

Good Morning! My name is Mary Hemphill. My husband, Wayne, and I went on the mission trip with our three children to Louisiana, then Mississippi. We knew it would be an adventure, and we weren't disappointed. Pastor Roger asked that we share a little about our experience last week.

As with any trip, there is a sense of a bond between the people, and certainly new friendships forged. For me, there was also an immense sense of being exactly where God's hand placed me, and it continued nearly constantly all week.

As I learned, a mission trip is about a whole host of lessons, all rolled into one. Many were somewhat mundane, like being flexible and willing to go the extra distance even when we were pretty well exhausted. But there were more-profound lessons that we are even now realizing. There were lessons about humility and surrendering our agenda to God's agenda, lessons about setting limits, and showing graciousness and kindness in doing so.

I was sort of the mom for the week, with warnings about nails in the lumber, sunscreen for the noses, seatbelts, and shoes in the cafeteria. I'm pretty used to being a mom, and there were other very capable women along with me, but it was really satisfying to be there, especially for my new son, Anteneh!

I also felt like I was put at our particular worksites for a specific purpose, to encourage and praise when there wasn't any other adult to do so, to keep things focused when they got distracted, to teach and affirm when things went awry. And even to decide who should paint what! Those were my tasks this week. I knew where I belonged, and what to do, which was a true blessing for me. We had some negative experiences, and we enjoyed some incredible excitement. We sometimes wondered what God had in mind, and even if he were toying with us, because as my mom always says, "God loves suspense."

But all in all, it was an incredible experience for all five of us, and we will never quite be the same people who climbed on that van (and into that pick-up) 2,100 miles ago.

--- Mary Hemphill