

A Hurricane For You

by Betty Steele Everett



The name “hurricane” itself comes from the name of a Central American idol that supposedly caused storms. The god was “Hurakan.”

Christians and scientists know that no idol causes these storms. They are the result of God’s laws at work in nature.

Starting Up

When the hot sun shines down on the ocean near the equator, it makes some of the water evaporate. This warm, moist air then rises until it is cooled by the atmosphere. That turns it into tiny drops that form clouds.

If the cloud gets heavy, the water can fall as rain. If the cloud keeps on growing, however, it can turn into a thunderstorm. With even more growing, it can become a “tropical disturbance.”

When a tropical disturbance occurs, the National Hurricane Center in Miami, Florida, begins to track and watch it.

Getting Worse

Tropical disturbances usually come between June and November, mostly in July, August, and September. The National Hurricane Center watches for them all year, though.

If a disturbance does not break up but keeps getting bigger, winds can make clouds start to spin in a larger circle. It is then called a “tropical depression.”

As the depression moves over water, it picks up more vapor and winds speed up. It is now a “tropical storm.” This means its winds are clocked at 39 miles per hour (mph) or more. And now it gets its own name.

To the Max

If wind speeds get up to 75 mph, the storm is officially a “hurricane” which can cover thousands of miles. About one-half of all tropical storms turn into hurricanes.

Many storms die at sea, causing no damage. The rest weaken when they hit land because there is no more water to grow on. But hitting land usually means damage and possible loss of life.

With today’s early warning systems, deaths from hurricanes are not as high as they once were.

The Big Ones

Atlantic hurricanes are most apt to hit the United States. Typhoons, which are Pacific hurricanes, usually hit Asia, especially the Phillipines. Filipinos call them “bagios.”

Hurricanes are more dangerous than tornadoes. They cover more area and last much longer. Hurricanes can last for days; tornadoes sometimes only for a few minutes.

Hurricanes have been named for hundreds of years. Giving each storm a short name means less confusion if more than one occurs at the same time.

A name is also a lot easier to remember than the location of latitude and longitude—especially for people like you and me who are not expert map readers.

Opening the Male

During World War II, meteorologists began using female names for hurricanes. This led to the riddle: “Why are hurricanes always named for women?” The answer?

“Because they are HER-i-canes.”

The joke got lots of laughs. But naming deadly storms only for them was not popular with women. In 1978, men's names became part of the system too.

Names are given to hurricanes alphabetically by the World Meteorological Organization. The first hurricane of the year gets a name beginning with "A," and so on.

Male and female names are alternated in the list of 21 available for each year. There are no names for the letters Q, U, X, Y, and Z. Names come from countries other than the United States.

Those Names

How are names chosen? From lists of names in the library.

If a storm is especially hard or damaging, like Andrew, Donna, and Camille, that name will be "retired" and replaced with a new name starting with the same letter.

Great in Power

There are five categories of hurricanes, based on their wind speed. Category "one" is 75-95 mph; "two" is 96-110 mph; "three" is 111-130 mph; "four" is 131-155 mph; and "five" is speeds above 155 mph.

Category five hurricanes are rare, but a category four, like Andrew in 1992, can do major damage. Andrew destroyed more than 60,000 homes, killed 30 people, and did \$30 billion in damage.

There are so many things we don't know about how God uses these storms in his plan, especially when they are so destructive. But we can pray

for the people and places in their path, wherever and whenever they happen.

God is always in control. And he uses all things for his good and eternal purposes.

"The Lord is slow to anger and great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet" (Nahum 1:3).

"It is the Lord who makes the storm clouds" (Zechariah 10:1).

Here's a peek ahead at the official hurricane names for the next few seasons.

2005	2006	2007	2008
Arlene	Alberto	Andrea	Arthur
Bret	Beryl	Barry	Bertha
Cindy	Chris	Chantal	Cristobal
Dennis	Debby	Dean	Dolly
Emily	Ernesto	Erin	Edouard
Franklin	Florence	Felix	Fay
Gert	Gordon	Gabrielle	Gustav
Harvey	Helene	Humberto	Hanna
Irene	Isaac	Ingrid	Ike
Jose	Joyce	Jerry	Josephine
Katrina	Kirk	Karen	Kyle
Lee	Leslie	Lorenzo	Laura
Maria	Michael	Melissa	Marco
Nate	Nadine	Noel	Nana
Ophelia	Oscar	Olga	Omar
Philippe	Patty	Pablo	Paloma
Rita	Rafael	Rebekah	Rene
Stan	Sandy	Sebastien	Sally
Tammy	Tony	Tanya	Teddy
Vince	Valerie	Van	Vicky
Wilma	William	Wendy	Wilfred