

Post-Sandy Chaplains Rely on 'Divine Appointments'

Chance. Coincidence. Happenstance. Those words don't exist in the vocabulary of Billy Graham Rapid Response Team chaplains.

"Because our chaplains pray each morning for God's direction, we don't believe that we ever accidentally stumble into a meeting with somebody as we're ministering in the aftermath of a disaster," said Jack Munday, international director of the ministry. "Those encounters were put in place by God. We call them 'divine appointments.'"

And those divine appointments have been happening for more than a month now in New York and New Jersey following the impact of **Superstorm Sandy** in late October.

Take, for instance, the recent experience of chaplains in Nassau County, N.Y., where the chaplains have been reaching out to hurting survivors since Oct. 29.

They were making their last stop of the day, a meeting with a homeowner named Jason. They pulled up to the curb in front of his home, and a man walked up and introduced himself as Jason, so they knew they were in the right spot. They began talking, and before too long Jason invited the chaplains into his house to show them the effects of the hurricane.

He described for the chaplains how the home had been flooded with several feet of water. He had already stripped the floors and wallboard to the studs, and was now trying to figure out how to deal with the remaining mold. The chaplains offered to help with that issue by enlisting the assistance of their sister ministry, disaster relief organization Samaritan's Purse.

During the course of this conversation, the topic began

turning to spiritual matters. Jason shared that he believed his good works would get him into Heaven. As he and the chaplains began looking at God's standards, though, Jason started to realize that he didn't measure up. He began asking very sincere questions about faith.

Mid-way through the conversation, with a puzzled look on his face, Jason finally said, "Wait a minute, aren't you the mold guys?" The chaplains laughed and said "No!" He explained that the chaplains came at the same time he was supposed to meet a mold-mitigation team. He thought it was the chaplains, and that's why he invited them inside.

As it turned out, however, the "right" Jason—the one the chaplains had come to see—lived across the street. The chaplains, who had assumed they were in the correct place, began to share who they were and why they were in the area. Jason mentioned to the chaplains that he didn't believe in accidents, and the chaplains could see that this new revelation was causing the wheels to turn in Jason's head.

Moments later Jason's phone rang. It was the mold-mitigation expert that he had been planning for earlier, telling Jason he was running late. They all laughed at the unique situation in which they found themselves, expecting appointments with others, but ending up where they were.

A few minutes later, standing on the driveway, Jason asked the chaplains how he could have a "turning point" in his life. They shared with him how a man named Nicodemus had once asked Jesus a similar question in John 3. As the chaplains shared the Good News with him, his heart opened and he surrendered his life to Christ.

"It's really remarkable how often we see God work in situations like this," said Munday. "What began as a miscommunication—or what some would call an amazing coincidence—ends up having eternal significance. In a lot of

ways, we're just along for the ride as the Lord goes before us."

Two weeks ago, a chaplain in Nassau County was walking into a diner when a lady pulled to the curb in front of her crying uncontrollably, and the chaplain was able to comfort her. Last week in Ocean County, N.J., a man ran up to the chaplains' vehicle and pounded on their window, wanting to make sure they were coming to his house. That man ended up making a decision for Christ during the visit.

"We appreciate your prayers and support. We really do," said Munday. "You make it possible for us to be there and be able to see God work. Thank you for that!"

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