesus taught. Every year in May,
thousands of Christian Aid’s supporters
celebrate Christian Aid Week. They do all sorts
of things to raise money, in churches, schools
and community groups across the UK and
Ireland. Many of them also collect money by
visiting people’s houses. Christian Aid uses
the money raised during Christian Aid Week to
help to tackle poverty across the world – and
to do things like build strong new houses for
people in Haiti.

(Show slide 11) Christian Aid knows that
people who are living in extreme poverty are
no different from the rest of us, they are just
facing much tougher situations. That’s why
it works with poor people around the world
to help them change their lives. Christian Aid
listens to what they have to say about the
things they need to get stronger and be able
to stand up for themselves. In Haiti, people
said that they need stronger houses that
can withstand hurricanes and earthquakes.
They also said they’re worried that the
pollution caused by people in richer countries
is increasing climate change, which makes
hurricanes worse. So Christian Aid is helping
to build stronger houses in Haiti and asking
people in rich countries to use greener
energy to reduce pollution and help tackle
climate change.

Together, we can fight poverty.
Together, we can tackle climate change.
Together, we’re stronger than the storms.
**Reflection**

Haitian people have an expression ‘Mwen santi mwen an vi. Mwen santi mwen egziste’. It means ‘I feel like I am alive. I feel like I am part of existence’ – not just breathing and surviving, but feeling truly alive and part of the Earth.

It is important to remember that we are all part of a bigger picture, all part of this wonderful world we share together. This is a beautiful feeling, and it reminds us that we need to care for our planet, for ourselves and for each other.

**Prayer**

Dear God,

Thank you for all the people who help us when we feel weak.

The doctors and nurses who help us feel better when we are sick or hurt and the strong houses that keep us safe in bad weather.

We pray that you will comfort and protect people who do not feel safe or strong because of the effects of poverty.

Please help us to use our strengths to make the world a fairer place for everyone.

Amen.