**Samaritan’s Purse Mission Trip…a Single Thing! By Kris Swiatocho**

Recently I traveled to southern Florida to help with the post-Hurricane Ian relief. I have helped with disasters in the past, but it was usually a year or more later. I had not experienced the trauma a disaster had had on home and business owners. God decided that I needed to. I shared the news with friends, asking for financial support to make the trip. My friend Renee asked if she could go with me. We were both excited about the journey.

I checked back with the Samaritan’s Purse’s website to learn more about what I needed to bring and what to expect. I was also told I would go through orientation upon arrival. Samaritan’s Purse was headquartered at a church called Citygates in Ft. Myers during the relief effort. I can still remember the incredible excitement of being there. We both felt led to help in whatever way was best.

So after orientation, we were given the address of the home we would be mudding out. Mudding out is tearing everything from a home down to the wood frame, leaving the outside walls and what is left above the flood line. When we arrived, the team leader told us that most of the home’s contents were on the street, but we needed to help finish and tear down the walls. I was assigned to the dining room while Renee was in a bedroom. It was hard, hot, and dirty, but so rewarding to know you were helping someone.

That afternoon, the team gathered to meet the elderly homeowners. While waiting, I discovered that almost every person on the team was a single adult. I was blown away. It then hit me that if singles were not helping, not only would this take way more time, but I am not sure Samaritan’s Purse could do all they were doing. I also found out that our team leader and his boss were single. Wow! Singles really can make a difference.

After meeting the homeowners, Tim and Dee, Renee and I fell in love with them. They were so thankful beyond words. We would end up helping them beyond the home by taking them on errands and buying some much-needed items. They lost 99% of everything in the storm. They were living at a hotel provided by FEMA. But like most people in Ft. Myers, there was no flood insurance. Tim and Dee weren’t sure of their next step.

A single mom owned our next home project. We found out that she had accepted Christ that week through the Sarmatians Purse chaplains. We were able to present her with a Bible with all of our signatures. On our last day, we spent helping another single lady who also lost everything too. She had a small travel trailer connected to a cinder block home. She didn’t have the funds to rebuild. While working alongside us, there were times she had to stop and sit in her neighbor's car. She said it was overwhelming to lose so much but also overwhelming to have so much help.

Renee and I met so many amazing people. From those, we served alongside those we helped. We laughed and cried many times, thanking God for our own homes. Each person there knew we could all be in the same place. A trip like this can change your life. You begin to see what is essential and most important: people (and getting them to Jesus).

So what is God telling you right now? What a great adventure awaits you in southern Florida. Take your family, friends, and church community, and just go. It will change your life.

Hebrews 13:16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.