

## We're Back Home!

Brian and I made it home Sunday evening. It was quite a trip, to say the least! I'll never say that one was better than the other, so don't ask!

Prior to deploying, we contacted several different governments, agencies and churches in all of the areas that were affected by the flooding. We felt led to go to Cobb County and worked with the Cobb County Disaster Relief Agency. We were blessed to stay at the 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Church of Powder Springs. What an awesome facility, it was like being at a retreat! There was another ministry that was staying at the church the first part of our deployment and they fed us, which was a huge blessing.

We were joined by Jason from CC Mechanicsville, VA the first week and then Patrick who is "unaffiliated" joined us for a few days. The last week we were blessed to have 8 guys from the Bowery Mission in NYC join us, Efrain, James, Jon, Spencer, Matt, Marlin, Scott and Fernando, in no particular order! We also had Bill and Donna from ACTS join in the fun the last week. Everyone worked really hard and we got a lot of work completed. We had a few locals join us on several different days, including Rescue Atlanta, a mission house for men in Atlanta. We also had Convoy of Hope from Missouri join us on one home.

We were blessed to work on 7 homes during our stay and could've completed more but we needed to head home. We were able to spend lots of time ministering to the homeowners where we were serving and planted many seeds for the kingdom!

Brian was quite a trooper, as he has several physical difficulties and while taking a walk one day, he slipped and messed up his arm pretty bad. None of this stopped him as he just put his left arm in a sling and pulled nails, was the tool boss and kept everyone in line with his good arm! He also managed to quit smoking and overcame some other things in his life as well during our trip.

When we deploy, our main mission isn't to help the victims, rather it's to grow closer to God as He transforms our lives into the likeness of His Son, Jesus. Our emphasis is on discipleship and the natural outcome of a life that portrays Christ is serving and thus those affected by the disaster get to reap the benefits of our obedience to God! This trip was no exception and our devotional times were very profitable. We had devos in the morning as we went through the book of Ephesians verse by verse and then in our evening devos I would call on someone different each night and allow them to share what God was doing in their life along with some scripture that was relevant to their lives. Most of the guys had never experienced going through the Bible and just studying what it has to say based on context and we all enjoyed it. Everyone was blessed and we all experienced some tremendous growth in our lives while in Atlanta. Please pray that the fire wouldn't die out and that we would press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called us heavenward in Christ Jesus! Also pray that the Bowery Boys will continue to meet together and study God's Word in context as they reach out to those

around them that are hurting. We can't wait to serve with them over Thanksgiving, which is just a few short weeks away!

We also experienced a lot of spiritual warfare. One of the "Christian" relief agencies near us wouldn't allow us to have anything to do with them, which was fine, but their leader walked into one of our meetings and proceeded to tell us that we were all untrained volunteers and he had no idea what we were doing and why we were there. He was a leader of the agency and had just come in town and obviously had no idea what he was talking about, not only did he know nothing about us, but he didn't even know what we were doing! It shook a couple of the guys up a little bit, but I just told everyone that we were doing what God wanted us to do and to not pay any attention to him. As my friend from Alabama says, it's not that it takes all kinds; it's that we got all kinds!!

Contrary to what this guy was saying, 3 of the homes we worked on had been "completed" by other organizations. The homeowners either heard or saw our work or realized that the work wasn't complete and contacted us to do it the correct way. There was a contractor who saw our work and recommended us to someone else in the area as he commented, he never saw anyone as particular to detail as we were and the homes we worked on were completely cleaned out! A group of Mennonites from PA were going around surveying the damage to determine if they can come in and help with the rebuild process, they commented that they had never seen work as good as what we had done. A local official stopped by to talk to me while I was assessing what turned out to be our last house. We had already planned on leaving and the homeowner thought the work was complete and it only needed the mold removed. Drywall, nails and the whole floor still needed removed, then the place needed to be swept, vacuumed and then sprayed, plus there were some huge tree parts in the yard that needed cut up and disposed of. I told her that I would run the job by the guys and if everyone wanted to stay an extra day, we'd do her home. The local official told her that if we couldn't do it he could find another agency to do the work, but she needed to pray that we'd stay and do it as we were the best in the area, and there were some huge agencies in the area! We had an awesome team, to God be the glory as we used the gifts that He's given us to do the things that He had ordained for us to do!

One final note to the church. We sent out many emails and made many phone calls to get Christians to come and join in the efforts. Most of our calls went unanswered. I understand that not everyone has the ability to up and leave like we do. Many churches say they want to help and often times come back with the answer that we can't get a team together, I implore you, even if you only have one or two, send them, we'll put them to work. The first weekend after the flooding, **1000 MORMONS** flooded the area helping many homeowners clean up and ministered to them. Yes the people needed help, but Christians, what are we doing about it? The Mormons preach a false gospel; we are supposed to share Jesus' love as we are His Hands and Feet to the suffering world around us. God has warned us in His Word that as the return of Jesus gets closer, disasters will increase both in force and number. This was not just put in the Bible for information's sake, its there for us to take heed and to get ready to minister to those who've been affected by the disasters.

I implore you to get ready, get your church ready. Even if you start out as just one person, be faithful and see what God will do. We are more than willing to help you in any way we can to get started in relief ministry. You are more than welcome to join us any time you wish. Pray, prepare and serve! You'll be blessed when you do!

I've already got some pictures up on our website; you can click here to see them, [http://reliefministriesccsarasota.com/Atlanta\\_Flood\\_09\\_pics.html](http://reliefministriesccsarasota.com/Atlanta_Flood_09_pics.html). I've got a few videos that I also want to put on YouTube, go to <http://www.youtube.com/user/reliefministriescc> to view our site; I've got one small video up now, more to follow!