

January 9, 2011

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Guatemala. I arrived here last night from Haiti. The project in Haiti went well and my mind is racing with images and feelings. I want to share a brief update of my reflections, feelings, and prayerful insights into the situation and the solutions. I could write a book about what I encountered and how I feel.

We were in the countryside about ten minutes outside of the town of Cabaret and about an hour from Port au Price. There were several neighborhoods in the vicinity of where we were helping build a church building.

We spent five days there with about 50 Haitian brothers and sisters working on the foundation of the church building and preparing lunch for everyone. This is the first step in the creation of a transformational village that will have a medical clinic, a vocational training school, an agricultural project, an elementary school and permanent housing for around 200 families.

Here are just a few things going through my mind after being in Haiti.

The Poverty: Like so many places we work, the poverty was overwhelming and at times seemed hopeless. The tent cities seem to be growing not diminishing.

One of the strongest images from the trip was told to me by two team members. After they had finished eating their lunch prepared by the women in the church, they threw their plastic plates in the garbage pile. A young boy ran over to it, grabbed the chicken bones and started to eat them. He actually ate the chicken bones.

When we finished eating lunch with the Haitians working with us, we would throw our plastic plates into a pile. The kids would fight over the few grains of rice that were left.



The land: This was my sixth trip to Haiti. I had seen how bad the land is. I knew that erosion had taken almost all the topsoil. I could see that there were no trees.

This time I did not only see the land, I worked in the land. We were hauling dirt to fill in the foundation of a Haitian church. The Bible talks about the “Rocky Soil.” That seems to me to mean soil with a lot of rocks in it. The Haitian soil is rocks with a little bit of dirt in it. I read that a lot of the trees were cut down and burned in the steam trains of the rich so they could go to the beach on weekends. This caused much of the erosion that destroyed the soil.

It is hard to believe that they will be able to grow anything in this land without bringing in topsoil and massive amounts of fertilizer



The kids: I would like to write an entire essay on the kids. There are so many. So many seem to be malnourished. A high percentage showed severe signs of Attention Deficit Syndrome. Most of all they were just trying to survive.



The Solution

One thing that the Haitians and we know is that Aid and Development organizations [Non Government Organizations (NGOs)] are not the solution. If they were the solution; Haiti would be one of the richest countries in the world. The billions of dollars that have been pumped into Haiti for years have not solved the country’s problems or in any way alleviated the poverty and suffering.

The Haitian Christian leaders and Beyond Partnership are convinced that effective solutions to the poverty and relief will only come from the Haitian Christian leaders and through the church.

Aid and development wants to come in and do humanitarian projects. They have failed! They think that if you invest in social programs the country will change. First you change the structure and develop the country then the people will change.

I have learned for the last twenty years from national Christian leaders that the first priority is to put back together the people. First you help sinful people, through Christ, become whole and then the country will begin to change. Therefore they start with the church and then bring in social programs and vocational training.

The NGO's want to put back together the country. National Christian leaders want to put back together a people.



HAITIAN PASTORS AND LEADERS

In both Haiti and Nicaragua we are working on large transformational projects. They are under the direction of national leadership. Both the national leaders of Haiti and Nicaragua are developing a housing project, an agricultural project, a water project, and a vocational training school. They want a medical and dental clinic. Much of what is being done is economic development.

Both leaders are starting with the same priority: the church. The first thing they want is to build the church building and start to disciple the adults and the kids. They know that before you can transform a country, you must transform the people.

Jesus did not say that I will build my water project, my houses, my orphanages, etc. He said, "I will build my Church." They know that for development to be successful there must be a change in the people and that comes through the church.

Please be in prayer for the Haitian leaders as they bring the good news to their people and through healed people their country will gradually change.

We have projects there in February and March. Thank you for your prayers.

In His Love,

Steve



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