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**March 23, 2010**

### **EQ P1**

As Jeronne let her grip loosen on the kitchen table and ended her 40 seconds of *screaming* at the top of her powerful lungs for Jesus, it slowly began to sink in that we'd just experienced something epic. Something we will never forget.

For me personally, the sound of the earthquake is what struck me the very most. Yes, we were shaking and yes the entire house was rocking, so much that you easily fell down as you walked. But the sound was deafening and it is what first registered with me when I wondered WHO could possibly want to bomb Haiti?

The kitchen floor was covered in soy sauce and spaghetti sauce and glass. Troy was pacing. He seemed uncertain of what to do first. Upstairs the desks had vibrated out of their places to the center of the office area. Books had shaken free from their spots on the shelves. The floor was covered with office supplies, papers, things from the walls, and glass. The boys' "pet" lizard used the opportunity of a broken pickle-jar to escape once and for all. The walls were bare of everything that hung on them just sixty seconds earlier. Water leaked from the toilet that had been shaken out of its place.

While Troy went to check on the Guest house and our friends and sons, I moved the kids to the driveway. Their bodies shook even though for those few moments the earth stood still. When just minutes later the first of many strong after-shocks hit, they all dove for my arms, for safety in my lap. Jeronne screamed for Jesus again. Paige remained cool and calm and helped hold little ones. Even in the chaos and fear, I noticed her response and felt gratitude to her. She had landed back in Port au Prince from Florida only six hours earlier.

The internet phone rang, it was the weather channel. The call dropped before we could figure out what they wanted from us. We were too confused to understand how the Weather Channel even found us? After getting the call out to my Dad and [posting a quick blog post](#), the internet dropped. We spent the first two hours after the earthquake trying to determine that

everyone in our area of Tabarre was accounted for. Troy had gone to get Vivien, Megan, Kristen, Erin and their kids from the guest house. They all moved to the driveway of our house. We traded a lot of "I don't believe this" type commentary.

Not one single Digicel (local cell provider) call would go through for us. About 45 minutes after the EQ John pulled up on his motorcycle and informed us that Jonna, Joanna, the Tluczek kids, Kelli, the Childrens' Homes, and the Buxmans had all been unhurt and their houses remained standing, although damaged to varying degrees. Just knowing that our little circle of people were *all alive* felt like a gift. We did not know the magnitude of the damage across the city by any means at that point, but we knew that 8 houses still standing up and no injured people was nothing short of miraculous.

Overall during the first two hours everyone stayed very calm. Inside I think we were all incredibly afraid. I remember feeling helpless as Erin and Kristen wanted to talk to their husbands but the internet phone was not working well.

Around 7pm the dinner that had been started before the earthquake was finished and we all quietly fed the kids enchiladas as we tried to act less nervous than we were each time the house shook. By the time we finished eating it was very dark outside and we knew we needed to start conserving battery power. We began discussing who would sleep where. Kristen's infant daughter was running a fever and vomiting, the sick baby added to the heavy feeling in the house.

I lose track of time a bit at this point, but around 8pm or so Megan began to share that she had not gotten through to her friends at Three Angels Orphanage and that she felt it was important to go check on them. I remember my initial response. It was a mix of selfishness and understanding. I said, "Well, you cannot drive a stick-shift and Troy is not going to want you going alone so he'll have to agree to come with you." I was instantly wishing I did not have to give Troy up, but I knew Megan should not go do that alone. (If you know her, you know she would have gone alone on foot if necessary.) I went to Troy to tell him what Megan wanted to do. He agreed they needed to get up the hill to check on the orphanage. I am not sure where the feeling came from but saying goodbye

to him felt very large to me and I was incredibly fearful that I would never see him again. I actually said, "If I never see you again, I love you so much. But PLEASE come back." Everything felt so out of control. Paige really wanted to go with Troy and Megan. I had no peace about that and although Troy would have allowed it I said, "No Paige, I don't know what it is like out there." She was pretty angry with me for that.

After Troy and Megan left we lit candles and put everyone to bed. The aftershocks continued every 30 minutes or so but were less strong. I laid next to sleeping Paige and begged God to protect Troy and Megan. I prayed things I have never prayed before. The hours wore on and I paced the house trying to calm down. Eventually I grabbed Troy's lap-top and went to the guest house. I think that was around midnight. I was too afraid to go inside and sat on the stoop outside of the house. When I logged into Troy's computer it began to download over 1,000 messages ... I glanced at the subject lines as they downloaded, they said "have you seen" and "can you help me confirm" and "my husband is missing" and "will you talk to us by phone" ... I started weeping. I read Troy's tweets to learn a few things about where he'd been. I logged into Facebook to see a link to a photo of the Palace. Collapsed. I could not believe my eyes. I think that was the moment, around 1am, that I realized the magnitude of those 45 seconds of shaking. As I sat on the stoop willing the battery to hold up the aftershocks continued. Each time little pieces of cement would fall out of the wall of what used to be Vivien's room. As they happened the neighbors gathered in a circle in the street would pray and sing louder.

Troy and I are already fuzzy on some of the timing of that night/morning. Around midnight he was back in our area but his main purpose was to get Jonna and Joanna and if I remember right, Vivien - he was checking to see if they wanted to help at a make-shift medical clinic for the night. Megan had stayed with the Three Angles group. After retrieving supplies and the girls, he brought them back up the hill to work. He returned home around 4am. We laid down and Troy told me what he had seen. He cried as he told me the story of a young woman and her husband's cousin sitting outside of the collapsed St. Josephs Boys home. Her husband was trapped inside. The husband had been singing for awhile, they could hear him, but eventually the singing stopped. Troy asked if he could give them a ride, they were not ready to leave or give up on saving their lost loved one. They wrote their names down for him in shaky writing, the paper sat on the kitchen counter

waiting to be reported to the US Embassy when we could get through to them. He told me about other things, like walking over the top of buildings and past many bodies. He listed the places we know well that he had visited and found reduced to rubble. He said it felt like Armageddon. Around 5am Troy fell asleep for 30 minutes. I got up. [I wrote this](#) but could not post it until later that morning when I went back to the guest house. When I went to post it another 800 messages downloaded. Most of them were in search of an interview or a loved one. A few messages demanded we post photos *immediately* - I was ticked at that and responded with this comment: "*We will not be posting photos here. We have limited time and internet ... Imagine the worst - you have your picture.*" I had no idea how true that statement was.

Kristen and Erin started getting some calls out to their husbands to help them find a way out of Haiti. In the end all of the flights their husbands booked never left Haiti. But for 48 hours they booked and re-booked flights frantically. I barely offered them comfort as I was so freaked out about everything, I know they could have used a more encouraging hostess, but we all sort of did our best.

Troy left again early Wednesday morning to go out for the first time in daylight. We had no way to communicate back and forth within Haiti but he was trying to find out if some friends and acquaintances were okay. The emails poured in faster than we could read them. I delivered messages to Troy and John as I was able. Morgan, John's daughter, wanted him to go check on some family friends. Those friends ended up coming out of the rubble as John arrived on Wednesday. [People wanted Troy to check on their loved ones.](#) The feeling of helplessness hit hard. There would be no way even with unlimited diesel (which we did not have) that we could go to all the places or check on all the people. Roads were blocked, fuel was running short, everything took so much time and there was no way to quickly communicate back to me as he found things out. As requests came in with photos attached, we separated them into categories ... areas we could get to and areas we could not get to ... faces we knew well and those we had no idea how to find. I made a list of the ones Troy could feasibly check on.

Weeks later, certain faces and photos and names stick with us. A photo of a red-haired man that was at the Montana Hotel is forever etched in my

memory. I know his name and his face, his family never got to see him alive again. I pray for them every-time the image pops into my mind. Troy will never forget the people he met that night, the ones who lost their husband, their cousin. He ran into them again at the US Embassy on Thursday.

At our own house the internet would come up for an hour then drop, each time it was up the phone rang non-stop. Media outlets we did not know existed wanted to talk. We felt far too overwhelmed to talk to them, we did not want to say something in our exhaustion or fear that we would later regret. We had others help us screen calls and refuse all interviews.

(For the sake of finding them later each installment will be EQ P# - for earthquake part \_ ).

(The less detailed telling of the first few days can be [found here](#).)

EQ P2 when time allows. The details of deciding to evacuate the first five kids and the experience at the US Embassy.

***March 24, 2010***

### **EQ P2**

Wednesday, January 13 came and went. Troy spent that entire day trying to assess the situation while looking for living people and confirming answers for acquaintances and strangers alike. I never left home except to use internet a few doors down when I needed to. I stayed with the kids and our two friends/guests. Nothing about that day felt real, it was very much a time of floating above reality and looking down onto it. I believe the psychologist types call this disassociating.

We did not sleep more than an hour or two Wednesday night heading into Thursday. We woke up Thursday to learn that Kristen and Erin could not get out on the flights they had booked but that their husbands were talking and making plans B and C.

Word on the street was that possibly 50,000 had died. The bodies were beginning to pile up around town. That seemed impossible. Fifty-thousand?

Troy left to go up the hill to Delmas 75 to check on the folks working that

clinic and to find out if there was diesel available anywhere along the route. Kristen and Erin and I fielded phone calls and tried to give the kids attention, but we were not all that good at it. The house had 10 kids, ages 15 - 8 - 8 - 5 - 3 - 3 - 3 - 2 - 2 - and 9 months ... we were outnumbered on a good day but with our brains spinning and no sleep, none of us were in stellar parenting mode by any stretch of the imagination.

During times when the internet was up I tried to keep track of emails for Troy. Sometime during the first half of that day (somewhat in response to emails and questions) I wrote three very short posts. [This](#) and [this](#) and [this](#).

When Troy got back around 11am he decided to take a motorcycle (pay a driver to take him) to the US Embassy. The reason for that was to conserve his own diesel in our truck and to try to keep from wasting while sitting in gridlock traffic. We had not yet gone there and we were hearing (through you and the internet) that evacuation flights had begun. He left for the Embassy at around 11:15am and was supposed to get back by 1pm to bring Kristen and Erin to a flight they thought they could catch to Jamaica. When he was not back at 1pm I got ready to take them, not really sure what to expect or if it was even possible to make it the the airport. As we were about to pull out Troy arrived back home. He said he had been to the Embassy and had decided while there to put our kids' names and my name on the list to evacuate. The Embassy had told him that things were changing all the time but that if the kids could be back within an hour they could likely get them out on Thursday night around 4pm or 5pm. They said each person could have 50 pounds of luggage. Being back within an hour, even though the Embassy is three miles from our house, was basically impossible. Plus, we had guests that needed out too and wanted a ride the other direction. He sort of gave up on the idea that we would get our kids back to the Embassy in time for that flight they mentioned. Troy left around 1:30 with Kristen and Erin and Kristen's infant daughter. They pulled out thinking they would head to try to get the Jamaica flight. Their two in-the-process-of-being-adopted sons stayed back with me. (There was no humanitarian parole for kids in the adoption process on our radar at that time - we were still not to 48 hours after the EQ.) Somewhere on the drive they abandoned their Jamaica plan and went to the U.S. Embassy. I was not in the car so I don't know how that decision was made. Troy dropped them to the Embassy and came home.

When he got home we had one of the more intense conversations of our marriage. He wanted me to leave with the kids. I felt torn and uncertain, and just sick. I asked if Kristen and Erin could possibly escort them? He said, "No, I put YOUR name on the list." We went round and round and it was highly emotional. He wanted me to go out to feel like he had us all in a "safe" place and I wanted to stay and work and get the kids out while we had capable, loving escorts to help them. We really could not communicate well (read: fighting) because we were both under stress and not able to share our fear-based choices. I wanted to stay to work, but I also was not ready to leave Troy in such an unknown new world. I knew the kids would be safe once they were on U.S. soil we had all the plans made with Britt and Chris and my parents and that felt *okay* to me. Leaving Troy when things were spinning out of control in Haiti was too much for me in that moment. We eventually decided that I would pack my stuff, I would pack the kids stuff, and I would be *ready to go* \*if\* the U.S. Embassy would *not allow* us to have Erin or Kristen escort.

About 5pm we were packed and ready and headed with the five passport carrying kids to the airport. I bawled my head off saying goodbye to everyone, uncertain if I would be returning home or flying out with the kids. We left behind the Haitian kids without U.S. passports, Jeronne was home with Megan to care for them. The kids were full of questions, but not yet afraid. Troy walked us into the Embassy. At the door they had security and the normal scanning machines and check-in process.

Troy went into the building to see if they would take my name off of the list. I waited in the courtyard with the kids and many others who were gathered there waiting for that same flight out. Troy came back out to tell me he had listed Erin as the escort for the kids and that they told him that no flight had left yet and that the plan was to leave around 10pm and go to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic to then book commercial flights to the USA on our own.

The Embassy staff was clearly working under great stress and with lots of conflicting and wrong information coming their way. I felt terrible for them as we watched them talk to angry people and put up with a lot of crap. When you got on their list you had to sign a piece of paper that said that the U.S. Government has a right to bill you for your evacuation. It made perfect sense to us. We *choose* to go abroad. A disaster happens. Our governmentt

shows up with planes for us. We *get* to leave. Seems simple.

While I am nervous to see if we ever get a bill, I sure as heck think it makes sense that they may bill something for it at some point. Every other time I leave Haiti I pay for a flight out. I know others disagree on that ... and I know it because people were jerks to the Embassy employees about it. As if the US Embassy employees set that policy. A woman literally said, "*What? You might bill me for my flight? It is not MY fault the Earthquake happened!*" Uh. Yeah. Apparently it is their fault? People are ridiculous sometimes. But I digress.

There were people trading stories in the courtyard. Paige ran into a lot of friends from school. Her friend Dawn was there with her family. Their house had collapsed on them but they had found a way to crawl out. Dawn's Mom was hurt and needed to be carried. Dawn seemed incredibly strong for a teenager who had gone through what she had gone through. Dawn's dad works for World Vision and Troy quickly offered them any help we might be able to offer and exchanged emails.

We are unsure of exact count, but there were probably about 175 people at the Embassy that night. Some stayed in the courtyard and others sat inside.

Troy left to go get sheets for the Church of the [Open Door](#) group (people we have MN connections to) to use and something to lay our kids down on and some food. Before he got back, at around 7pm they came out to distribute MREs (military ready to eat meals). We sat in a circle with our group and the Buxman kids and the Tlucek group. Troy delivered blankets and we laid them out to get everyone to sleep for awhile. (In theory.) Lydia was manic and would not settle down. Isaac and Hope and Noah all fell asleep around 10pm. Paige could not sleep. Lydie sort of did for about three minutes.

Around 11pm there was some buzz around the courtyard that if you were willing to abandon your bags and you did not have a baby, you could go on a flight straight to the USA. We did not jump on that because we had Lydia and Kristen had Karis. We watched as a few decided to take that chance, including the Tlucek kids and their guardian Kelly. Ten minutes passed while we discussed the change and tried to figure out if the Dominican Republic plane was still coming? No one seemed to really know. I went to ask an employee. She said she did not know yet that the only SURE flight

was the one straight to somewhere in the U.S. (she did not know where) and that you could not take luggage.

We talked some more and Erin was willing to take the kids and go if they would let Lydia sit on a lap. The Embassy lady said okay and we began trying to put layers of clothes on the kids while trying to wake them up and get them on their feet. The Buxman kids were unsure about leaving their bags and Kristen felt that she could not travel without luggage with her infant, she was thinking she would stay and see what other choices might be offered.

Erin and I walked into the Embassy from the courtyard and got in a line. The line let us out the backdoor to a driveway area where black Suburbans were pulling up. As you got to the front you showed your passports and had your names checked against a list. In that line Isaac lightened the mood by saying, "Hey Ma, do you think there is any good place to get a haircut in America?" Right as we were getting to the front Kristen showed up with her baby girl and said she decided to go with Erin and the kids. They loaded into the Suburban. Paige was crying quietly, Noah was crying with some force, and Lydie was screaming. Hope and Isaac were both quiet.

After they were in the Suburban the Embassy worker saw me crying and said "Ma'am I can try to get you on this flight too." I told her I was staying but wanted to stand outside until the Suburbans left. At that moment there was obviously major stress among the Embassy workers. They forgot about me (the only person outside the back door with them at that moment) and talked together about the news they had just received. One woman told the others that USAID was asking that all the Suburbans come immediately to the Hotel Montana to work on recovery. Yet their orders were to get people to the airport. They discussed the options for about a minute then one dark-haired woman who seemed to have the most authority said "Go go go, get these people to the airport and then go straight to the Montana."

Off the long line of black Suburbans went. My kids and friends ended up being in the second to last one. I think that was right around midnight. I walked back inside wondering if I had made the right choice. I felt utterly alone and on the verge of vomiting. I passed a woman sitting in a side waiting area that thought I was an Embassy employee. She said, "I have myself and one child with passports, but two children without. Can we

please go?" I told her I was not in charge but that I had heard they would only talk to people with a passport in hand at that time. She asked me to take her two kids without the passports. I said, "No, I'm sorry, no."

I walked back into the large waiting area. The room was mostly empty. I decided to go outside and gather all the bags that our group had abandoned. As I walked out a lady carrying two of our pillows and a blanket passed me. I said, "Hey, those were ours!" I immediately felt like a jerk and told her to keep them. I gathered the stuff into a pile and listened in on a conversation nearby for a few minutes. I saw a few rats running along the wall and decided I did not want to lay down outside yet.

I went back inside with a blanket and laid down on the floor near the TV that was broadcasting CNN. Anderson Cooper stood in his black t-shirt talking about the numbers of deaths. I watched the footage as if it was not where I was. A heavy darkness fell over me. I wondered how this could be true? After a few minutes more people trickled into a fairly empty room. The Embassy employees were giving them instructions about the new bag rules. One young Haitian-American woman who had been visiting Haiti for two weeks got very angry about not being able to bring luggage. She verbally abused the weary Embassy employees while they graciously kept apologizing. She went on a major rant about how expensive her clothes were and how much she needed her scarf, and her shoes, and her toiletries. I listened to it while still laying on the floor watching the footage of dead bodies on the sides of the roads - right.outside. - right outside - a mile away - dead bodies ... and there she stood complaining about the cost of her designer wear. "You are the US Embassy - you said I could bring luggage - you should KNOW if I can bring luggage." It was atrocious listening to her - atrocious.

The full story - not sure I should tell it -- but I lost it. *Really* lost it. I stood up on my feet and across a few rows of chairs I told (yelled) her to SHUT UP and sit down. (There were strong swear words involved. People that know me in real life do not find this surprising.) She came right back at me and told me she would stick her foot in my #\$\$\* if I did not lay back down. I told her I'd like to see that and said, "Bring it." I then told her that she was a spoiled, entitled jerk (add more swear words) and that one look at the television told me her suitcase and precious designer clothing was actually of ZERO importance. There was a moment where it easily could have

turned physical. Thank goodness the rows of chairs separated us. I was as mad as I have ever been and she was as self-centered as anyone can be. I laid back down shaking mad. She left to get in line to go to the airport. The pastor from Open Door was at the far end of the room. I wondered if he was impressed with my language.

After another hour of CNN coverage and all hope zapped, I went outside. I laid awake listening to planes and helicopters and wondering where my kids were until about 5:30am. That made three nights with less than four hours of sleep combined. As the sun started to come up I fell asleep. I woke up to Troy's voice yelling my name. He was outside the courtyard. I got up and started walking toward him. He yelled that our kids were safe and in New Jersey. I fell on the ground crying and thanking God. It was very dramatic ... not the way I typically roll - but then nothing about that night was typical. Troy helped me get the bags out of the courtyard (a few more things had been stolen in the night but I couldn't care less) and into our truck. We drove three miles home crying and amazed that our kids were in New Jersey, of all places.

Shortly after we got home on Friday morning, I wrote [this](#).

EQ P3 - Chasing down emergency twitter messages (the good and the bad parts of that) and what we all did to get ready for the medical clinic, the weekend of January 15-17th.

**March 26, 2010**

### **EQ P3**

Things in our memories (especially timing of when things happened) are not as clear after our first five kids left. We were sleep deprived, emotional, and things just started to blend together. As best we could, we've pieced together some of the things that happened Friday through Sunday. I don't think I can keep them completely chronological though.

By Friday night at 6pm our kids made it to DFW to be picked up by Britt and Chris. They took a police-escorted bus ride from the New Jersey

Airforce base to PA to catch flights to DFW. Paige reported that the day was exhausting and she does not really know how she held it together - Britt reported that Paige looked like a freight train hit her when they finally locked arms in Texas. When the kids talk about it now, they complain most about how cold it was. Other than that and how loud the C-130 was they say very little about their evacuation experience.

In the days immediately following the earthquake twitter went crazy. I am not telling you anything you don't know. We had **no idea** how often Troy's face was popping up on news outlets and that his tweets were being read by so many, had we known that we would have been freaked out - I am glad we were oblivious. That whole thing is still very crazy to us.

On Friday around 4pm a phone call came in on our internet phone from the USA. A man told me that he got our number off the internet and that he had a friend who had been walking for a day without food or water. He said his friend was vomiting and ill and needed a place to stay for the night and would be going to the Embassy to evacuate on Saturday. He asked if we could go get his friend. Troy was not home and phones were still barely working (one in twenty calls would go through) - I told him we had no way to go pick his friend up. In a day and age where anyone can find you the call did not surprise me that much but my response did. Without any qualifying I said, "sure" and gave this stranger on the phone the location of the gate into our neighborhood. After I did it I realized I was kind of stupid. Or really stupid. I started to wonder if I had just given some bad guy information and I let my imagination run wild. I reigned it back in and decided that if the guy made it to our gate we needed to let him rest and help him get to the Embassy. The man in the USA called a few more times and sent me an email photo of the person walking toward our house. Eventually he said his friend was too tired to walk anymore and would be sleeping south of Port au Prince.

People from all over the world were sending us messages via twitter and email with urgent and frightening requests. They ranged from asking for help to dig someone out at an assumed location, to delivering food and water to orphans, to helping the elderly that were being eaten by rats. If one thing kept me from sleeping it was laying down at night and picturing helpless elderly left alone to fend for themselves against rodents.

Most of the time the emergency messages came in without information about where the information originated and at what time the request was first made known. Most requests also lacked a specific location or address. That is not surprising in that even before the earthquake finding things in Port au Prince was a challenge. Once you know your way around it is not that difficult, but the tips were coming from abroad and the people giving the tips would say things like "near Delmas 33". Saying "near Delmas 33" is a lot like saying, "near Manhattan" - it is far too broad.

In a few instances we received 30 to 40 requests to go help the same people. The hard part was trying to understand if we were hearing a new need or an old need or a totally fabricated need. It got difficult to know what to do.

Troy was asked by John to be careful with diesel. As of that moment on Friday we had not found any to buy and we had no idea when we would. Some of the places we were told had dying people waiting on help were more than an hour away from us.

The situation was heavy and we tried to be open to any request and ask God what to respond to. We knew we could not physically respond to most of the requests. We definitely prayed and asked God for mercy on the suffering with each email. We have recently gone through all of those messages in search of loved ones, we now know that many of those folks you emailed about did not survive the earthquake. We extend our deepest sympathy and prayers for those who mourn.

Troy ended up feeling strongly about responding to an orphanage near the Caribbean market. We heard they had no water and no food and no way to get it. We had friends that have adopted kids from there so we knew sort of where it was from being there months before. The problem was, a lot of fallen buildings blocked the usual routes. With very little diesel in the truck he and John went to try to see what the situation was. They tried to get there a bunch of ways but kept being blocked by large crowds of people or by rubble.

Eventually John said they needed to give up and Troy left the area without having accomplished his goal. He came home very upset and tried to figure out another way to get back up there. In the meantime CNN had showed up there and someone wrote us to tell us that. We decided if CNN was there it

was probably not something we needed to worry about anymore.

The next day we again got dozens of messages about that one location. A lot of them seemed based off of the CNN report but we could not imagine that CNN would show up, do a report, and then leave without the situation being rectified.

In the end we made phone contact with the girls at that location and while they were telling us by phone that they were fine and had what they needed at the moment -- we were getting multiple requests telling us they were not fine and PLEASE would we get there ASAP. That played itself over many times in the coming week. We called and checked on them and each time they told Troy that they were okay. We went with the on the ground information and tried not to stress about the frantic emails. We are certain that twitter and social media helped save lives in that first week or two. The benefits *far outweighed* the mis-communication and confusion it caused.

Mid-day Friday we met together with everyone associated with Heartline to discuss what our next step was as a ministry. At that time, the (expat) adults and young adults in Haiti were: John McHoul, Lisa & Don Buxman, Joanna Thiele, Jonna Howard, Britney Gilbert, Vivien Ingram, Megan Haug, and Troy and I. Our Haitian staff was also in attendance.

Heartline has been on the ground in Haiti for 20 years, but it was obvious we needed to come up with a plan of action that addressed the current overwhelming (overused word? there needs to be a stronger word) need. During that meeting we talked a lot about not wanting it to be "show business" - this is a John phrase meaning, we need to do it well ... *really well*.

Thinking back on this meeting and what became of our little desire to meet needs well, and to avoid "show business", I cannot help but point out that *no single person made this happen*. The coordination that went into throwing this together was utterly crazy and the number of people that helped make it happen is mind-numbing. People that screened volunteers and dealt with fundraising in the USA need to be recognized for the role they played. God completely blessed the efforts of this little known NGO and we're grateful to Him for that.

We divided up tasks for Friday and Saturday and believed that on Saturday a team of volunteer docs and nurses could begin arriving. At the time of that meeting around noon on Friday, we had no supplies and no idea how to run a clinic in a developing country that had just been rocked by the worst natural disaster of our time. Of the people in the meeting, we had zero doctors and zero trained medical clinic administrators. It was the truest degaje moment of our time in Haiti.

During that meeting it was also decided that our area of Port au Prince had done well enough in the quake that we might consider going to get our patients in worse off areas with our big group truck. A plan was made to go to Simone Pele on Saturday to assess the need in that area. We chose that area because we already had relationships there due to our Prenatal outreach each month. From Simone Pele we also eventually went into Cite Soleil, Wharf Jeremie, Cite Militaire, and surrounding areas. It quickly became clear that the need was great in those very poor areas, we stuck with that all the way through the response.

At the end of the meeting Dianne Sawyer showed up to do a story on Heartline's kids - we met her and got out of her way. We scattered to start on our assignments for the day. I made lists of things we needed and lists of the personnel we thought we would have to work with based on the people on the ground and the word of mouth about who was coming to us from Florida. Our needs included everything from heavy duty trash bags for medical waste (a weird thing to deal with in a country that dumps its trash outside of the city in a field) to wound care supplies, to food to feed volunteers.

In the USA Beth McHoul, who was in Florida at the time of the EQ, was working with others to buy as many supplies as the private chartered planes would hold. They took calls and emails from us all day Friday and Saturday with new requests and new thoughts ... the calls often went like this, "We just remembered that the lighting in the room we'll be doing small surgeries is very poor. Can you buy some sort of flood light?" and "We need small gasoline generators, can you buy that?" "We are not sure about the availability of propane for cooking, can you bring lots of dry and ready to eat food?"

I was not on the USA side - but I know from talking with Beth and Dr. Jen

that it was insane for them. They spent two days in Wal-Mart and Home Depot. The Docs had rallied for medical donations and came with lots of things to get started.

Sometime on Saturday we sent Kristen and Erin's sons back to their respective homes, we felt bad doing it but we were totally ignoring them and we felt they might be more secure and loved in their own environments. That left us with just two kids in the house. Tipap and Jeronne also left sometime Friday to go check on their family and loved ones about 30 miles away.

Even before the Docs showed up, God provided through the Zachary family. Friends Lori and Licia and Zach have been running a medical clinic for years and showed up on Saturday with incredible amounts of supplies to begin getting set up - as we unpacked it and organized it we marveled at all the stuff they gave us to use.

We attempted to design a use of the Womens Program building that made sense. We made the sewing machine room into the operating room. The classroom for literacy into the recovery area. The "Heartline store" where we sell the purses the ladies make was an office and supply area. Upstairs was a giant pharmacy with everything organized and labeled. People with great organizational skills were highly valued. Thank goodness for type As!

Getting the place set up with tables, chairs, supplies and a system took all of Friday afternoon and Saturday and the morning of Sunday. We learned early on Saturday that the flight with the first Doctors, Dr. Tom McKnight, and Dr. Jen Halverson would not be given a slot to land. They were bumped back.

In my memory it was a Monday when they landed, but as I look [back on old posts](#) I see it was Sunday. Every day felt like Monday for about three weeks.

On Sunday we all worked nervously wondering if the planes would be allowed to land. That day around the time the planes were to land a man named Scott Salvant showed up in his unassuming way and delivered precious diesel that he had found for us in the D.R. His timing was perfect and all of us at Heartline viewed him as God's angel to us in that day and in the coming weeks.

Two planes landed with our people and supplies on Sunday, I probably cannot accurately list every person that came in to start the hospital/clinic, but Jen wrote about it all in detail [here](#) and [here](#). After they got in there was much more to unpack, organize, and label. Sunday was spent discussing how we thought it might work and getting ready for Monday's start of clinic.

On Sunday night the buzz about Humanitarian Parole made it to our ears. We'd not really thought much about Phoebe or Annie (for new readers - Annie lived with us 26 months during her adoption process, she is now with her forever family) getting out - not that we did not want that - just that we were way too focused on everything else. The Heartline kids had their cases being worked on by Tim Pearson, an adoptive Dad. Megan helped gather paperwork and it seemed that most if not all of the Heartline kids might get an opportunity to go to the USA on Humanitarian Parole.

On Sunday late afternoon John pulled me aside to talk to me about Phoebe and Annie. He told me they could go that night. It was a replaying of Thursday afternoon with the other kids. I burst into tears trying to decide if I was going to leave or stay. Jen had just arrived. I was scared to leave Troy. There was work to be done. The girls needed an escort. Sunday night was more irrational behavior and trying to decide things that were impossible to decide. In the end the girls and the other kids in the Heartline group did not leave until Friday (five days later) but right away on Sunday night Megan agreed to escort our girls to meet my family. I packed the girls Sunday night. Their bags waited ready to go for whenever we got the call.

In EQ P4 - The clinic opens - The first truck load of injured arrive - More kids come to town to stay with us while waiting on parole - We see many miracles and horrifying destruction - The frustrations of getting our hands on supplies - people show up for shelter - Some of the kids get Humanitarian Parole - Anger and frustration and how we let it affect us - The overview of days 6 to 12 post earthquake.

**March 31, 2010**

## EQ P4

On Monday morning, January 18, everyone nervously waited on Don and Troy and John to arrive back to Tabarre with the first load of patients. I don't think anyone necessarily knew what to expect. I think I can safely say there was a bit of apprehension for all of us.

While we organized and set up supplies that Zach continued to bring in from Cazale, we learned from Tim that he would be going to the Embassy to work on the release of the kids at Heartline, two kids at RHFH and "our" girls. Zach dropped Ronel and Amos off at our house to wait it out and be ready if the good news came quickly.

As the truck pulled in we began lining people up outside on benches... some of the injuries were shocking and horrible, others were less difficult to look at *but still very serious*. The images you've seen on TV of bones poking straight out of skin and open gashes were exactly what we saw on the 6th day after the earthquake.

One of the very first patients was a young woman whose head was split open from her forehead/ skull down across the edge of her eye – it had been stitched elsewhere with very thick string in a couple of spots, *it looked terrible*. Lori Moise of Real Hope for Haiti boldly took on her case. A few hours later – the young woman left, obviously benefiting from the work of a skilled perfectionist.

The Docs and staff that came in on that first flight on Sunday all worked well together and challenged each other to work within the new system in which they found themselves. As happened all over the city that week, Doctors did things they would not do in the USA. They worked in anything but a sterile environment. They worked without the tools or medicines they might really want to use, they did their best with what they had.

Early on we were set up to be able to sedate our patients with Ketamine and the Anesthesiologist worked each case one by one and helped oversee each patient with great care and concern. We heard many funny things from the patients while they were sedated, lots of singing and boisterous conversation.

We've heard a lot of hospitals/clinics needed to work without being able to help their patients with pain, we're **so thankful** it never came to that for us. We saw so many children and that would have made everything so much slower and more draining for everyone.

In those first days there were countless cases of people that had either not been seen at all, or had been seen once and had received a lot less than ideal care but were not left with any sort of follow up instructions. Some of the people spoke of being turned away many times in the aftermath and search for care. It was heartbreaking to hear their stories of searching for help at one full hospital after the next.

As they left they received a card listing their rendezvous time and day and they were told to watch for our big white truck with the cage and to return for a dressing change or a check-up. They were sent home with painkillers and instructions. We regret that the need was so intense and the work in front of the Docs so overwhelming at times - that we did not keep nearly the statistics we would liked to have kept. We do know that statistically we saw far more people 25 and under than 26 and older and we saw more women than men. Most injuries were crush injuries, either gaping wounds or broken bones. There were also a significant number of burns from the cooking taking place at the time of the EQ.

By the end of day one we knew we would have to have a true "hospital" section for after-care. We tried to do it in the recovery room area but it filled up too fast and so the building that was formerly a boys orphanage became our hospital. The patients, even in great pain and pretty serious situations, refused to enter the house no matter how safe we told them it was. The hospital "beds" began to be set up in the driveway on the large slab of cement. Some tarps were hung for protection from rain and sun.

Once the first truck load was treated those well enough to go home were brought home and the next group was located and brought back. In these lulls in the intense action there were recovering patients to look after and the staff used that time to make connections with supplies and attempted to keep up with new information as it came in. This time between patient loads proved to be key to our success because it gave the time needed to build relationships with other organizations and connect with key personnel to begin the crazy business of trading medicines and even

patients.

The truck continued to go in and out of the "slums" for weeks to come, always finding new untreated people and always experiencing safety in areas considered dangerous by most. Each Doctor, Nurse, Physical Therapist, EMT, and Physicians Assistant that spent time working with the clinic has twenty or thirty stories of their own. Each of us connected with different people and learned the horrors and miracles they had experienced. I've said it so often, *I wish these stories could all be told.*

As the week wore on our house filled up with guests planned and unplanned. We wrote about that in a Thursday [post](#). We handled the guests fairly well. It is always interesting watching different personalities jockey and figure each other out. There were a few nights with 22 people in the house, but most nights we ran around 15. There were of course some things that happened with a guest or two that stressed us out and caused tension, but under the circumstances we did great if I do say so myself.

If you've been reading since January you already know how God worked miracles for [Collette](#) and many others in very serious condition and made a way for them to be moved from the slums, to a makeshift hospital, to an enormous ship. Rather than re-write that particular portion of the week one story, it is here:

[Day Three of Clinic/E.R.](#) (This post has a CBS news video clip of the patients coming off of the helicopters and onto the ship.)

The only thing I will add is that on Wednesday, the day that we went to find the ship, things were very tense. I think we were all feeling the weight of day one and two and watching the cases that needed immediate surgery pile up. What were we going to do with all the people that needed surgery? People were a little shorter with one another and there were other outside factors that played into the stress.

I was being polite when I wrote about a little conflict I had and I will still be polite by not saying who it was. This man had committed to helping us for the day by doing three truck runs for us. We were giving him some food that he needed out of our supply. It was a basic trade-out that we agreed upon on Tuesday night. After his first run into Simone Pele on Wednesday he came back griping and complaining about how hard it was and how

dumb it was to only be able to get ten people at a time. I happen to know the guy and really dislike him on a good day so I told him to beat it and forget about doing the other runs, we would figure it out. I was mad and I wanted the good ole' boy out of my face. John saw him on the road and said, "Hey, no way are you leaving, you promised three runs - get back to it." Ooops. John just shook his head at me.

When the aforementioned selfish redneck came back with the second load of patients he was in a foul mood and acting even more obnoxious than earlier in the day. Picture this: A man with bloody bandages around his head climbing out of the back of the truck, a woman with a limp baby sitting down to wait her turn, a seven year old boy crying in pain over his broken and floppy left leg, a sister with her brother who has lost his leg and it has not been closed properly ... all climbing down one-by-one out of the truck. As this is taking place the guy from the other mission says, *"This is just a waste of my diesel." "I cannot keep going in and out of there when I don't know what is going on out at my place. I got people waiting on me!"* (I wish I could type the way he talks, but I cannot. I can impersonate him fairly well if we ever have an opportunity to meet - remind me to share.)

That statement about "wasting fuel" -- ON PEOPLE -- REAL LIVE HURTING PEOPLE -- brought on my second little rage fest. I asked him what in the world he thought was more important use of diesel? I was livid. I had to go inside and get the former Air Force Doc to go out and deal with him as he tried to leave without doing his third run of the day.

Our third run was to the Comfort Ship with 11 patients and we needed his big truck. We took three of our smaller vehicles with patients and this other truck with Mr. Yucky driving to go find the Comfort Ship.

Finding that location was a miracle in and of itself. I still get goosebumps recalling how that all went down. When we got there and tried to negotiate with the military people to call for a helicopter, we had more trouble with our buddy. He walked up and started telling the military how angry he was and spouting off at them about this and that. Jen put her hand up and said "That guy is not with us. He just drove a truck here." How embarrassing. I have not seen him again, but if I do I plan to tell him *he does not belong in Haiti.*

By Friday I think we were pretty ticked at a lot of things. Being ticked changes very little, but we felt it none the less. The supplies that sat on the tarmac and the frustration of finding what we needed sometimes resulted in a snaggy tweet from Troy or a angry word from me. We were not the only ones feeling that way, but if we had it to do over again we would have leaned less on our own ability to find supplies and more on trusting God to bring them to us --- because that is how it worked out anyway. :) The day we were going to run out of Morphine, guess what, Morphine showed up. It went like this day after day. It was a privilege to be able to watch it happen.

After five days of Heartline representatives going to the Embassy each day, finally many of the kids were cleared to leave Haiti on Friday evening the 22nd. I did not write about it at the time because I felt bad knowing so many parents were still waiting, the victory of getting a good portion of the Heartline kids out was overshadowed by the many still stuck. Unfortunately one of those kids was the one I made big promises to all week.

On Friday Tim, or John, or I don't know who called to say "Okay - FOR REAL - we are leaving tonight. Get the kids to the Embassy". (We thought they might leave on other occasions - so we needed to be told this was real.) Annie and Phoebe are too little to explain it to, but I did keep telling them that Megan was going to take them on an airplane. (Thank you is not enough to say to Megan, she helped us out so much by taking the girls to Florida.)

I had Amos and Ronel all decked out in really cute duds. They were so cute helping me choose things. They showered and got dressed in their "America clothes" and we waited until about 6pm to go over to the orphanage to join the other kids. When I pulled in and unloaded the kids with Megan; John walked up to tell me that Ronel was not approved. I basically said, "No - you're making that up." John assured me that Tim had called back to say Ronel was not approved. Yet, there he stood in his fancy outfit expecting to climb on the truck with his friend Amos. It was horrible. I just kept hugging him and telling him he would get to go .... that someone made a mistake. I felt like such a creep having to put those other kids in the truck while the oldest kid, who understood the most, was left in the dust watching them go. Ronel and I drove home. He got in bed and cried himself to sleep.

I looked back at what I wrote that day. I skipped all of this, it was too heavy

and too unfair and I never said that our daughter got Humanitarian Parole along with our sweet niece that lived with us for more than two years. No fancy goodbye parties or time to get used to the idea, one phone call and they were gone. I felt the worst for Jeronne who lost a lot that week. Not only did the five kids leave, but then when Annie and Phoebe left she had to say goodbye to Annie for good and it all hurt a lot. I still cry thinking about this day and how hard it was on our sweet Jeronne. Bittersweet does not adequately describe it all.

Saturday we got up and went back at the business of the day - we wrote this in the morning:

*We pray today is another day of miracles and divine appointments and saved lives. God is with us. Thank you for your prayers.*

That turned out to be **exactly** what happened that day. On that Saturday a little boy named Jean with a bad amputation and a bone sticking out exposed was moved to the Miami Field Hospital, our first day to connect with them and get a promise of surgery.

Late that night a woman showed up bleeding badly. Ten minutes later an emergency c-section had been performed under flood lights powered by a small generator. If I had not seen it with my own eyes, I would not believe what took place. In a period of 97 seconds from the start of the incision the baby was out ... the baby was handed to Jen to work on and five minutes later the panic and fear began to subside and all present in the oddly lit room realized they'd just witnessed another miracle.

We entered week two of our clinic bolstered by these things.