

Letter from Mike Mitchell (Haiti Team Member)

From the minute we got to the airport and 26 bags weighing over 70 pounds each with an additional 10 bags of 30 pounds each and God arranged for us to get them on the plane for no extra charge (**which we kind of added up later to be around \$2,000**) - to the melding together of 13 male weirdos over 10 days in temperatures of 100 - 110 with equal humidity - to the mental etchings of total destruction of everything how ever far the eye could see - to the going out on the street with a guitar and singing worship and having a crowd gather and around 30 people gave their hearts to the Lord and prayed for 2 breast cancer victims and multiple EQ fear & anxiety ridden people and a blind guy and all of that in about an hour...let's just say I was amazed to say the least.

It always opens my eyes after something like this.

As we were driving from Dominican Republic (**Santa Domingo**) to Port Au Prince I was just blown away by the country side - it's beautiful - the little towns are what you'd imagine Havana, Cuba to be like - the people are friendly - clean - wow!! Then, as soon as you cross the border into Haiti, it turns from all of that splendor to trash everywhere - 3 - 6 people on a Honda trail bike - the hustle of people trying to survive any way they can and it was still 2 hours to Port Au prince where the EQ was.

You start to see some building damage in about a half an hour - nothing major and extremely random. I got to thinking this isn't as radical as they made it sound. I was a tad premature.

When we got to Port Au Prince (**which by the way has 4 million people in it and 200,000 of them are now dead and the rest are so afraid they won't go into any buildings**) the building destruction was so massive I couldn't even take it in.

If the building wasn't completely crushed, there'd be a front wall standing and the entire inside of the building would be filled from top to bottom with rubble - not even one square inch of space left.

You'd look up a hill side and there was a path of destruction a mile wide and 5 miles long of buildings destroyed.

It was a lot to take in. So much in fact that while we were driving along seeing all of this, it was probably 30 minutes before we noticed, really saw the people in the midst of it.

Everyone was taking pictures of all of it - not too many comments other than an occasional OMG or wow!! or I can't even believe it.

Then you start to see people...2 women walking along with everything from a cinder block to a bowl filled with 2 weeks groceries all stacked on their heads...every 2 feet is someone with something for sale - kind of like the swap meet on steroids. Each little "business" looks exactly like the previous "business" - all on the street in front of what used to be a home - kids everywhere in different stages of undress.

There was no piece of land left to travel on because of all of the people on the street.

The traffic in cars was insane. Bumper to bumper - horns blasting every 2 seconds 4 cars wide in a 2 lane street - everyone trying to get ahead of the next one - 3 people on a bicycle - 15 people in a tap tap truck/taxi - eye and heart pollution to the max!!

We eventually arrive at the orphanage where we would be staying for next 9 days...armed guards - a billion toddler kids - adults - dogs - roosters. We get introduced around - shown where we'd be sleeping.

We took about 30 minutes to down all of our belongings - walk around and see everything inside the parameters of the "compound". Then we all went right to work until dark...setting the tenor for what would be an amazing week and a half.

Even in all of the things you just read about - the destruction - the homelessness - the pollution - the fear - the seeming hopelessness - God was their. He spared our team the indelible etching of dead bodies laying everywhere. He showed us that He loved the Haitian people too. He gave us a heart for them right away.

All of the above is a 40 hour period from 4 am on Tuesday leaving our houses to flying into Miami then onto the DR to the drive into Haiti and pulling up to the orphanage and working till dark - all with about 2 hours of sleep.

The bonding between us was instantaneous and deep.

The next day we got up wandered around (**nothing more scarring than 13 guys running around in haggard undies and a half of cup of almost cold Coke - burping and scratching**).

We got together and kind of talked together and prayed and readied our "plan" which kept getting added to as the days went on. We ate breakfast and God had already been putting teams together...these 3 went there - these two over there - an so on.

You'd have been so proud of what He was doing - our team began the rebuilding of the exterior walls of the orphanage. The first wall was about 300' long and 8 feet high. There is no rhyme or reason to the shape of the ground - level was a thing of the past. They were somehow able to set a base line up and I was in awe at how fast it went - how well everything worked together - this was extremely physical work - it was way too hot - way too humid and most of these guys don't do construction work or even work outside. But God provided strength and stamina...we provided sweat and B.O. and laughter and hugs.

As the day unfolded the little Haitian kids came out to inspect us. We'd all stop and pick one or two of them up say hi - give them a piece of candy or gum or a hat. We now had friends for life.

Now I'm crying just writing this. Laughing and crying. This isn't even the middle of the real first day of "it" and all of this has happened.

I'll send more as I'm able - God is a mad man - I love Him so much