

HAITI REPORT

I've spent time doing missions work in third world environments, but this time it was different.

Our trip began with ten team members from varying parts of the US: Gary and Klorisa from Vermont; Nick from Florida; me (Paul), Chloe, Cody, and Jada from Indiana; and Derek, Mark, and our fearless leader Dennis Anderson, all from Iowa. Although this was an FCFI trip we worked with Global Compassion's orphanage, school, widow and infant caring facilities in Les Cayes, Haiti.

I'd like to help encapsulate the trip by sharing five things that moved me while in Haiti.

5. THE FOOD

Oh, you heard me right – I was moved by the food. I say that tongue-in-cheek; but, seriously, the food was amazing. I've got to admit that I'm somewhat of a wimp when it comes to trying new food items. And I've got this philosophy on missions trips that when you find a meal you really like, you put it down as if it's your last supper, because who knows what breed of dog you might be eating next! (Did I say that out loud? I really am kidding). After six meals I decided that this philosophy was not necessary because it was all so good. Another three weeks and they would've had to load me on the plane with a forklift.

4. THE SCENERY

I really enjoyed how beautiful it was there. It was so lush and tropical. Maybe my senses were a little skewed by the fact that it was in the 80's every day – a far cry from January in Indiana.

3. THE LEADERSHIP IN HAITI

The orphanage where we worked was called the Consolation Center, and the Consolation Center works with Global Compassion Network and other organizations to help make a difference in Haiti. The American staff there (Zackary, Les) and the Haitian staff (Eddy, Max) were so intentional about caring for the physical and spiritual needs of the Haitian children and people in their care. Their dedication to be Jesus to physically and spiritually needy people of Haiti (especially the orphans) was certainly inspiring to say the least. When you spend time in the poorest country in the West, Haiti, the words of scripture concerning the poor flood your mind. This is one of those scriptures I had trouble shaking from my mind: *But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. I John 3:17-18*

2. KEN AND CONWELL

Ken and Conwell are farmers from Iowa that are like many farmers across America, successful. They, like many of us, have a love and passion for farming. From the smell of dirt in the spring to the beauty and wonder of corn emerging every year to the excitement of harvesting another crop. The story of the details that led them to be integral partners in Haiti is too long to share here, but as they both shared the story with us, it was apparent that God had used Haiti to break them and

give them a vision for a kingdom purpose. Ken challenged us by likening the farmer in scripture that tore down his barns to build bigger barns, to an Iowa farmer that achieves the dream of farming big, with bin space, machine sheds, acreage, notoriety, and a green combine (which is certainly debatable if we are trying to describe a "successful farmer.") *But life, like the vapor that it is, wound down for this farmer and God was unimpressed. God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, [a fool] and is not rich toward God. Luke 12:20-21*

Through tears they both shared their heart to make their life count for eternity, and as a Christian farmer, that night on the deck of the beach house their message resonated deep within me, to lay down my kingdom to further his.



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1. THE ORPHANS

This is hands down number one. I have never spent a substantial amount of time with a group of orphans. I've spent time with children in villages and towns here in the States, in Mexico, and in the Dominican Republic; but there is something different when it dawns on you that these children, in many cases, will not know the security of having an earthly father or mother to love and care for them. There is a feeling that overwhelms you about how near these children are to the heart of God. God is near to the fatherless, and as James says, true religion is visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction. Words can't really express the deep sense of clarity of purpose that comes (during my best moments in Haiti) holding orphan babies, walking the younger boys back from school, spending time with Watson (the boy I am sponsoring), and holding a little girl named Gelan during movie night. I can't explain how it happens, but drawing near to orphans seems to draw people nearer to the presence and the heart of God. *Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; Free them from the hand of the wicked. Psalms 82:3-4*

Ken shared a story that involved his meeting a man in Port-au-Prince who was going out to hand out gospel tracks. The man didn't have time to address physical needs because he had the more important task of getting the gospel out. But as Ken put it, the Gospel has to come with food, clothes, water and shelter. Because without their physical needs met, you're sharing only words; but with their needs met you are getting to the very essence of the gospel, which is the love of Christ.

I'm all in for helping Haiti. My wife says that this trip has affected me, changed me, moved me – however you want to say it. I need to go back. The poverty there, you can smell, you can see, you can feel. And there's an endless sea of physical as well as spiritual needs. But the reality is, I don't live in Haiti. As of right now that's not where God has called me to be. He's called me to make an impact to the people in my community. My Haiti experience reminds me that I need to be addressing poverty in my community. In the US (the richest nation in the history of humanity), we are plagued with a different kind of poverty: spiritual poverty. Solomon wrote: *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' [America] or lest I be poor [Haiti] and steal and profane the name of my God. Proverbs 30:8-9.* So if the gospel in Haiti needs to go out with food and water, shelter and clothes, how does the gospel need to go out here in America? Well, first I'm just reminded that each person I am eyeball to eyeball with that doesn't know Christ is facing a condition that's far worse than malnutrition. They are facing a condition that, if not remedied through Jesus Christ, will separate them eternally from their Creator. Second, the gospel has to go out with love and relationships, because as my pastor always says, "They don't care what you know until they know that you care." My experience in Haiti changed me, there is no doubt, and after you have those kind of experiences life can never return back to "normal" nor do I want it to.

- Paul Herrold

