

2021 M3 Conference
Q&A with Kelly Sites, RN
“Serving God with Open Hands”

CLICK LINK TO WATCH SESSION: <https://youtu.be/fGU0wxZecdk>

Did you feel safe in Iraq? Also, what opportunities do you know of in the Middle East?

Yes, I did feel safe. We take security very seriously at Samaritan's Purse, and I'm sure other organizations do as well. We knew that being on the front lines during a war would be exceptionally challenging, but I really did feel safe. We needed to be there as there was a lot to do, and we saw a lot of patients. You just have to hone in and focus on what God has called you to do and trust Him with the consequences. I trusted God that He called me to go, so I also trusted Him with the outcome. Regarding opportunities in the Middle East, there is information on the Samaritan's Purse website (<https://samaritanaspurse.org/>), as well as opportunities listed in the “Mission Opportunities for Nurses” booklet on the M3 website (<https://m3missions.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Mission-Opportunities-for-Nurses-Feb-2021-Booklet.pdf>). There are also a lot of opportunities for physicians and many other professions. Everyone is needed on the mission field.

What resources would you suggest for teams that deal with regular loss of life/trauma with patients?

What tools did you find useful on the days you felt overwhelmed?

I suggest building resilience long before you need it on the field. The time to be thinking about it is before you even leave for your trip. Find resources for coping with the hurt you will see. I suggest The Resilience Resource website (<https://theresilienceresource.org/>); they have classes, often free, for building resilience, as well as other helpful information. Prepare a play list of great worship songs that remind you of Who God is; I have found this very helpful when feeling overwhelmed on the field or at home. Reading my Bible and talking to a trusted friend, or if applicable, talking with your spouse, also helps.

How do you handle re-entry?

Re-entry is really challenging, especially during the pandemic this past year. I've deployed three times this past year. Usually, before the pandemic, I leave the comfort of my home, go to a disaster, live there in a disaster for 4-5 weeks, and then I come home to the comfort of my home. Well, over the last year, I left a disaster, to go to a disaster, and came home to a disaster. So, that's been challenging for me this year, for sure. I handle re-entry by just pulling away and taking time for myself and my family, to get to know my family again, since I've been gone. I spend a lot of time with God processing because you don't get a lot of time to process on the field, so you need to process once you get home, which involves reading my Bible, resting, and getting ready for the next deployment.

Your testimony is so encouraging. What has been your most challenging assignment?

Since I'm a disaster response nurse, every deployment is a great challenge due to the nature of why we are responding. So, each of my 21 trips so far has been a challenge in different ways. Ebola and COVID bring a challenge unlike any other, though. The PPE you need to wear to protect yourself is a challenge when trying to perform different medical tasks.

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Have you ever experienced burnout? If yes, how do you deal with burnout?

There are times this is a struggle, with very long hours, long deployments and challenging work or situations. I pray a lot and ask God to equip me to handle the situations. He always does. I try to remember why I'm there and that those we are called to serve need an all-in nurse/healthcare provider who does not feel burned out or compassion fatigued, they deserve the best care and love. In those moments when you struggle, it's best to ask Christ to fill you with what you need and help you through it. When we are weak, He is strong.

Does Samaritan's Purse DART need mental health professionals? What qualifications are needed?

Currently, we don't use mental health professionals.

How long are your trips through Samaritan's Purse? Does your time away effect your family?

I'm usually away 4-5 weeks at a time. We have been doing this a long time, so we see it as a family ministry, not just something mom does.

I was so encouraged to hear that you are a wife and mom, as well as a missionary nurse! How does your work impact your family? How do you and your husband address preparing your children for your travels and including them in your work?

It's very important that our family get the best of us, not the scraps. So, I engage with them deeply and often when I am home so I can "fill their bank accounts" so to speak. That way, when I'm away on a deployment, they have reserves left over and don't feel that they are not important to me. We talk a lot about my work, and I always ask them how they feel about my leaving each time. I cast the vision often for the work of Christ and that serving God demands sacrifice and a cost. They are very supportive and understand the bigger picture of going out into the world to share Christ during crisis situations. I come home and share stories about how I see God working in the world, and how God used our DART team to serve others and bring encouragement and tangible help. That helps them to see the bigger picture. We text, email or FaceTime the best we can while I'm away to stay connected. I try to always be available to them when I'm home and when I'm away.

Bless you for your service! Do you recommend that new RN's join DART, or should you have a certain amount of experience first?

Samaritan's Purse requires nurses to have at least 2 years of hospital experience before applying to the DART team. We are very busy once we hit the ground, and we need our medical staff to know what to do when they arrive. We have long hours and busy days, and we don't have the capacity for one-on-one training during a disaster. So, you need to have good skills and experience that you can put into practice right away. There is always learning of course, but for the most part, we need high-functioning nurses who know what to do and can immediately get to work and manage challenging patient care.

Added by M3 Conference: For mission opportunities for nurses, check out the "Mission Opportunities for Nurses" booklet on the M3 website (<https://m3missions.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Mission-Opportunities-for-Nurses-Feb-2021-Booklet.pdf>).

What specific training did you have for your travel?

I have been a RN for 24 years. Samaritan's Purse provides DART training and different training opportunities, but most of my training has come through my 11 years of experience on the ground in many different disaster settings. I also study and read a lot when I'm home about tropical illness, field-wilderness medicine, and many other things I encounter when deployed. That helps me stay up on things and current.

Can you comment on your statement of "making comfort an idol?"

We live in the comfort capital of the world. There is so much comfort around us at all times. And it's hard to leave that, especially in a disaster situation, when you're going to the not so comfortable. But God meets you there in those places, and when you're out of your comfort zone, that's when you get to see a big God. We don't always see Him when we have everything that we need at our fingertips.

In disaster relief, volunteers and workers are needed from every skill set, not just medical. Can you tell us about other jobs, skills and trades that are needed in disaster relief?

I can speak for Samaritan's Purse where we have all kinds of needs - water and sanitation, shelter, food distribution, engineers, logistics, finance, and hospitality. There is something for everyone in missions. Everyone has a gift, and God will use it for His work.

If people want to get involved in Samaritan's Purse, how do they get connected?

You can visit www.samaritanspurse.org and read about where Samaritan's Purse is serving internationally, as well as domestically within the United States. As you explore the website, you can learn about various opportunities available. To specifically learn more about the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) program, visit <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/our-ministry/dart/> on the Samaritan's Purse website. You can also follow Samaritan's Purse on Facebook and Instagram to keep up-to-date with their current activities.