



If not you, then who?

If not now, then when?

Hello to all our co-laborers for Haiti.

Wednesday, 13 January 2010

Thank you for your calls and e-mails expressing concern for the people of Haiti. The following is as up-to-date as we can bring you. Most of what we know comes from CNN coverage.

This brief note is simply to let you know that the devastation in Haiti is now being reported by eye witnesses as being far worse than originally expected. The major portion of the damage is in the area of the Presidential palace and government buildings surrounding the "downtown area." These are considered "major" because they are official buildings and they are constructed with reinforced concrete and proper foundations. Among them are the UN building, the hospital, the government offices, embassies, the hotel (where most diplomats stay) and the airport. Unreinforced buildings were destroyed outright. That would include most of the dwellings.

Right now, we are concerned for the orphanage in Leurboug which is in a small suburb of Port-Au-Prince. There is no phone service there now, so news is not available. It sits in the area most hard hit by the earthquake. Also of great concern is the school in Cite Soleil which is almost certainly damaged - possibly destroyed. The fellow who runs that work on site is Luc Deratus, a Haitian national. We have heard nothing of him to date. He is currently residing in Port-Au-Prince.

As far as we know now, Petionville (a small community just at the edge of Port on the mountainside) has also been hard hit. As for St. Marc - the news from there is more encouraging. The quake did much shaking, but the damage is reported to be "not extensive." As for the schools in Pont Sonde, Borel, Thomane, Leogane, and Biquette, we have no information. We are encouraged however, in the knowledge that the school in Pont Sonde was built with reinforced concrete on a firm concrete foundation. Even with the reported magnitude of shaking, that school should be OK.

We are unable to speak with anyone on the ground, so we are simply praying now right along with everyone else.

We are scheduled to visit Haiti on the 26th of January and tickets have already been purchased. Whether we will be allowed to travel by that time, no one knows. If we are permitted, we will go as planned.

Pictures will be taken and a report will be sent out upon our return. In the meantime, please continue in your prayers for the people of Haiti. They endure so much unspeakable privation as it is, let alone with this kind of extensive devastation.

If you are planning to give to relief organizations, please do a little homework before choosing a channel for your relief gifts. Many of the organizations being promoted via the news media send less than 20 cents on the dollar to the field. The last figure I heard concerning the United

Way, for example, was less than 5 cents on the dollar. I heard that just this morning. As a rule of thumb, if the organization has a large advertising presence and an international staff, it is likely that the bulk of your financial support will go to sustaining the organization.

Practical Compassion is not in a position to provide the kind of support that is needed immediately such as heavy construction equipment, emergency medical care, peace keeping forces, etc. We will be able to provide some assistance in less immediate ways when we get our feet on the ground later this month. We are not launching a fund raising drive to deal with this quake simply because the type of help they need right now is outside our area of capabilities. The work we already support will need our assistance as recovery begins to take the focus of attention. Right now, the focus is search and rescue, medical, and peace keeping presence. We will carry funds in with us when we go in a few weeks.

We will keep you apprised as more information becomes available. Thank you for caring.

Your servants,

Practical Compassion
by George and Suzie Zimmerman