

This past week I was in Mississippi with 11 of our youth on a mission trip. We traveled in one of the church vans and pulled a trailer behind it. The mission part of the trip was exciting and challenging. It is always good to give of ourselves to help others. Anytime we let God use us to serve others it is an amazing experience.

Some parts of trips are not always exciting however. This trip had a rather testy part to it. About half way to Mississippi the van picked up a horrible vibration. It became obvious that we were going to have to do something with the van before we left Mississippi to return to Jacksonville. I asked around and found a reputable local tire place to take a look and see what was wrong. This sounds simple, you take the van to the shop and they look at it. The issue is that the van was the only mode of transportation that the youth had to get to and from the worksites. Luckily the organization we were working with had a van that they could let us use.

So the day we took it to the shop, our crew leader drove her personal van, an adult chaperone drove the other van and I drove the church van up to the shop so we could drop off the church van and then I could hop in one of the other vans and head to the worksite. On the way to the shop to drop off the van, the borrowed van ran out of gas. So after dropping off the church van at the shop, we went back to the church to pick up a gas can, then to a gas station to get some gas, and then to the van to hopefully get it started. We eventually made it to the worksite about an hour and a half later than we were planning on getting there.

After the days work was done we drove to the shop to pick up the van. This would have been a good thing except the problem with the van ended up being a manufactures problem with the tires and the shop we were at did not carry those tires. So we had to drive down the road to a shop that carried the tires that were on the van. The church van, the borrowed van, and our crew leader and her van all drove down to the shop where hopefully they could quickly put new tires on the van and we could be done with the ordeal. No such luck. They could not find the tires that were on the van in the system so they had no idea how to apply the manufactures warranty. After waiting for about 10-15 minutes, I sent the youth back to the church where we were staying to get showered up while I stayed at the tire place to wait for them to do something. Our workday ended at 3. The van was ready at 6. Luckily, one of the other adults on the trip came up to the tire place at 5:30 to switch out with me so that I could take a shower and get ready.

This tire ordeal was not a huge issue, but on a trip, there are enough things to plan and take care of without having tire problems. In the midst of everything that was going on, this tire problem became quite a stress. Two things helped me. One thing was remembering one of the devotions that Gwen and I had put together for the trip based on a Castings Crowns song called "Praise Him in the Storm." The basis of the song is that we are to praise God regardless of the situation we are in, good or bad, because God is always with us. The second thing that helped was saying the Prayer for Serenity. These two things as well as the attitudes of people who had lost everything helped me to fully understand what is meant by **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Big or small, God is there to comfort us. Praise be to God.