

Life... The Habitat House

Situation:

On Saturday morning I got up early and headed to the Habitat for Humanity site where some of our church members planned to help. This is something I've always wanted to get involved in, it's seems like such a worthy program. When I got there, things were, let's say, more than a bit disorganized. It seems that the person who was supposed to deliver the paint wasn't there yet. And there were six of us standing around with our hands in our pockets because all the other jobs that could be done were already being worked on. When it got to be a half hour later, I found myself getting worked up.

Symptoms:

Racing thoughts were whipping through my mind: "I've got better things to do than just stand around. My grass needs cutting, my car needs washing. I could be catching up on all kinds of things around my house. Boy, I made the wrong decision coming out here! If they want volunteers, they ought to be more organized.

I felt restless inside and started shuffling my feet, kicking in the dirt.

"If they ask us to come back tomorrow, I'd like to, but my Sunday's are usually pretty filled. Then it's a half hour drive to get here and another half hour back, if the traffic's OK. This isn't at all as I expected it to be."

Solution:

As soon as I caught the thought, "This isn't at all as I expected it to be," is when I realized that what this whole thing was about was a disappointment. In my mind I had pictured getting coming over and getting straight to work. I figured they'd hand me a gallon of paint, a brush and a ladder and I'd be set! Expectations and disappointments happen, even on Saturdays when you're trying to do something to help people who are less fortunate.

I knew that I couldn't change the situation, but I could change my attitude about it, by changing my thoughts. I knew that once I tossed out the right, wrong – the good, bad I'd feel better.

They're not wrong, they're average for the paint not being there. And, I'm not wrong, I'm average for not liking it.

Once I excused them and me, my thinking cleared. Supplies don't get to regular construction sites some times – why should this be different. It's average! Not right, wrong, good or bad – just average.



Waiting around is uncomfortable for some people, and I am one of those kind of people. I'd rather be busy.

As for me thinking I had made the wrong decision in coming over, that just wasn't so. It's something I wanted to do. It was my choice. It wasn't a bad choice, it was just a choice. No one could have predicted this delay. The people in charge probably aren't happy about it either

Once I stopped to change my thoughts, I didn't feel quite as anxious, impatient or uncomfortable.

In the past:

In the past, I would have never volunteered to work with people I didn't know, even people I knew casually from church. I would have never driven half an hour and gone somewhere I didn't know where I was going. To be honest – I was afraid: afraid I'd get lost, afraid people wouldn't like me, afraid I'd make some huge mistake like drop a can of paint.

Thinking about how my life was, I realized that had come a long way, a long way! And whether I got to work on this house or not, I could give myself a lot of silent applause for all my progress, and for the fact that I made the effort to volunteer. With that thought I got a smile on my face.

