

Tennessee Tornado Final Thoughts Feb 2008

Anthony and I made it home late last night from TN. It was sad to have to leave, but we needed a break and to spend time with our families. We were up before dawn and didn't get back each day until after dark!

Anthony was a blessing to have on this trip, he worked hard and learned quickly how to adapt and get the job done! He also helped with some of the driving so that I could take a nap! Please keep this young Christian in your prayers as he has a hard road ahead of him. God definitely allowed him to accompany me on this trip for a specific purpose and I pray that he always remembers that as he continues on his Christian walk.

We managed to plow the way and set up a great relationship with the city of Jackson and Madison County. While in town we were in the local newspaper and local radio station as the contact information for any type of relief needed by the community. We were also given any help they could offer us including space at the volunteer center to help coordinate. They even took our Volunteer Liability Release Form, Homeowner Liability Release Form and Homeowner Work Request Form and changed our heading to the city's heading and these have become the official forms now being used by the city! We were there to assist them in any way we could.

While there we hooked up with a local CC pastor who recently relocated with his wife to Jackson, Sergio and Katie Babich. I believe God called them to this area for such a time as this. They will continue to minister to the people there and may be starting a Bible study that could be the beginning of a CC church plant in the area. This is crucial for our work as one day we all go home and we need to make sure that the Spiritual needs of the people are taken care of once we are gone. There are plenty of churches in the area, but when you are working side by side with unchurched people, there is a bond that forms. If you live in the area and are able to form a relationship with them, this relationship will often lead them to feel comfortable to attend a Bible study with you and eventually can lead

them to salvation, or if they've walked away from the Lord, lead them back to His loving arms. This is why we do what we do, to share Jesus love with them and not just leave them, continue to be able to disciple them, just as Jesus did when He left the world, He gave them the Holy Spirit, but also left them with the disciples to disciple others!

On Wednesday a 19 year old from Buffalo, Earl, showed up to help, so we adopted him and he stayed with us and worked along side of us. He too was a blessing from God! Please pray for this young man that he would desire to be like Jesus and not let the things of this world choke out the things that God would have him to do.

We occasionally had a little extra help here and there including Pastor John and his son Daniel from CC Bartlett, TN and Benjamin, the son of CC Memphis' pastor. They were not only a great help, but a lot of fun. Benjamin attends Union University where the tornado destroyed the dormitories, he was in the one that suffered the most damage and one of the last ones to leave the campus, making sure that everyone was OK.

By Thursday, most of the volunteers and ministries had gone back home. We expected locals to show up this past Saturday to volunteer at the volunteer center, and didn't get one person! Some of the local Baptist churches belong to a Baptist Relief group and they are still staying active and doing a lot of work to help the Union University and their students get back to school.

First Baptist Church of Bemis has graciously hosted our group, providing warm rooms to sleep in, free wireless internet access, warm showers to clean up in and a full kitchen to use for cooking. They are offering us their facilities for as long as we need them, which was a great blessing as they are in the middle between the two main areas we were working in.

A group of 18 from CC Chester Springs, PA came in on Sunday and will work through Friday and head home. We then have a group of 5-10 coming in from Harvest Fellowship in Indianapolis who will come in from Sunday through Thursday of the following week.

While we were driving home the lady who headed up the work for the city and county, Lynette, called and couldn't thank us enough for all we did, though I feel it was only a drop in the bucket. We documented 17 houses that we worked on, even though we worked on more, and we talked to or passed out flyers with relief help information to over 150 more homes. We have lined up enough work to keep both the current team and the one coming next week busy and anticipate even more work needing done from all of our contact with the flyers and conversations. Also as work is being done on one home, the adjacent homeowners usually come up and ask for some type of help.

The city proper has a population of 90,000. I was told that there were over 250 homes either totally destroyed or severally damaged, with many more needing minor repair and/or tree/debris removal.

Lynette talked with me about long term recovery help for the people who won't have enough insurance or money to fix damage done to their property. I assured her that we would be available for any needs that they may have that we have the ability to resolve.

There is a good chance that I will need to head back up soon and will be needing construction crews who are willing to help provide labor and tools for minor construction needs that need met once needs are determined. The needs will be things such as roof replacement, siding repair, gutter replacement, soffit and fascia repair, drywall repair, painting, etc. nothing too major. I will wait to hear back from the teams who will be there the next couple of weeks and to hear what Sergio and Lynette come up with. I will keep you posted via email of what develops.

If you have any interest in helping out with this work, please contact me. We will need lots of prayer as we seek the Lord's direction in helping out these people. We will need teams who are willing to travel to the area, bringing tools and some supplies to do minor construction on some of these homes. We will also need funds to help purchase supplies that may be needed and to support the work that God has called us to do.

Please continue to pray for the people in Jackson and other areas hit by the tornadoes and there have been more since the ones two weeks ago! Pray for wisdom and guidance from God on what He would have us to do in this and other areas and for Sergio and Katie as they seek God's will on why He has them in Jackson! Thanks for all your prayers and support. I have attached a few pictures for your viewing pleasure!