

PURE RELIGION

Why Do You Do This?

The following letter was received from Sterling Ashley Ingram of the Ridgeland Ward, Ridgeland, South Carolina:

As a missionary some 17 years ago, I sincerely enjoyed saying, “Hello, we are representatives of the Savior, Jesus Christ, and we would like to share a message with you; may we come in?” Recently, I experienced a similar mission. An assistant to our ward’s high priest group leader called Thursday night and asked if I could go to Florida for the weekend to help the hurricane victims.

The first gentleman we helped asked, “What agency are you guys with?”

We replied, “We are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are volunteers.”

He then said, “So you are getting paid or something for this effort?” We explained again that we were volunteers. A bit perplexed, he asked, “Why do you do this?”

I didn’t have a response. We just shook hands and moved to the next house. We worked all day Saturday and most of Sunday. Many homes were condemned by the authorities, and we covered them with tarps to protect their contents. Some homes, along with all contents, were completely destroyed. Many homes had roof damage, and that was our main focus.

A lone man was on a roof, and we approached and offered our assistance. He had traveled from Vermont with his wife to help his 86-year-old mother. Her roof was laying in her front yard. We attached the roof to my truck

with a chain and an elderly man driving a golf cart led the way as we dragged the shattered roof to a trash pile the size of a basketball gym. We then spent an hour or so putting three large tarps over the house. We repeated this effort from house to house.



The highlight of the trip was the early-morning sacrament meeting. We missed all of general conference except for the priesthood session, so the sacrament meeting was a real treat. I suppose with over 700 of us in attendance, it was one of the largest sacrament meetings ever held in the South. It was short, and I don’t remember much of what was said, but I will never forget the way I felt. It was tough for most of the men to keep from tearing up.

At 2:30 Sunday afternoon, we departed for our seven-hour ride home to South Carolina. I thought back on the question, “Why do you do this?” I was driving, and I had plenty of time to reflect.

Why? I do it to look upon my bishop and his 15-year-old son exhausted from their labors, to shake the feeble elderly hands of those who are no longer able to work, to look into the eyes of those in despair and see fear and aggravation converted to gratitude, to look through the eye of my camera and see volunteers with hearts full and smiles wide. Above all, I do it to have the privilege of saying, “Hello, we are from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are volunteers; may we help?”