

“I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”—John 8:12

CITY LIGHTS

Published by Main Street Church • Brigham City, UT • Fall 2010



Shiprock, AZ. Photo: Steve Whitehorse

**"I call to You from the ends of the earth when my heart is without strength.
Lead me to a rock that is high above me, for You have been a refuge for me, a
strong tower in the face of the enemy."**

—Psalm 61:2-4 HCSB

CITY LIGHTS exists to showcase God's unique handiwork in His children's lives for the edification of others.

As we see it, we are called to let our lights "shine before men in such a way that they may see and glorify our Father who is in heaven" -Matt. 5:14-16.

This publication must be, as Charles Spurgeon says, "simply the pen in the hand of the Spirit of God unable to write a single letter upon the tablets of the human heart except the hand of the Holy Spirit shall use us for that purpose."

To contribute a photo or a story, contact Diane at writingdinah@gmail.com or call 435-723-8486.

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you." –Maya Angelou

CITY LIGHTS

(previously *The Fellowship*, established 1994)

Main Street Church

48 N. Main Street • Brigham City, Utah



Remembering to Praise

Fall, 2010

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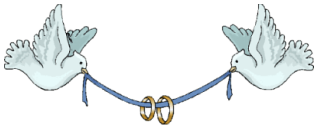
OUR CHOICE

The Apostle Paul says: "It is obvious what kind of life develops out of **trying to get your own way** all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on. . . .

But what happens **when we live God's way**? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely." –Gal. 5:16-22 (*The Message*)



Fruitfulness. Both photos taken on the Alighieri Estate in Verona, Italy by Scott Johnson, 2005



"I DO!"

by Jim Catlin--Brigham City, UT

The disciples once asked Jesus how to pray and His response, so familiar to us, was "Our Father who art in heaven...." Look at those first two words. With them, Jesus compelled us to couch the rest of our conversation with our Creator in a way similar to how we relate to our earthly fathers. Because what we know of good fathers is very true of God. He loves to meet our needs by protecting us and feeding us just like a good father does with his children.

But our relationship with God goes beyond the notion of Him as just our father. The "father metaphor," while adequate in evoking so many loving attributes of God, is frankly not big enough. For example, He is also like a King; just and powerful. But one of the most overlooked yet most frequently mentioned relational metaphors in the Bible is God as our husband! And in the context of our understanding of human romance and bridegrooms, God's ongoing offer to mankind, His central covenant since the beginning of time, becomes astonishingly recognizable.

It is unfortunate that the study of Biblical covenants is often made overly complicated and needlessly dry. The result is more suited for the accolades of academia than for the encouragement of the broken-hearted. But take heart! God has been romancing humanity with a covenant, an open offer, that bears a striking resemblance to the most heart-warming proposal you have ever seen portrayed in a movie.

With one knee on the ground since the beginning of time, God has outstretched His hand toward all mankind asking, "Will you be mine?" The Biblical phrasing of that offer, of that covenant, has always been, "If you will be my people, I will be your God." The prophet Jeremiah recorded God's ongoing intentions:

Jeremiah 31:31-32

"Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,'" declares the LORD. (NASU version, emphasis mine)

The covenant was marital in nature! And clearly, this marital-arrangement was broken by an unfaithful wife and not a failing husband. In reality, the bride was willing but her flesh was weak. As the hymn-writer penned it, "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love." So what is the solution? The "husband," God, transforms the wife.

Jeremiah 31:33

"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My

law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'"

One hundred years earlier, in order to illustrate how chronic her offenses of infidelity had become, God instructed his "bride's" prophet, Hosea, to marry a woman infamous for her promiscuity. The living metaphor of Hosea's violated marriage would, God calculated, make plain the offense.

Hosea 1:2

"...the LORD said to Hosea, 'Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD.'"

Like His bride, Israel, God foresees that Hosea's wife will run off looking for other husbands, better lovers, but will never be satisfied and return to her proven husband.

Hosea 2:7

"She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; and she will seek them, but will not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now!'"

Then after generations of unfaithfulness, much of mankind, not just Israel, will accept the offer from the bride-groom who Himself will make transform her to be faithful in return.

Hosea 2:19-20, 23

"I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion, and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD...I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, and I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' and they will say, 'You are my God!'"

Until that day, God patiently waits for those who will hear His offer, His covenant, and will embrace it fully. In a wedding ceremony there is no proving of worth. There is no public recognition of the bride having ever earned her place alongside the groom. He simply asks, "Will you be mine?" and she replies, "I will." Likewise God is proposing, "If you will be my people, I will be your God."

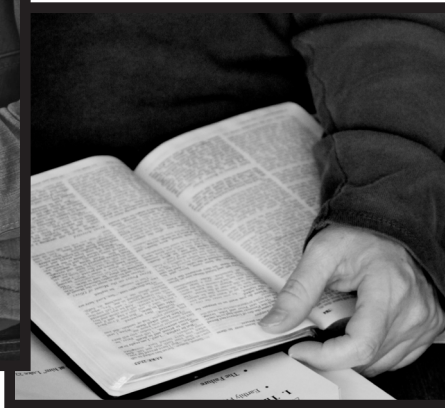
And like a new bride, all those who accept His offer must leave behind their old lives (Luke 18:28-30). They must build a new life with Him whose banner over them is "Love" (Song of Solomon 2:4). They must take on the new name of the groom (Exodus 20:7). They must love Him and Him alone (Deuteronomy 6:4). And their hearts will ever strain toward the day when the bride and the bridegroom will find consummation in the wedding supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9).

Isaiah 54:5

"For your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth."

"The LORD God is my strength, my personal bravery, and my invincible army."

—Hab. 3:19 Amplified Bible



"Jesus went up to Jerusalem...(to) the sheep gate, a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, waiting for the moving of the waters; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool. . . A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and **knew** that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, 'Do you wish to get well?'" John 5:1-6

You are There. . .

on your pallet carried by friends to the Bethesda pool. They set you down next to others who have only one hope of healing: to be the first into the moving water. You come here everyday for the same reason. Close your eyes and feel what it's like to be back here again, helpless in the boredom, accosted by merciless heat and bitter cold, disappointed when someone gets to the water first. It's easy to join in the pity-party around you. No one comes to help. Describe how you feel.

Several retreat ladies gathered for the Receptive Meditation workshop on John 5:1-15 on Saturday afternoon. Following a brief introduction, we worked silently through the passage, focusing on the meeting between the man called impotent and Jesus. While reading what happened centuries ago, we related to the story as if Jesus had singled us out in the same way.

We hung out in the usual place of hopelessness, but when Hope came along and knew everything about us, we faced the facts about ourselves and answered a hearty "Yes" when He asked, "Do you wish to get well?" Then He gave us a choice: continue on as you have been or take a chance and follow My lead: "Pick up your pallet and walk."

On the outside, we may appear to have it all together, but we're no different from the man in this story, a prisoner in his body, too easily defined by his infirmity. We are equally skilled at justifying our attitudes and actions and playing the martyr by pointing the finger at others for what's happened to us.

And then, we meet Jesus, our Remedy, and discover that if we truly want to change, we have to stand up and move away from what has bound us all our years.

"Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk" (9).

The amazing thing is when Jesus the Omnipotent speaks to the impotent, He infuses us with His courage and power, enabling us to obey. As we take our first faltering steps, we find ourselves on Way and Truth Road. It all began, of course, when we took our eyes off of others and looked into the eyes of Life and saw His transformation promise that changes everything.

This encounter between the needy and Fulfillment happened in public. Within minutes, the man who "could not" walked right into the Pharasaic conflict swirling about Jesus: How dare He heal on the Sabbath? Stubborn unbelief always confronts active faith.

"Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, 'Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you'" (14).

We hear Him loud and clear—God has answered our prayers (even if we don't see all the evidence yet)--so we must walk a straight path, avoiding sin, or something worse than "what was" will happen.

So where do we go from here? We determine to follow and we trust in His faithfulness. The psalmist describes the process: "I hold on to You for dear life, and You hold me steady as a post" (Psalm 63:8 The Message).

His Spirit Who dwells within produces a beautiful lifestyle--a fresh attitude, new choices, and surprisingly, healthy outcomes. As we put one foot in front of the other, the key to our success is relying on Him 100 percent.

The great thing about our collective meditation together that day was talking about it with each other and discovering how much we all wanted the same thing: to be free and to know and love Jesus more. As Christopher Reeve once said, "Once you choose hope, anything's possible."

Note: The following two stories were written by women who attended the retreat and the workshop. They are members of Light Writers, a group interested in writing and sharing their journey stories.

Come Closer: Reflecting on the "Bind Us Together Retreat"

by Sheila Hassett -- Brigham City, UT

I was born in Doneraile, a small village in Ireland and have lived in the US for the past 25 years. I recently relocated with my job to Brigham City from Houston, TX. Moving here was the right decision because along the way, I drew closer to God. However, I didn't realize that until I attended the retreat last May.

Come Closer is the title of a book written by our retreat speaker, Jane Rubietta. She was a breath of fresh air filled with the love of God, eager to help each of us grow closer to our Heavenly Father. Jane could easily make a living as a standup comedian. Her humor put us all at ease and we were able to relate to her as someone like us. Jane allowed us to laugh and to cry with her as she recalled situations in her life with which we could identify.

I often heard that God is always there for us. However, I have only recently begun to understand what that meant. Looking back, I believe that God had been preparing me for this retreat since last October. I have always used prayer as a means for God to come closer to me. I believed that if I could name my desires and ask in Jesus' name that God would grant them.

I had accepted Jesus as Savior in Hong Kong back in the mid-70s. It was a true and genuine experience for me because for the first time, I believed that Jesus really died for my sins past, present and to come. At that moment, I understood, but did I really "get it"?

During my travels, one of my first priorities has always been to find a church home where I could study God's Word and enjoy Christian fellowship. For 30 years I grew in Christ, memorizing many Scriptures by heart.

I have been an overachiever all of my life, so because of that, I began to wonder how much I had allowed God to bless me and how much I had done on my own. Most of the time, I brought my burdens in prayer to the altar and then immediately picked them back up to solve the issues on my own. Subconsciously, I never believed that God loved me enough to take care of all my needs.

There's no doubt that this began when I was born without a father. The stigma attached to me in my small Irish village convinced me that no man could ever truly love me. My sense of unworthiness was something that Satan used for my detriment over many years. I'm convinced that because I never believed my husband loved me, I self-destructed in my marriage. For 50 years, I wore a



83 women from 9 churches in retreat--Albion, ID, 2010. Photo: Sharmila Felix

mask of confidence, achieving many honors as I traveled the world, but deep down I felt unlovable. This past October, like many others in America, I was negatively affected by the recession. I was downsized from a lucrative management position and found myself living in poverty. I exhausted all my resources and finally was forced to my knees where I cast all my cares and burdens on God my Savior.

During this time, I finally "got it!" I prayed the prayer of faith, studied the Word and remained still, remembering the Scripture that the Holy Spirit recalled to my mind: *"Be still and know that I am God"* (Psalm 46:10).

For the past nine months, I have continued to listen to God's voice and moved ahead one step at a time as He directed. I trusted Him to guide me out of the dark tunnel of desperation, not knowing how long it would last or where He would lead me.

My journey to the retreat took me through three states in three months and through many stages of uncertainty. I blindly obeyed the prompting of the Holy Spirit and arrived in Brigham City, found my church home, and at the retreat, realized that God had been calling me to *"Come closer. . .come closer. . .come closer."*

Having had possessions and success only provided a life built on sand. The devil entered and before I knew it, my life as I had been living it was destroyed. In my new-found situation, not knowing how I could pay my bills, I searched deep within myself and found Jesus, my One True Treasure, the One Whom I had taken for granted. Amazingly through the power of the Holy Spirit, Satan has not been able to steal my joy.

At the retreat, I listened and learned, and slowly saw myself as I was, drawing nearer to God. I was not leaning on my own understanding but was moving ahead step-by-step into a deeper relationship with Him. God has blessed me and filled my cup to overflowing. I am truly living life and living it abundantly!

"He Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!]" -Hebrews 13:5 *Amplified Bible*



First, I Need to Know the God Who Saved Me

Shannan Gunn -- Plymouth, UT

Low self-esteem ruled my world, unlovable was my hallmark, and working hard and taking orders were my calling. My lifestyle was pride and the blackness of immorality.

A brutal childhood led me into a marriage that was dark and unloving. But my three wounded children helped to save my soul. They encouraged me to stand my ground and be true to their needs. Without their unconditional love, I would have been lost.

The one and only breath of my grandson, Elija, started me down Christ's path. His father, Lem, my son-in-law, had taken me to church for weeks before Elija died. The songs we sang lifted my heart to a place I had never been before--soft, comforting songs that spoke of God's Word and His salvation.

Lem, too, had been lost to God for a time. Drugs and alcohol had darkened his life. Hitting rock bottom had taken him to church where he met Pastor Larry. This soft-spoken man's encouragement led Lem to the Lord in a powerful way.

He wanted to reach out to all the bikers who were lost, so he joined "Soldiers for Jesus." These guys are big, big men with leathers and bandanas and tattoos, lots of hair on their faces. And when they speak, you expect to hear anger but instead, you get "God bless you" and hugs that feel like God Himself has missed seeing you.

Lem, along with four other Soldiers became a living example of what God's Word can do. Their words were of God, and His grace and mercy filled the air. Soon there were 12 men and their families

dedicating their lives to God's work.

As I walked into the hospital room, some of the Soldiers were praying for Amber and Elija. As the next man showed up with something he thought might help, they prayed together again. Their hugs were as warm and loving as my kids gave me. Soon my heart started melting.

For weeks they made sure that I was okay and could get the girls back and forth to school with money for lunch. Not one of them ever came around without God on his mind. I truly had never met anyone, let alone a whole group of big men like the Soldiers who spoke of God in such a personal way. Little did I know that was the first time God entered into my heart in any real way.

Before this, I can't remember ever going to church and feeling Christ. I can't remember ever seeking His forgiveness. But now, I wanted it. I wanted the peace I saw in Lem and the soldiers. I wanted to feel God's presence.

However, it took the heart-wrenching death of my granddaughter, Ashtin, to slap me in the face. My son Wes's beautiful four-year-old loved her dad, but the whims of her 24-year-old mother tore the family apart. Wes's love for Ashtin kept him on the run 24/7 to dance and gymnastics and to and from daycare. She spent every other weekend with him. Until one early spring afternoon, when her mom came to pick her up, because she wanted to get some hair extensions so she could party.

An SUV ran a red light, hitting the car's right side where Ashtin was sitting. Her death devastated all of us. I saw no sparkle in my son's eyes. No life or harmony. Just pain.

That's when my soul cried out for God's mercy. *What have I done? Why do I have to feel this horrendous loss? Why do I have to see everyone in my family in pain?*

"He went without comfort so you might have it. He postponed joy so you might share in it. He willingly chose isolation so you might never be alone in your hurt and sorrow." --Joni Eareckson Tada

I have heard it said that if just one person comes to God because of the unforeseen death of a loved one, then that death is not in vain. But if it took my Ashtin's death to get my attention, I was ashamed of my lost soul.



Lem with son, Isaiah. Photo: April Camp, 2006

Soon I began to listen to Christian radio stations. Their words started grabbing at something inside me. But I resisted. *God can't forgive me! I've sinned too much and for too long. Why would He want an old sinner like me? I'm not strong enough to walk his path.*

I heard that to walk with God you need a community to help you. I had always wanted friends with whom we could do things because my husband and I were always loners. But I really wanted more than that. I looked for a church community that would feed my soul with song and God's Word.

Then one morning my heart said *NOW, I just need to believe in Him. I can do it.* So I made a covenant with God. I begged for forgiveness. I began learning His Word and finding my truth in His works.

Although my sinfulness is still dominant and my habits strong, I can feel His presence changing me in my thoughts and in my actions. I love what is happening. I treasure the thought that I am truly loved by God and forgiven of all my sins.

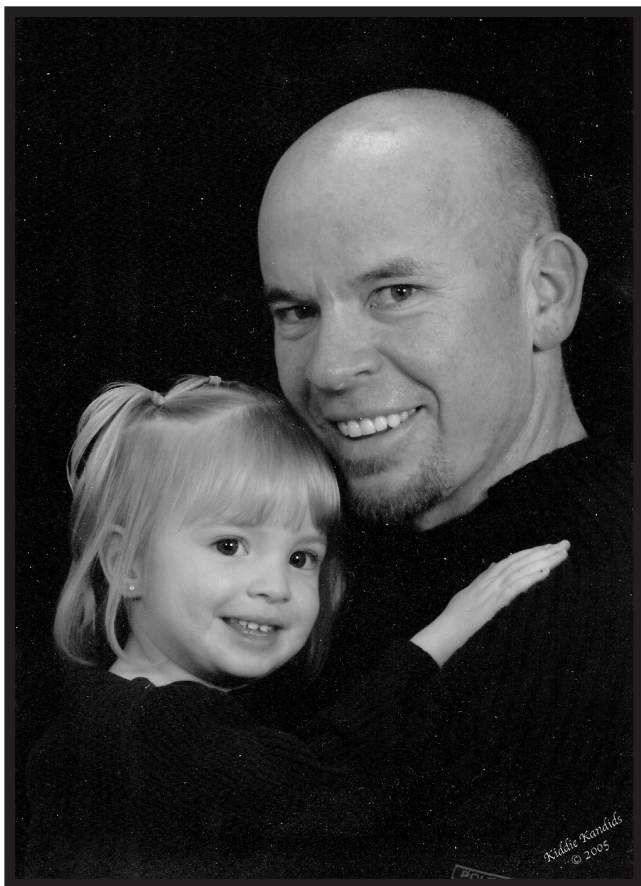
I have yet to find the calling that digs deep into my soul, that makes the morning shine! What I have in mind is knowing that I have a job to do for God and that He is trusting in me to get it done. He needs my help and my story to gather in His flock.

But first I need to know the God Who saved me.



Shannan's daughter, Amber, and the Soldiers for Jesus.
Photo: April Camp, 2006

Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am." —John 14:1-3



Wes and Ashtin, 2005



Shannan's happy family. Photo: Carl Shannan

"The giant step in the walk of faith is the one we take when we decide God is no longer a part of our lives, He is our life." —Beth Moore

"And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'" Matt 25:40

Not Your Ordinary Youth Summer Camp!

by Karen Holder--Brigham City, UT

The year: Summer 1997

The participants: Jim Catlin, Joel Holder, Daryl Jump, Kip Murray

The destination: Rocky Boy, Montana on the Chippewa Cree Indian Reservation

The purpose: Spend a week with youth from around the country serving residents in that rural and impoverished area.

That was our first exposure to Group Workcamps Foundation. Then after years of Joel attending workcamp as a youth camper, site writer and a "red shirt" site coach, Joel convinced Bob and me to join the "red shirt" volunteer staff in the summer of 2004. That was seven years ago. Bob quickly got the nickname "Photo Bob" and I'm the "cafeteria lady."

Before I tell you more about my experience, let me go back even farther in history and tell you how Group Workcamps Foundation and Group Mission Trips got started and what happens in a typical day at camp.

In July 1976, it rained 12 inches in three hours in the Big Thompson River basin, near Estes Park, in Colorado. In the floods, lives and homes were lost. 145 people were killed, more than 400 homes destroyed, causing over \$40 million dollars worth of damage. It was a horrible tragedy. Group's founder, Thom Schultz wanted to do something to help. Group was a small Christian company that at that time was based around Group Magazine. He ran an ad in the next issue calling for volunteers to come to Loveland and help rebuild the devastated community. He was amazed when 300 youth and adults arrived for that first "work camp" to rebuild homes and mend lives.

But the largest change was that everyone grew in their Christian faith. Today, workcamps are still an integral part of Group's outreach, with over 100 work sites in the US and Puerto Rico. Each summer, thousands of kids from youth groups across the country head into needy areas and help rebuild communities. From that tragedy, God created a powerful program for service, ministry and personal spiritual growth!

This year 11 adults and youth from Main Street Church embarked on a week long mission trip to Red Mesa, AZ during the week of July 10-17, sponsored by Group Workcamps Foundation, where they heard God's Word...did God's Word...and deepened their spiritual walk, while providing meaningful service to people in need! Those attending this year were: Adult Leaders--Cheryl Loudermilk and Steve Whitehorse; Youth--Cheyanne Anderson,

Parker Anderson, Jared and Kymber Loudermilk, Preston Merrill, Markeisha Sims; "Red Shirt Staff"--Jim and Dorothy Catlin, and Karen Holder.

The youth and adult volunteer staff must pay their own way for the mission trip. So in the fall, the church began to raise the necessary funds to help pay for their travel expenses, lodging, meals, and home repair materials – lumber, paint, etc. Everyone lodges at a local school...sleeping on the classrooms floors, eating meals in the school cafeteria, and showering in the gym locker rooms. New friends are made all while serving on project teams with people from other churches.

The young people served in tangible, practical ways. For six days in this remote part of Northern Arizona among the Navajo people, they participated with nearly 300 other youth from around the country and other churches to repair homes with damaged roofs and sagging porches, rebuild unsafe steps or wheelchair ramps, paint interior and exterior walls and transform a house as God transformed their faith. Then after a long day of work and service in the 100-degree heat, the large group gathered together for a time of high-impact devotions and interactive programs packed with music, Scripture, media, drama, and challenges--led by a trained youth ministry professional (that was Jim's job!) and a song leader. All this is designed to help shape the young peoples' service experience into a spiritual growth experience.

2010 marks my 7th year as a "red shirt" volunteer staff member and cafeteria host. My busy day starts at 5:00 am and ends sometime after 11:00 pm. My main responsibility is to create a welcoming and pleasant atmosphere in the cafeteria by helping the cook staff organize the cafeteria, which also includes keeping tables cleaned and floors mopped (for this part of the task, Dorothy was a tireless partner and helper!); interact with the campers during meal times; establish a friendship with the cooks; organize the lunch line early in the morning for the crew breakmakers; and set up food for the staff lunches (this year we even had senators, governmental dignitaries and news media show up for lunchtime!).

When the youth crews are out at the residential sites repairing homes, I'm back at the school preparing for the next meal. One of my favorite things to do is to sit and visit with the wonderful Navajo ladies from the kitchen. After everything has been cleaned, we gather all the lunch foods for the next day. While we count

and package meat and cheese slices, lettuce, and condiments for sandwiches for each of the 40+ crews, we talk and laugh and share. I so enjoy getting to know these ladies, hear of their rich heritage and deep faith in God. What a blessing it is to work side by side with them.

So why Group Workcamps? Connect with Jesus. Serve others. Be changed! Next summer at Navajo Mountain, UT!





It was a great feeling to work on the trailer home of Kyle and Ophelia Blackhorse and their two daughters, Amelia and Taliara, and to see how they felt when they saw what we were doing to improve their place. Five teens and I worked as a crew. We fixed the roof, put on and painted new siding, framed around the windows with wood and painted the wood white.

They asked each of us on the crew to dip our hand in paint and put our hand prints on the newly painted wall, and then sign our name next to our hand print. It was great to see how happy the family was when we were finished. They said they wanted to remember us always. That was such a special day.

Throughout the week, we had many God sightings, that is, seeing God at work. I know that all of the youth who went with us as part of the Main Street Church group had an awesome week together, and they all want to do it again next year.

This experience changed me. I truly felt God's presence. The night before we left the reservation, I had a God sighting of my own. I met with one of the girls in my group. The team of eight should have come to the meeting, but it ended up just the two of us. We had an amazing talk and time of sharing. I think it changed both of our lives.

It Wasn't About Me

by Cheryl Loudermilk -- Brigham City, UT

Going to Workcamp on the Navajo reservation (the Mexican Water area) in Red Mesa, AZ was an amazing experience. At first,



I wasn't sure if I would be able to get up at 6:45 a.m. and go out and work in 100-degree heat all day, then sleep at a school on the floor with 20 girls in one room and shower in a locker room. But none of those things mattered after I had been there for one day.

God was amazing! He showed me that it wasn't about me, it was about the people we were serving. And we were working for Him.



Across: Dillon, Jared, Janique, Jameson, Preston
Top to Bottom: Haley, Janique, Robby, Caroline, and Lori

"And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is My disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward." Matthew 10:42

“Haiti,” He Said

by Rebecca Catlin--Brigham City, UT

“GO.”

When I had first received my letter of acceptance from Ecola Bible School, I had no clue how God would use me in the year to come. I had no idea what He had been planning for me, and I especially had no idea what He would teach me about prayer. The thought had not even crossed my mind that I would go to a third world country during a crisis that would paralyze an already crippled nation.

I remember thinking at the time that possessing the foreknowledge of my first year at school would make all the anticipation easier, but we possess 20/20 hindsight for a reason. Knowing what was to come would never have given me the patience to listen to God.



Ecola students in class. Photo: Rebecca Catlin, 2010

I went to Ecola to be still for a year. Attending a Bible school on the Oregon coast sounded like a great place to just sit and learn to get my adult feet under me. Following my acceptance in July of 2009, I received a number of letters regarding the upcoming school year. The first time I heard about the Spring Break mission teams, my heart tweaked when I read that a trip was being planned for Haiti. There were no details listed at the time, unlike the outlined team projects for the Mexico mission. All I knew was that something stirred deep within me for Haiti in particular, and I wanted to follow through to the best of my ability. I listened carefully during the first weeks of school for any mention of the Haiti mission.

One day in mid-October between morning classes, I was praying while making a second pot of coffee. Suddenly, the chorus of Bluetree's “God of This City” played so loudly in my mind that I completely forgot what I was praying about and began to cry.

*“For Greater things have yet to come
And greater things are still to be done in this City
Greater things have yet to come
And greater things are still to be done here
There is no one like our God
There is no one like our God.”*

Haiti had been on the back burner of my mind for weeks, but I quite suddenly felt deep, deep love and compassion welling up inside of me for the tiny island nation. There was no reason for it. I knew next to nothing about Haiti at the time. I could have pointed to it on a map, and that was about it. It was in that moment that I knew for the first time that God was actively speaking to me about something He wanted me to do.

A week later, I attended the first light meeting about the Spring Break missions. The school's chairman, Dave Duff, very cautiously advised us to pray about the trips and seek advice from our parents, but I almost dismissed the entire speech. I had been praying about Haiti for almost a month, and God had very clearly given me an answer already, but Dave stressed again and again about the risk of going to Haiti.

I stared at the team application sitting in front of me while he spoke about Malaria and gang violence, and I distinctly remember thinking that it didn't matter. Violence, disease, expenses – none of it mattered to me. It wasn't that I didn't care, I cared a great deal. It just didn't matter. By the end of the meeting, I had the application completely filled out. I hesitated only to call my parents and seek a final word of assurance. They told me they were behind me no matter what my decision or the risks that accompanied it. Twenty minutes after the meeting ended, I left my dorm room to track down the staff member who took the applications, and God, in His infinite wisdom and planning, had her walking by the bottom of my stairs exactly when I needed to find her. My first step toward Haiti had fallen into place precisely how it needed to.

In the weeks that followed, I and 70 other students attended weekly mission meetings, eagerly awaiting the list of people chosen for teams. I had no doubt that even though the number of people permitted to go to Haiti was low, God would put me on the team. As I listened to the history of Haiti and the projects we were to do, I began to feel unprepared. I knew I was going, and I trusted God to give me growth in the months to come, but it didn't change how young I felt. I couldn't help but feel that I was still just

a kid playing college student and experienced Christian. I felt like a spiritual infant.

During a class on Matthew, the speaker encouraged us as a student body to sit still and be silent for two minutes with God to see what He would tell us. I sat quietly in a room full of 130 other students, and listened to the steady flow of air going through my lungs. In the midst of all that silence, a single definitive word popped into my head. I silently, but very clearly, understood the word, "Go." It was deliberate and sudden, taking me off guard. I paused, held my breath, and responded, "But why? Why do you want me?" Almost immediately, and before I even finished my thought, I understood a calm reply of "Because I asked you to."

The teacher closed our silent time with a prayer and wrapped up the class, but the interchange I had just experienced rattled around in my head for weeks. It shook me so deeply, that I felt something more distinct than surprise and more intimate than comfort. God had now told me personally twice that He wanted me in Haiti.

Two weeks after studying Matthew, we had side-by-side classes of Missions and Old Testament Survey. On the first day of our Missions class, the speaker brought up Matthew 18:13-14 and stressed the point of leaving the 99 sheep we find comfortable to go in search of the one that is lost. I was actively taking notes and thinking about Haiti when our teacher said, "God tells us to go. He tells us to go, not for any reason other than because He's asked us to."

My face turned white and I swallowed very quickly while my friend, knowing about my previous experience from Matthew, looked at me with her mouth wide open. It was like the words "Go" and "asked to" were electrified and hung in the air, tingling. Every day during the following week, our Missions teacher repeated the phrase, and every single time, I reacted the same way. This was now the third time God had told me what He wanted.

During the same week, we had an assignment to spend a two-and-a-half hour block of time alone and in meditation. Our Old Testament Survey teacher told us to choose a section of Scripture, and read, meditate, and pray. Many of us had never done anything like this before, and I was not alone in that. On a stormy Thursday in early November, I walked into an empty dorm room with my Bible and a blanket, locking the door behind me. I cleared my head and opened up to Jeremiah for no reason other than I felt like I should.

As I was reading the introduction to the book, I noticed the awesome power of God outside my window. The leaves were

blowing sideways across the glass and the whole building shook with His power. I was struck by how real and living our God is. He builds up and destroys so easily. I mulled over how He had been teaching me that if I ask, He will answer.

When I read Jeremiah 1:4-10, I was nearly brought to tears. It was so incredible to me to know that God has had me in mind since the beginning of time. He has been planning for me since before my birth and my parents' birth, and their parents' birth. I was quite awestruck. In verse six, Jeremiah responds to God exactly as I had recently concerning Haiti. I had been thinking all along, "But, God, I'm just a kid." This thought of being an immature Christian had kept me from teaching those around me and even praying aloud with others. When God says to Jeremiah, "*Do not say, 'I am a youth,' because everywhere I send you, you shall go, and all that I command you, you shall speak,*" it gave me strength to know that

God was telling me what needed to be done not because of my being, but because of my faith. I knew that God had given me a job to do, and I had the childlike faith to trust that He would provide me with what I needed to do it. For the fourth time in a month, God had cleared my doubt about Haiti.

By Thanksgiving, the teams had been announced, and my name was clearly listed among the 20 accepted students, though it wasn't any surprise to me. I smiled deeply when I saw that I was on the list, feeling like I was the special person with some inside information. As a team, we met on Wednesdays to discuss potential projects and other preparations for leaving the country in the spring. To close our meetings, we prayed in groups of three or four that the complications would come together as God

saw fit. We prayed for the people who were not selected for the team and we prayed for our brothers and sisters going to Mexico. We lifted up our health, the health of the missionaries we would serve, and the state of the orphanage we would be working for.

Most importantly, we prayed specifically that God would rock Haiti. I prayed those exact words. Not just once, but many times I prayed for God to shake Haiti in a way that would prepare them to receive us. I had no clue how literally God was going answer.

I returned from Christmas break in January, hopeful that God would continue to prepare us. I had raised half the funds I needed to go, and received my appropriate vaccinations for Typhoid, Tetanus, and Hepatitis A and B. We had a Haiti team meeting on January 6th to discuss what we'd accomplished while being home for Christmas. We prayed, continued to plan, and went on our way without knowing how entirely different our next meeting would be.



Classmate, Rebecka and Denzel, 2010

On Tuesday, the 12th of January in the late afternoon, I was sitting in a relatively empty student lounge with a couple of friends watching a movie. Andrew, a member of the team and son of the missionaries in Haiti, was sitting at a computer when he received a phone call that rushed him out of the room. Ten minutes later, he walked back inside with a stricken expression, and told us about a large earthquake that had just destroyed much of Haiti. Many of the buildings had collapsed and though the orphanage was still standing, some of the walls had been badly damaged. Fearing its potential collapse, the children had no place to sleep for the night.

The ten or so of us in the room immediately got together and prayed, but my heart had been shattered. I couldn't help but think about the subject of our prayers from the previous weeks. I spent the rest of the night running on mental autopilot and answering phone calls from concerned family members about the status of our trip. I had no answers to give them. None of us did.

The next day, we had our scheduled afternoon meeting. We sat solemnly, in our half of the dark divided classroom while on the other side, the Mexico team members were playing a game and practicing their Spanish. We watched several news reports online and surveyed the destruction of the city we had planned to serve.

It was far worse than any of us had initially imagined. The death toll was estimated at 100,000 and nearly the entire population had become homeless.

Clean water and electricity were practically nonexistent, and all the inmates at the prison were out on the streets again. The team sat completely still and silent for the hour that we watched news footage. Haiti had been sitting on the brink of anarchy for generations, and now the



Destroyed shopping district near the orphanage



Presidential Palace, Port Au Prince, Haiti

earthquake had pushed it over the edge. We had to question whether the trip would happen at all. Dave, the school chairman and leader of our team, told us we would continue to plan as if we were going, but he was unsure about the trip. We prayed for an hour. I called my parents and sat on the beach in a daze until dinner, but I never once questioned why God had shaken Haiti. I knew why. Even though the official status of our trip was up in the air, I knew that God had told me I was going. I had a deep peace that He would bring it all together for us, and the earthquake was just the beginning of the plan He had for the tiny nation.

The feelings from the weeks that followed continued to mount up. As the death toll rose daily, our desire to do something deepened. We left every Wednesday meeting wanting to scream or cry or run around in circles until our bodies collapsed beneath us. We were so anxious to just be in Port Au Prince and serve God immediately. We wanted so badly to be there, but God was telling us to wait. I began to ask other team members about what God had told them. I wanted to tell them what He had told me just to give them some assurance if they were feeling doubtful, but God is ever amazing. I found that everyone I talked to had the same feelings about going. We all knew that we were part of God's plan in the aftermath of the earthquake.

On February 2nd, the staff and student body at Ecola had a day of prayer. Once every term, classes would be canceled for the day and mass lists of prayer requests would be handed out. Haiti was at the top of it. We gathered in the classroom that morning for a minor debrief before going off in solitude. Dave stood before our class and told us that the missionaries in Haiti had called and given the team the green light to go. He urged us then to spend a piece of our day praying for personal confirmation about going. With such a significant increase in danger, Dave wanted us to be absolutely certain that we were called to serve. In the weeks that followed, four team members dropped out for personal reasons. I thanked God daily that He had been so clear to me in the fall. It granted me confidence to push forward and determination to follow through.

The final stressful details of the trip weighed on me heavily during the final week of classes in February. I took many long, silent walks to remote beaches just to find solitude and breathe. I had no mosquito net, needed the final shot in my series of Hepatitis A and B vaccinations, and had no way to get to the Astoria Health Department for it. All this and more needed

Children playing on the roof of a collapsed building



to be accomplished in the next four days. The other team members were all under similar stresses, but God is faithful, and He put all the little things in their appropriate places right up to the minute they were needed. By Tuesday, February 23rd, we were fully packed, vaccinated, and ready for leaving the next day. We had miraculously fit the mountain of supplies in the school office into bins for travel to Haiti. It felt like we had been pushing a boulder up a hill for the past three months, and we had finally made it to the top.

On Wednesday afternoon, the teams and various supportive students stood in a circle in the Ecola parking lot as an emotional and anxious group. We prayed for safety of the teams and provision during travel. I stood, shoulders laced with two of my best friends, and all of us at the brink of tears for both excitement and sorrow for the trips on which we were about to embark. We said our goodbyes to both fellow students going home and the other teams driving to Mexico. As we piled into our carefully packed and airport-bound vans, it felt as though the boulder we'd pushed to the summit was now slowly beginning to roll down the other side. Everything was prepared. There was nothing left to do but arrive.

"I'M WITH YOU."

We checked 30 bags and bins of supplies at the Portland airport and prayed that we might see them all again after three flights and landing in a torn-up country. On board, as we buckled up that evening, no one felt much like sleeping. We boldly struck up a conversation with anyone who would listen and news spread quickly throughout the plane that a crazy team of Bible school students was traveling to Haiti.

I calmly read Psalm 71 and thanked God for getting us safely to our first flight. *"You who have shown me many troubles and distresses will revive me again, and will bring me up again from the depths of the earth. May you increase my greatness and turn to comfort me."*

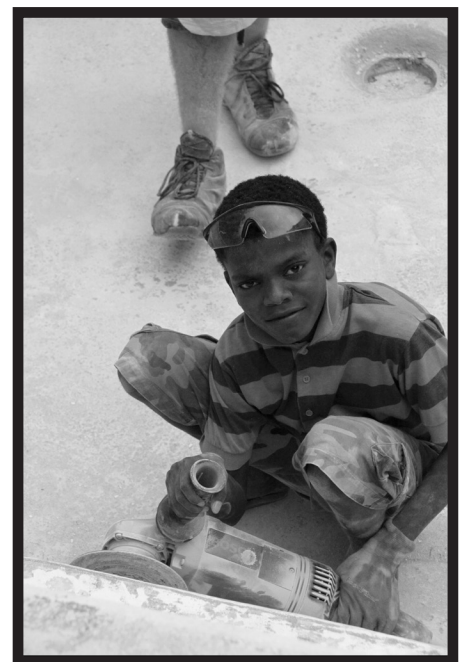
As we landed in Los Angeles, our stewardess announced our

intentions for Haiti. She spoke about how amazing it was that we were not only going, but bringing supplies for the orphanage, and carrying all our food for two weeks with us as well. The pilot thanked us personally and we got off the plane feeling the first fruits of our commitment. A sign flashing "Help Haiti" made us all laugh as we waited for the shuttle to

take us across LAX. "We are!" a few of us responded aloud.

We boarded our second flight bound for Miami at 9:00 in the evening, hoping to sleep on the plane. Very few of us caught more than 20 minutes in the five or so hours that followed. I stayed in silent prayer while seated between a married couple who were trying to sleep. We finally stepped off the plane in Florida at 4:30 in the morning, local time. Our excitement slowly turned into anxiety as we spread out on the floor at our gate. We made our last calls home for the next two weeks and spoke terms of endearment with our groggy family members. I called a good friend who would be leaving on his Mormon mission while I was away. It broke my heart in a different place. I left messages for my parents and my sister before sending final text messages to friends. I told them I was terrified, but determined, and asked them to pray. Then I shut my phone off and zipped it into a pocket, not to be turned on again for two weeks.

The hour nap that I took on the floor of the Miami airport felt more like ten minutes. When I woke up, the people sitting at the gate were a mixed group of Haitians and relief workers. We thanked God for so many Red Cross people. The atmosphere as we boarded our final plane was very quiet. I sat between two nervous middle-aged Haitian men who were clearly traveling back home



13-year-old Jeff was very helpful and served as our Creole translator

for the first time since the earthquake. Many of the people were. It had only hit six weeks before. We were one of the first available commercial flights back into Haiti. No one spoke a word as we circled the Port Au Prince airport, surveying the demolished buildings. I wasn't sure what I would say even if I had wanted to talk. The view out the window was nothing short of unbelievable.



Women sewing purses in the Women's Center

We gathered in a hallway near a Haitian greeting band that looked rather out of place. The joyful music that came from their instruments didn't seem to be cheering anyone up. We loaded into a shuttle that drove us across the airport grounds, past the Army encampments that were set up weeks before for aid, and into a warehouse. The lines we shuffled into were hot and slow moving despite being 8:00 in the morning. We quickly shed layers of clothing and stuffed them into our carry-on baggage. After passing through security, we made a mad dash for our luggage that was stacked in the middle of the warehouse.

The chaos reminded me of traveling to Israel and how immediately foreign I felt before even seeing anything beyond the airport. By God's provision, we picked up every single piece of luggage we had checked in at the Portland airport 15 hours earlier. We stood in a tented courtyard with a high, barred red fence, and a hundred Haitian faces gazing in at us. I was wondering what I had gotten myself into when God reminded me that He was there with us and had been the whole time. I smiled, comforted. We stood quietly, listening to Dave's instruction about getting through the crowd that was desperate to carry our bags for spare change. I felt foolish muttering my half-learned Creole phrases quietly to myself. In the team busyness that followed the earthquake, we reduced our Creole lessons to single sheet handouts of phrases that went barely practiced.

When the gate opened and the airport security men rushed us along, we wound through traffic in a long line and avoided eye

contact, saying, "No, messi," all the while.

I wasn't sure what to think when I first saw the vehicle that we later referred to as "The Cage Car." I briefly pondered the purpose of the large white truck with a caged sitting area in the back. The barrier was not there to keep people in, but rather to keep others out. All the same, I crawled up the ladder in the back to sit on the roof while we loaded the truck bed with our luggage. I smiled dimly at

the other team members on the roof. We looked so out of place. Haitians stared blankly at us, just another group of clean, white Americans. We weren't the first "help" they had seen.

It was a short drive to the orphanage, but the visual overload of destruction slowed time. Everything looked exactly like the pictures we had seen from just after the earthquake. There were piles of rubble on street corners and people partially living out of flattened buildings. We drove by a few tent cities, and received our fair share of wolf whistles, spitting, and rude hand gestures. I put my camera away. I wouldn't want to be gawked at either if I was in their position.

As we drove into a wealthier neighborhood of Port Au Prince, I wondered who lived in the

large and seemingly undamaged homes beyond the eight foot high walls of the street. Was anybody living on the other side of the razor wire? We rounded a corner and honked from outside a large metal gate. It slid open, revealing two Haitian security guards and a number of smiling volunteers, attempting to keep the house dogs at bay. We dazedly lumbered off the Cage Car and stacked our luggage in the entryway of the house. A giant mastiff lay on the cool tile floor with his tongue hanging out, clearly exhausted from the heat. I envied him. Shelly, Andrew's mother and caretaker of the orphanage, gathered us into the living room for a quick debrief of the house and rules that followed.

"The showers will be cold, if at all," she said. "Flush the toilets as little as possible. Keep the mastiff, Marley, out of the front yard or he'll fight the other dogs. Lunch will be prepared for you, but help will be needed for dinner. Never, under any circumstances, get the tap water in your eyes, nose, or mouth. Likewise, never put your toothbrush under the faucet, or you will need to buy a new one. Drink only from the water cooler downstairs. Dress modestly. Work hard. Wear your sunscreen and bug spray or you will be sorry. Turn electronics off during the day, because there's a limited amount of electricity from the generator and you will want it running through the fans at night. Most importantly, remember why you're here."

Shelly explained that she and her husband, Byron, were out of the country during the earthquake to run a marathon. She outlined the troubles with getting back into Haiti and all the uncertainty

they had for the kids. In the weeks that followed January 12th, most of the children at the orphanage had been delivered to their new parents in the States. Since they were all in the final stages of adoption, many of them made it out, but three remained due to difficulties with customs. As we sat and learned about the affairs of the orphanage and Heartline Ministries that ran it, we all teetered back and forth, wanting nothing but food and sleep.

“I know you're all very tired,” Shelly said, looking around at the heavy-eyed team, “but if you just make it to dinner without sleeping, you really will be better off to start again tomorrow.” I remember thinking that staying awake until dinner wouldn't be too bad until I looked at the clock. It was only 9:00 in the morning and I wasn't sure I'd make it past two hours without collapsing.

Shelly led the girls on a tour of the houses involved with the ministry while the boys went with Byron to survey potential projects. Through the backyard of the house, there was a gate in the high wall connecting to another backyard, one house over. There was a bright-eyed Haitian woman sitting in the courtyard by a tent with a few kids playing inside.

“Bonjour!” We greeted her with tired smiles, and she nodded back at us with a small grin.

“This is, or was I guess, the Girls' House before the earthquake,” Shelly explained as we walked through shaded rooms. “The woman outside is one of our hired staff who is afraid to live indoors, as is the case with many Haitians.” I looked around at the brightly painted walls with birds and flowers. It felt strangely empty without little girls running around. “After the initial quake,” Shelly went on, “many people went back into the standing buildings, not knowing about aftershocks. And, you know, they start off strong, but slowly lose magnitude over time. So the first aftershock that hit, collapsed many of the buildings that were still standing, killing thousands more. As you can imagine, this built up a fear of being indoors, and though it's safe now to stay inside, many Haitians are still afraid. Which is why there's a woman in the courtyard living in a tent.”

We walked through winding hallways as Shelly told us about projects she wanted us to take up. The outside of the girls' house was in dire need of repainting and there were boxes of donations that needed to be sorted. We met other women on the orphanage staff who introduced us to their shy children that sometimes come along with them. I fell in love with those little smiling faces. We all did. Shelly led us out of the girls' house, and into the street. We walked a short distance to the end of the dirt road and knocked on the metal gate that stood before us. The security guard slid it open and we quietly walked beyond the barrier.

“This is the Boys' House,” Shelly remarked. “It was turned into a makeshift medical clinic right after the quake. And, as you can see, it's still up and running.” We somberly took in the sight of a sea of people in stretchers beneath a blue tarp. The courtyard was covered with Haitians and various medical volunteers checking on patients.

We walked through the clinic as Shelly talked. “Many of these medical clinics sprung up all over the city right after the earthquake, but not so many of them are left. You know, people fly in with the best intentions and set up a place to help people, but six weeks later most of the trauma patients have been healed, and the clinics have shut down. But there are still many many people who were set into casts and now need them taken off, or who didn't receive all the treatment that they needed and so on, so that's what we're here for. And we're going to stay open as long as possible, although it's getting more and more difficult.”

We tried not to stare as we walked through the grid of beds and



Makeshift medical clinic

into the building. Shelly talked briefly with a volunteer who was sorting through medical supplies and asked him if she had all her facts straight. He assured her, she'd told us correctly and asked what was for dinner.

“Dinner,” she said with wide eyes, turning to us, “will be prepared by you guys and some of the house ladies that work for me.” The volunteer went back to sorting his supplies, and let Shelly address us. “You see,” she smiled, “we feed as many as 60 people every night. We feel that at least one sit-down meal should happen every day, so we try very hard to make dinner a time to come together and rest. You'll be eating American cuisine,” Shelly continued, walking us out the door, “but we might have a night for your to try some Haitian cooking.”

She led us up stairs in the back of the building and onto the roof of the boys' house. To be quite honest, I don't remember at all what she told us about the gardening project they had up there. So much of that first day in Haiti is such a haze from sleep deprivation, that we all still have trouble recalling what happened. All I remember from the roof is gazing across the wall to a completely flattened two-story house. There were three kids standing on top of its pancaked layers, laughing and waving at us. I wondered if they knew the depth of the destruction they were playing on.

Shelly walked us out of the building and back onto the street. As we walked along the busy road, I studied the top of the walls. Each section was lined with either razor wire or broken glass to prevent intruders from crawling over. We rounded another corner and knocked on a gate halfway down the street. "This," Shelly smiled, waving us all inside, "is the Women's Center." I was amazed to see a dozen or so antique Singer sewing machines arrayed in a covered section of the courtyard. "As you can see," she continued, "the Women's Center is all about teaching native women marketable trades to give them some kind of income. We teach them to sew, and they create, and then we send their wares to the US to sell. They make mostly purses, which I'll show you in a second, but we also offer prenatal, childhood development, and literacy classes for them."

She led us up a rickety set of stairs into an office area with boxes of brightly colored purses ready to ship, and a man sitting at a computer. Shelly introduced him as John McHoul, the founder of Heartline Ministries. He smiled warmly at us and encouraged us to take a look through the purses if there was anything we would like to purchase. No one had money on them, but we looked through the bags all the same, expressing great interest in purchasing. John and Shelly assured us that we would come back some other time to make a purchase.

As we walked back to our house, we met up with the guys who were just leaving the boys' house. It hadn't truly sunk in yet where exactly in the world we were, but that final walk back to the main house with Shelly and Byron really cemented it in. I and 15 other people were in Port Au Prince, where exactly six weeks prior, a quarter of a million people had died. As we walked over the rubble that lined the street, I couldn't help but think about the pictures of bodies piled up on roads just like this one. It strangely wasn't difficult to imagine what the day after the earthquake would have been like. What I couldn't imagine was how I would have reacted had I been in Haiti then.

Editor's note: Rebecca's story will continue in the next issue of *City Lights*.



Shenzi and Rebecca Catlin during a lunch break. Shenzi is the daughter of one of the staff women and Rebecca's translator who was very eager to help with the chores. She and her two little brothers were always around, brightening the day.

"Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in Him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. . . Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life."

—Phil. 4:4-7 The Message