Rebuilding in American Samoa

The invitation surprised the team from America. That morning, when the team from Parakletos arrived in American Samoa, led by the team to Amanave—property owner Jesse Tupa‘i’s small village. Upon arrival, Oscar introduced them to the property owner, Jesse and his family. They were sleeping in tents while they cleared the property to begin rebuilding.

The team followed the advice of locals to discern where help was needed most. Oscar Sagiao, pastor of the Calvary Chapel on American Samoa, led the team to Amanave—property owner Jesse Tupa‘i’s small village. Upon arrival, Oscar introduced them to the property owner, Jesse and his family. They were sleeping in tents while they cleared the property to begin rebuilding.

The men returned to Amanave and continued to clear away the wreckage for several days. Tim recalled that “on the third day, we gave our tools to Jesse, telling him to use them for his family and for the rest of the village,” said Tim. “He was fighting tears, and his family started crying. Jacob and Randy shared the Gospel with him, and Jesse asked Jesus into his life.”

On one of the team’s last days, Jesse’s family cooked them a traditional Samoan barbecue. “We gave our tools to Jesse, telling him to use them for his family and for the rest of the village,” said Tim. “He was fighting tears, and his family started crying. Jacob and Randy shared the Gospel with him, and Jesse asked Jesus into his life.”

The team started their workday with prayer in the village of Amanave. Parakletos, a ministry of CC Costa Mesa, comes alongside of those in need, often after disasters.

“Parakletos is a Greek word that means to come alongside,” explained Tim. “Parakletos comes alongside those in need, particularly after disasters. "We desire to demonstrate Christ’s love through acts of service," said Tim. "Standing with people through tragic, working side by side with them—this is doing unto others as we would have them do unto us. We’ve found that being with people in the midst of disaster opens up incredible opportunities to share Christ.”

Tim continued, “I believe with all my heart that the body of Christ, the people, are the ministering arm of the church. It’s not the pastor’s job to go out and save the world; it’s his job to equip those who sit under him to do ministry. We are the body, the ministers.”

And He Himself gave some to be ... pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry. Ephesians 4:11-12a

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The men returned to Amanave and continued to clear away the wreckage for several days. Tim recalled that “on the third day, Jesse said, ‘I’ve really taken a liking to you—I’m going to miss you guys.’ We went from receiving formal Samoan handshakes to hugs as we left each evening.”

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Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:20

“We are Christ’s ambassadors,” said Tim. “When you serve, spending a grueling week in the mud working alongside those in need, they see love in action. They cannot argue with what you’ve done, but they won’t know why you’ve done it. In that context, it’s a lot easier to share the Gospel.”

When the team flew out, Jesse’s family drove across the island to see them off—an activity normally reserved for family. Now, team members occasionally talk on the phone with Jesse and his family. They are praying for opportunities to return and serve in the rebuilding still needed on the islands. Parakletos is applying with the Federal Emergency Management Agency for subsidized airfare, and they hope this may allow them to return with teams in the near future.

The Parakletos team has been working and serving in ministry to Haiti.