

Listening

"I just can't believe people would do something like that," an elderly woman I'd been pulled into a room to talk with said. She'd just arrived in Atlanta, after spending almost a week in the Superdome in New Orleans. "What people will do to each other, instead of seeing the beautiful world God still wants them livin' in."

In case you were wondering, the rumors about what went on in the Superdome, man's inhumanity to his fellow man, while so many others were trying to comfort and help each other, is true. At the Salvation Army center I'm volunteering in, we talk to several people a day who lived through the nightmare. When someone's too upset to talk with the financial aid counselors, they come find a Stephen Minister to take them aside and let them talk it out.

So many people in shock, after seeing and experiencing things were so much worse than I ever wanted to imagine. "It was like a third world country," the sweet lady kept saying.

Lives--many very young ones--were lost in needless violence as people fought for what they had, and some for whatever they could get. Free water and food were confiscated by gangs and sold to those who had nothing, certainly not a dollar for a bottle of water. The rescue and volunteer workers many are complaining about on the news networks were shot at, in harms way, and some killed while trying to ease the burden on others.

If you're the praying kind, join me in praying for peace and comfort, and an end to the blame and finger-pointing at the national level that's doing no one any good. We should be about caring, and removing anyone from the process who's sole focus isn't on helping--and nothing else.

If you're a celebrity, and you have to have a camera crew with you to do your "rescuing," get the hell out and let another boat take over, so there's more room in the thing for those who still need to get out of the muck a week after their lives were destroyed.

I'm more angry today than I thought was possible, but I've been doing this a day longer, too. I can't close my eyes for seeing the faces I've shared time with this week, the tears I've comforted with nothing more than a hug and a plate of food. I can't stop their stories from replaying in my mind. But the lady I mentioned before, she hasn't slept for over a week--not in the Superdome, and not now, because when she closes her eyes, she sees it all again and wakes up thinking she's still there. So I guess I'll stop complaining about what's making me so mad, and get back to doing something about it.

Listen to what you're seeing and hearing about in the media. Really listen, and figure out for yourself who the good guys are. And for heavens sake, believe that those involved in the real process of rescuing and providing aid (not just those running for office next year or promoting their next entertainment project at the expense of the suffering) are there to give and to serve. Applaud them--don't make them out to be evil.

