

February 9, 2010

Haiti Earthquake Relief Update

Snapshots. . .

As we try to gear down from the critical relief efforts to more long term strategies, I think our lives right now are best illustrated by snapshot views of opportunities we have to help. Caleb continues to be amazed by the sheer volume of phone calls he gets daily requesting help. He wonders, "How did they get my number?" In reality though, he is glad to hear of ways to intercede.

A day or so ago, he remembered an acquaintance who lives in Port au Prince who had given about \$6,000 worth of books to the ministry school last year. He hadn't heard anything about her and asked a friend in the capital to stop by and check on her. Caleb found out that this 65 year old woman was living under a sheet in her courtyard, her house destroyed and without any food. He quickly made arrangements to get a tent sent to her and asked his friend to take her to a market so she could get some food. Hosean Int'l purchased a food supply for several weeks and got her back home and put up the tent. This woman was touched and remarked to our delivery person, "I can't believe he would remember me."

Yesterday morning after working through home school lessons with my daughters, I made my way down to the cybercafé to try and catch up on messages. After I gotten a generator going and sat down in the dusty room, someone came in and said there was someone asking for my husband. Caleb was out of town so I told him to come in and I'd take a message. A soft spoken, tired looking 25 year old man came in and handed me a piece of paper. On it was written a medical consult for a 2 year old boy who the man said was his son. Eventually the whole story came out. The man is a single father who had been living in Port au Prince. His son had been born with club feet and been fitted with a splint but he hadn't been able to get any other medical care for him. Then, the earthquake came and demolished their home. He and the boy escaped, but the boy had something fall on his legs injuring them further. In the days following the quake, the father made his way to the northern state capital of Cap Haitien. He found initial care for his son with some American volunteer doctors who were caring for people in a school gymnasium. The volunteer doctors were friends of Caleb's. He had found out there were orthopedic surgeons coming in and out of our local hospital and told them if there were patients needing follow up, to send them up and we'd see what we could do to help. Thus, the man appeared asking for Caleb. His son was already admitted to the hospital and finishing evaluation for repair of his injuries and club foot repair. Ultimately, I think the outlook for the boy will be good, as he will be able to get the medical attention he needs. The father is exhausted and doesn't really know what to do. I knew he had his immediate needs met: shelter and food. Between our ministry and the hospital, all inpatients are receiving two meals a day. I sent him several changes of clothing as he vocalized that need and he came by this morning to tell me thanks.

I don't know what is going to happen completely yet. I told him Caleb would be back in town today and we'd come together and discuss how we can help. If the father wants to stay, I think we can provide for him at the camp. If he does not for some reason, an option exists at a close friend's orphanage in town which often takes in children with medical needs with the plan of reuniting them

with their families. Please be praying for this situation that we can find the best way to help both the father and the boy.

One final story from yesterday, as dusk was approaching; I was hanging some washed clothes on the line. I saw a man walking up the hill with the help of a walker. Since it's quite a walk to get up the stairs in this old guesthouse, I told him to wait and I'd come down to him. Again, a fatigued young man, this time with obvious injuries to his feet. One foot was wrapped in gauze in a new dressing. The other foot showed newly healed wounds from having three toes amputated. The story was similar. He and his family had survived the earthquake and come north to receive help. He initially got to Cap Haitien where he met the same doctors who referred them to our community. He'd already been to the community hospital and had his foot redressed. He had in hand the medications (antibiotics) prescribed. He told me his wife and four children were in Cap Haitien still and he'd come to receive medical care and any help he could find. He hadn't eaten all day after traveling 8 hours on the back of a pickup truck to arrive in our community. I got him some of our leftover lunch (rice and vegetables with goat). He immediately perked up while I made some phone calls. Eventually I found a car that was not already being used and got him a ride to our camp. I made sure he was set for the night and told him once Caleb returned the next day we could figure what more could be offered to help him. I let him borrow my phone to call his family in the city and tell them he'd safely arrived. All in all, he was happily settled for the night. Tomorrow is a new day and we'll see what it brings and what help we can offer.

I hope this wasn't boring to anyone, but I just wanted to give you an idea of what all of us living and working in Haiti now are seeing on a daily basis. Friends who have worked in the tsunami disasters and the like, continue to tell us in the months to come we'll have more and more people relocating and seeking help. Many people are still clinging to existence in the capital city, not yet understanding the long term rebuilding that will be necessary. I don't blame them, I still can't wrap my mind around it all either. We'll just all keep doing everything we can one day at a time.

One final note, school did reopen yesterday, our new enrollment including refugee kids is: 1,200 students. There were some enthusiastic kids on the bus yesterday. Until we get uniforms for everyone, the administration told the kids to wear regular clothing, to help the displaced kids integrate more easily. The kids all think it's great fun to wear street clothes. Our administrative staff has been wonderful working out all the details. Please continue to pray for all of us!