

When traveling to a third world country there will be certain obvious discomforts one must accept. The muggy heat paired with no air conditioning, the quick disorienting cold showers, and the constant need to be wearing sticky bug spray. But once these are accepted and eventually overlooked, something greater begins to come into view.

I had the amazing opportunity to travel with fifteen other people to Léogane, a town in Haiti that with one glance will break your heart. Split into two teams, we began our work with separate churches. Though the buildings were falling apart at the seams, the floor covered in rubble and just a blue tarp functioning as the roof, the people were bursting with joy. I was astounded Sunday morning when, instead of worrying about their next meal or grumbling about the heat, they were making such a joyful noise, singing with all their hearts, looking towards the sky as they did; though I couldn't understand a word being said, as it was all in Creole, I knew they were worshipping the same Lord that I did.

This wasn't the last time the language barrier would present itself. Depending on one translator along with a few of the church's members who spoke a bit of broken English, seemed a daunting task, but one we (with a lot of help from God) were able to overcome.



Each day I found myself being followed by a precious Haitian girl with the saddest eyes I had ever seen. And each day she chattered along yearning for me to understand. I'd simply nod with a blank look on my face as she continued to repeat the same desperate phrase over and over again. I found out later that she was telling me she was hungry. Even now as I write this down, tears fill my eyes and I am overwhelmed. How is it that I was so blessed to be born into a family where I don't have to worry if I'll be able to eat tonight? Why me and not her? I'm plagued with regret that I could give her no more than a pack of crackers and a bag of water no bigger than a Capri Sun. But I thank God that I was able to give her even

that. Though I never learned her name, she remains in my prayers, and I hope in yours as well.

A little boy by the name of Obed stole the heart of just about every one of my team members, including me. Around three years old, he was obviously malnourished. His face was so thin, and his clothes hung on him, clearly too big. But I think what he wanted from us most of all was to be loved on. He was always in the arms of one of us, clinging to our shirts or playing with our bright green lanyards. Though a smile rarely appeared on his tiny face, I was blessed to see one as he thought it funny to dump the last of his water in my hands. Saying goodbye to him was one of the hardest things to do because he'd found a spot in my heart so quickly. I yearned for him to have a better life, one where American team members didn't have to sneak him extra crackers just to satisfy his hunger. Our team leader, Janet, said it best, though. She reminded us all, that though most of their needs won't be met on this earth, one day, if they know Christ, they will never grow hungry again. All of their needs and wants will be satisfied. There will be no more tears. No more worries. I cling to that hope for my dear friend Obed. I pray as he grows, he will grow in the Lord.





I spent my week working with the children at our Vacation Bible School (VBS). Day one, I found myself being pulled on to back pew (really no more than a wooden bench) and surrounded by kids. They'd smile coyly as they touched my pale skin that was such a massive contrast to their own dark skin and giggle as the older ones pulled the younger ones' arms away. Each day after this, I was summoned with a quiet "chita," meaning sit down, and tugged into the middle of a growing crowd. After sitting down on the tiny bench, a cool breeze swept over me as they waved their tiny fans we'd just made in crafts. Something practical we'd decided to make for them to use, they returned their gratitude by fanning us. Touched, all I could say was "merci," thank you.

I seemed to be at a loss for words many times throughout the week. At times, I just wanted to sit and watch as the people went about their day. I observed little children, usually no older than ten, as they took care of smaller children. I witnessed a seventy year old lady push her way past young adults just to participate in crafts. But what struck me most was on our last day with the church as my friend Ben was mobbed while passing out bibles. He told me later he thought he might have been killed (or at least slightly injured) during that commotion but if one must die, why not die passing out God's Word? It made me wonder if such a riot (and believe me, it was a riot) would ever occur in America. Would the American people, who are blessed more than we realize, ever become so desperate for the Word that we mob the ones passing it out? I fear the answer may be no. As Christians, it is our duty to share God's love with everyone, no matter if they are annoyed by it or if they stare at you like you're crazy because one day when we get to Heaven, what a joy it will be to see even one person that you shared with.

I met a lot of people and shared a lot of great moments with them but none can compare to Wednesday evening. That day had been hard, and I felt distant from God. My heart was heavy for the Haitian people and the food was starting to get to me. It would have been easy to go to bed early and skip out on our worship time. But I walked downstairs to where we'd meet for our closing and was immediately overwhelmed with the Spirit of God. I could feel His presence but couldn't form the words to tell Him so. I just sat there unashamedly weeping. My friends that I'd grown so close to in such a short time lifted up their own prayers and sang along with the worship music coming from Micah's iPod; the song spoke of God raining down on us. The Lord answered us with a burst of thunder and let raindrops pour from the clouds. Immediately these lyrics filled my mind:

"Just to see Your face and to feel Your embrace wrap us with Your love and mercy; come fill us cause we're so thirsty for Your touch, God we need You so much. Let Your glory fall like rain till were washed, washed away in You."



As I sang these words, I stepped into the rain and let God wash away every burden that I felt. I let the water run over my face as I prayed to the Father, as I danced and worshiped Him. It's interesting that I had to travel to a third world country and step way out of my comfort zone just to be reassured that God is indeed always with us.

This great opportunity was made in part by the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief and their partnership with Pastor Jean Milot François, a Haitian pastor who coordinates with the churches in and around Léogane. In addition to his church, Pastor Milot heads up a school for local children. Since the earthquake, both have been greatly damaged. Because he cannot pay the teachers anymore, he's having to turn away students. He's also burdened with getting around by motorcycle taxi because he has no car. Through all these struggles, his desire to serve God does not waver. Instead, it grows as he hopes to one day open an orphanage. However, he can't accomplish this alone and thus has begun praying for an assistant pastor. He also asked for you to pray for him and his ministry in Léogane. If you feel led to donate money, you can do so using C.A.M. Transfert, Western-Union, or UniTransfer. You can also contact him by email: [jeanmilotfrancois@yahoo.com](mailto:jeanmilotfrancois@yahoo.com).



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I hope you will join me in continuing to pray for Haiti, especially for Léogane and its people.

I would also like to thank FHBC for helping make it possible to be able to go on this trip. It truly was life-changing. Without your support, both financially and through your prayers, it would have not have been possible. Thank you once again.

Hayley.