

PURE RELIGION

Strong Arms, Stronger Hearts

In 2005, hurricanes ravaged the Gulf Coast, causing billions of dollars of damage and displacing over a million people.

In the aftermath of the disaster, the Church hastened to assist. Hundreds of thousands of hygiene kits, school kits, and other items were assembled and distributed. Thousands of members from all over the United States traveled to affected areas, providing more than 300,000 hours of service clearing trees, cleaning debris, and leaving in their wake profound feelings of gratitude and friendship.

During the months that followed, letters poured in, expressing thankfulness for a little human kindness in a time of distress. What follows are a few excerpts from those letters.

“We spent months living in cars, boxes, the woods. Anywhere close to our homes. There was no way to be clean. Family members were getting sick. Babies were diaperless, no food, no milk. What money our family had was used just to send for these things. Now the money has run out.... The items you sent have been like a light from God on a very black day. I thank God for you and your kindness. ... Your sweet gesture has let me know I will never be ignored by God.”

“Thank you so much for the wonderful gifts. ... How did you know I love Ivory soap? ... Please thank the people who donated these gifts as they are much

appreciated. Also please tell the charity workers who pack them so neat with loving hands that they are doing God’s work.”

“It fills us with joy to know that someone cares. We are very thankful. Since not many stores are open, your supplies helped. A lot of people are having a hard time, but people like you are helping us get through this. ... Thanks for caring, but most of all sharing.”



“They gave us all one black pail and bleach to clean up our property. I would have never thought of that, but God gave it to your organization. So again, thank you for everything you gave us. ... Most of all thank you for opening up your hearts to us.”

“Our roof was tarped, a tree cut down and a metal roof shed was taken down by you all. The men we talked to were from all over—Georgia, Utah, etc., but the love they gave our family was one in God’s family and you could see it and feel it.”

“They came. The famous emissaries, the awesome Twelve. Men of good will. ... The men from Little Rock, Arkansas came, brought saws, pulleys, strong arms, stronger hearts. They cut and they pulled and they pushed and they cleaned. They did this for me. They did not know me. I will never forget them, never will I forget this immense act of kindness and generosity.”

"I don't understand why this disaster destroyed so many things that I cherish. ... But I do know that there is a God who sits up high and looks down low and has moved you all to come here to bless us. ... Things are no longer important to me. Giving, compassion, love is what you've shown me, and this is what I want to do with the rest of my life. Thanks for showing me my true purpose in life. May God continue to enrich you that you may enrich others!"

"I want to thank everyone from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. After all we have experienced, we have come to realize that family and faith is all that is truly important. Thank you for all you have done for the people of Louisiana and around the world."

"I am a single mother whose husband died thirteen years ago. I have been struggling to raise my only son and now Katrina took everything we owned but it has taught us there are still many wonderful giving people in the world."

"Thank you so much for your love and concern. I received a package of canned goods. I will have some of the soup for lunch today. The 'Son' is still shining."

"To My Angels, Thank you so much for the handmade book bag and supplies. ... We lost our home and everything in it ... a life-changing event to say the least. ... Thank you for your help and hope. All of America has opened their hearts and homes to us in our time of need. It will not be taken lightly or soon forgotten."

"The volunteers from the Mormon Church came in when these people were literally down at their lowest point. I can't tell you how much it meant to our

community to have the Mormon Church be here."

"I cannot thank you enough. We watched them and they don't care about getting the glory for anything, they just want to make sure that people are taken care of and if someone needs food, they're going to get food, if somebody's got a tree on their house they're going to get it removed."

"I had been harassed by opportunistic men charging astronomical prices. They became aggressive when I refused their cold, uncompassionate prices. So, when this kind gentleman appeared, I distinctly remember thinking, 'Oh, no, not another aggressor. Don't they know we are hurting? That we have all been traumatized?' ...

"I did not even want to turn and face the gentleman in the hard hat. He asked me if they could clear my driveway and, in reply, I sighed, 'How much?' he replied, 'Free. No charge. We are doing this as a ministry. We just came down to help you out.'

"I was speechless! Had God answered my prayers so quickly? I immediately knew that he had, that God sent these men to me in my time of greatest personal need. Tears immediately began to roll down my cheeks as men in hard hats and boots with chainsaws of all shapes and sizes appeared out of the debris. My husband was working out of the country and I, a 49-year old woman ... had no one to help me. I noticed as I watched these working warriors my stress level went from 1000 to 0!"

"It was absolutely, unequivocally, one of the most supreme sacrifices that has ever happened to me personally. I am a nurse. I am used to giving, not receiving. It was a picture to me of what Christ did for me on the cross. There are just no words in the English language to convey my gratitude."