In The Wake Of Katrina: Service During Times Of Distress

Talk to people who were there—those who witnessed the power of Hurricane Katrina—and you hear one word over and over: devastation.

Homes ripped apart leaving only a cement foundation. Shards of splintered wood, twisted metal, and shattered sheet rock splayed across fields. Massive trees torn from their roots, tipping over and sheering through homes.

The images of this devastation motivated a nation to reach out and help. Tens of thousands of members of the Church also rose to the occasion and helped in a hundred different ways.

Mike Kagle, 1st counselor in the Shreveport 1st Ward was one of those. Mike, the owner of Martin Lake, an East Texas construction company, offered to pack up his heavy equipment and travel to Mississippi as part of a coordinated Church effort to relieve suffering in the hardest hit areas. When Mike's employees heard he was going, several of them volunteered to accompany him.

"We worked all day Friday, loaded up at six and arrived at Picayune at 3:30 in the morning," Rusty Evans, one of Mike's employees says "We woke up at six and worked all day until dark. Then we showered and went to bed and got up the next morning and did the whole thing over again."

Kenneth Worsham, a driver for Martin Lake said, "It was bad. Those people couldn't get into their homes. It was a heart-touching experience. You see some of these people and ask if they needed help and they'd cringe a bit and the first thing out of their mouth was 'How much would it cost?' And we told them, 'we're here to help you out.' And tears was on then. It was a heart jerker is what it was."

Those who traveled to help tell stories about people in need—a man with multiple sclerosis who broke down and wept when he learned that members of the Church would help him asking nothing in return.

The widow who had lost her husband earlier that month and who didn't have insurance or the means to clean up the devastation around her home. "She sat down on the floor in front of us and went to tears," Rusty says, "She told us we were her angels who showed up to do the work for free. She had six of us sitting there crying before we even got started."

For his part, Brother Kagle believes that those who benefited the most were those who provided service. "This was a face-to-face look at what the scriptures teach us. If you want to lighten your burdens you need to pick up those of those around you. There's no doubt that the real growth that came from that service came to us."

In the midst of disaster—in the midst of incalculable grief and loss—came a shining light of service. In the wake of sorrow, hope. From out of the despair of devastation, a new spirit of dedication and devotion.

A humble truck driver speaks for many who gave of themselves to help others. "I'll never forget this experience," Kenneth says. "I wouldn't take it back for anything in the wor

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