

Celebrate Jesus of Haiti

May 2013

The Lord appeared to Abram and promised him a very specific land, and moreover that through him in this land of promise all the people on earth would be blessed. He verified His promise again and again through Abraham's descendants. During their wanderings and their captivity, it must have difficult to hang onto that dream....their own fertile land with water wells and abundant fruit trees. Yet hundreds of years later Abraham and Sarah's family came to take possession of the promised land. It came with an instruction: "Go in and occupy."

When you think of Haiti, fertile and abundant are not adjectives that would pop into your mind. Native Haitians dream of coming to America or at least a great outpouring of American money and a brand new honest government with opportunity for all. But on LaGonave, the body of Christ at Celebrate Jesus Church has learned about the important promises of God, and their hope is not elsewhere. It was fitting then that six years ago when Jerry purchased 20 acres of land where nothing grew but scrub-brush, Pastor Joaquim suggested we name it *The Promised Land*.

As the Lord prepared His people to take possession, He also prepared Jerry. Born and raised on a farm, he learned how to get the most out of land with only simple implements to work with. Shovels and picks and hoes. Decades later, he tested this parcel of ground for sale and found that unlike every other piece of ground on the bottom lands, there was a foot of good soil without rocks & gravel. This acreage is located about three miles from Campus One. The purchase was made and Jerry's dream of helping families learn to feed themselves began to take root.

Like the Israelites, the Haitian families from Celebrate Jesus had to occupy. Seven wells dug and no water. Undeterred, Jerry and the men dug an 80x28 ft. reservoir to catch the water running down from the mountains and they dug it 10 feet deep with nothing but shovels. Crops were planted and up they came. But the local cattle and goats are allowed to roam free at harvest time, and they devoured most of the produce. They also enjoyed the reservoir of water, breaking down the small fence to get to it. Yee-hah! Jerry and his cowboys had to corral the cattle to get them out of the reservoir!



In the past 6 years six teams of four men from various U.S. churches have made the trip to Haiti to work on buildings and on *The Promised Land*. They have labored alongside 20 Haitian men. The Lord sees. He provides for those who seek Him. In 2012, an American donor provided all the materials needed to put up "goat wire" and concrete posts around all the

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acreage, as well as a skid loader to properly clear the land including the cost to ship the materials to LaGonave. Praise God for His abundant favor and the generosity of His people. In January 2013 a team of men came to build the forms and pour the concrete



posts. One man of God stayed an entire month. During our most recent trip, a long-time friend came who was also an expert in fencing. He led the work of the twenty-four Haitian and American men to put up the entire fence. In only two days instead of the anticipated four days *The Promised Land* was fenced and gated. The men returned to Campus One each night filled with joy.

Jerry marked off 60 parcels of land for families to begin gardening. Fifty church families have already committed to working the land. When the gate was hung, 15 families were waiting at the gate to go in and “occupy.” They will plant corn, beans, tomatoes, melons, pumpkins, squash and a staple crop that looks a lot like wheat. This will be enough to feed their families and to trade crops with one another or sell the surplus. The produce will feed their families for half a year. It is a dream, a promise, being realized. Our deepest thanks to those who gave, those who labored, and those who prayed. And most of all to our Lord who made the promise come true.



The lives of these Haitian families will improve. Their trust in God will continue to grow. And our Lord wants that for each of us, no matter where we live or what our circumstances are. Every person who joins us in Haiti is touched by God and it is personal between Him and them. We want to share the testimony of a brother in Christ who made his first trip out of the country with us in March.

For twelve years Jerry has been saying “Come to Haiti.” No interest. A few weeks ago I got a Facebook message from a friend who made a surprising move to Nairobi to serve God: “Step out in faith - get on an airplane and go somewhere you

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haven't been." My response was typical for me: Mortgage, car payment, kids. No.



That same week at church an announcement was made that Jerry needed one more person to help him. On the way home I told my wife "I'm going. I trust God to make a way." He did, and I went. I returned home a different man. God changed my heart and helped me to see that I had been judging others. I realized that kids are kids everywhere. They experience joy, sadness, they can be sneaky, and they are wonderful! When I saw the conditions they come from in the Saline Flats, I saw my own selfishness. And I also saw the difference in the lives of those who now know God as a result of the Celebrate Jesus ministry. I felt God was saying to me, "Give! And if you have to, use money."

The world needs us. He's waiting for us to go. They are waiting for us to say yes. I have photos from my trip all around me. I don't ever want to lose my perspective that I have a purpose.

Dave



Sonja worked in the Clinic every day while the American and the Haitian men labored together on The Promised Land and other construction. Two women who came on this trip opened up the Celebrate Jesus Store and distributed children's clothing. They were the "peanut butter queens" dishing up sandwiches for the school kids

and children at three feeding centers. Peanut butter joy is contagious. How we wish it was always just good news to share.

After our last trip I (Sonja) shared with you the story of Jonah, the 7 year old boy being starved by his mother so that people would give her money. Jonah was kept in the hospital on LaGonave for five weeks at our expense until he was able to ingest food by mouth. After that time he was returned to his mother.



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Hospitals in Haiti and most other third world countries actually only provide medications and life-saving care. But the basic needs of a patient are to be provided by the family. The family is responsible for bringing and serving food.



Jerry's kids. The path from the Saline Flats to Celebrate Jesus School is a victory walk.

They must provide bedding. They must bring a bucket for a toilet and empty it daily. This care was not being provided by Jonah's family so the hospital simply returned him home. I went to get him and take him to the hospital for a check-up. Compared to how he looked when I last saw him weighing 13 pounds, he looked better. But when the doctors and nurses saw him they were outraged. His condition had deteriorated since they released him and it was clear he was once again not being fed.

Celebrate Jesus had been providing food for the entire family with the

understanding that Jonah was to be cared for. Jonah needs to be fed every two hours, and his muscles have to be exercised. I visited orphanages on the island hoping to find someone who would take him, but no one would. Sometimes you must make hard decisions. I returned to his mother, and advised her that if Jonah was not cared for we would no longer provide food for her family. It breaks our hearts as we know it breaks yours. We pray always for wisdom. Please continue to pray for Jonah's healing and for him to receive love. Surely God has given him life and spared his life for a reason and we will continue to do our part to demonstrate the love of God toward him and other abandoned ones.



We thank God for your friendship and participation with us in the Lord's work in Haiti. You make a difference. Your prayers keep us going and protect us. May you experience the simple joy of a "peanut butter smile" and the deep and abiding joy of knowing and serving Jesus.

We love you,

Jerry and Sonja Dickherber



Our most important work on LaGonave is adding to the Kingdom of God.