

*A 30 Day Devotional*

# **GOD MOVING IN HAITI**

**MYLIFESPEAKS**



*Written by the myLIFEspeaks Staff*

*A 30 Day Devotional*

# **GOD MOVING IN HAITI**



**WRITTEN BY THE MYLIFESPEAKS STAFF**

This devotional is a 30 day journey with us as we share what God is doing. We have seen firsthand these amazing stories from Nepley, Haiti. Many more stories just like this exist throughout Haiti and the world. Our goal is to share these stories with you as both an encouragement and declaration of what God is doing. The myLIFEspeaks Staff prays these stories help you see even more clearly the beautiful things and miracles God continues to do in our day.

**We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.**

1 John 1:3 (NIV)

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*All Scripture passages are from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.*



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*This devotional is dedicated to the men, women, and children of Nepley, Haiti. Without them we wouldn't exist.*

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Author bios are located at the end of the book.

As you read this devotional, you will notice each devotional is written in the author's own style. From Andrea's "Y'ALL" (written in all caps and should be interpreted in a full volume Texas-twang) to Missy's straight-forward and challenging questions to ponder, each writer is sharing how God has used Haiti to move their own hearts.

We hope you are encouraged, challenged, and moved by the stories on these pages. We know we have been.

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Wilson". The letters are connected and fluid, with a prominent "M" and "W".A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Missy Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike & Missy Wilson  
Co-Founders, myLIFEspeaks

# PROLOGUE

The goal of this ebook is simple, we want to share the story of what God is doing in Haiti. Many times those of us who live and work in Haiti see God do amazing things and (as unbelievable as it sounds) don't share these stories with anyone else because things like this happen regularly. That's right, we see God doing amazing things in our midst daily.

The stories on these pages are meant to encourage you as you go about your day. Our prayer is for you to begin recognizing God is doing amazing things in your midst too, not just in Haiti.

## HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

Don't read this book cover to cover. While you might enjoy reading these stories in one sitting, the goal is for you to not only read them but also spend time allowing God to use these stories to speak to your heart.

We recommend beginning each day in a quiet place where you won't be interrupted.

Start your time with prayer, asking God to show you what He wants you to see during your time reading. Each of these stories was written for the purpose of telling about the Greatness of God.

As you read, look for God's Hand at work. The focus is not on the writer, myLIFEspeaks, nor Haiti. The focus should be entirely upon what God is doing.

Make sure you don't skip over the Scripture text in each story. Read the Scripture. If you have your Bible with you, read the Scripture from your Bible. None of these stories can ever compare to the Word of God.

As you read, ask yourself these simple questions:

- How did I see God's Greatness in this story?
- What part of this story stood out to me the most?
- How can God use me today to be an example of His Goodness?

If you use a journal, write what you've experienced as you read each story. What is God saying to you?

Let us know what God is saying to you. We would love to hear from you. Feel free to email us:  
[info@myLIFEspeaks.com](mailto:info@myLIFEspeaks.com)

# DAY 1

## A BOY, A MOTORCYCLE, AND A PRAYER: KERWENS' STORY BY: MIKE WILSON



*"Don't be afraid, Just believe."*

I was visiting with team members about their day in the commUNITY center in Haiti, I remember a commotion was happening outside and a crowd of people had gathered around. I stood in the doorway and saw a young woman holding a child on the back of a motorcycle. She was screaming and asking for someone to help. I knew he must be injured.

I'm not great with medical issues. I don't do well with blood or injuries so I stayed inside the commUNITY center. I really didn't have anything to offer this mother or her son so my decision was to stay out of the way.

When I saw my wife, Missy, her eyes told the story. This child was severely injured and needed immediate help. He had head trauma and our small clinic couldn't offer him any help due to our lack of resources for a patient in such critical condition. He needed to get to a hospital immediately. At that moment, one of our medical interns came in with a look of grave concern.

Our medical intern shared with the group inside the commUNITY center the story of what had happened. The little boy, Kerwens, age 3, had been hit in the head by the handlebars of a fast-driving motorcycle as it rounded a corner. The driver of the motorcycle evidently hadn't seen Kerwens when he ran across the street to a family member. The driver of the motorcycle never stopped.

When he was struck in the head, Kerwens immediately fell to the ground. His mother was called and she flagged down another passing motorcycle and brought him to the one place where she hoped she could get help for her injured son. She brought him to the myLIFEspeaks commUNITY center in the next village over.

When he got to us, Kerwens was unconscious, his eyes were fixed and his breathing was shallow. His face had zero signs of LIFE. The memory that sticks out the most though is the "dent" in his head. Our medical intern

described it like that; it was a dent and the skull was shattered into pieces. When she examined the injury his whole head caved in.

The horror of the situation was immediate. Missy jumped into action and told Kerwens' mother to take him to a local hospital. Due to the lack of medical infrastructure in Haiti, it was likely Kerwens was going to die because the hospital would be unable to treat his severe injury. However, it was our only option.

I remember someone in the room encouraged everyone to pray. The group of people there began praying for Kerwens, his mother, his family, the driver of the motorcycle taking him to the hospital, and the driver of the motorcycle that hit him. At that moment the sounds of people praying and those prayers brought peace and comfort as I've rarely experienced.

In this moment, Missy remembered an ambulance service that could potentially get Kerwens to a hospital in the capital city of Port-au-Prince. She began calling them and within minutes they agreed to meet us at the local hospital.

We jumped in the car and drove to the hospital to meet Kerwens and his mother. When we got there we jumped out and ran to the counter and asked to see Kerwens. The nurse at the desk said he wasn't inside. We were crushed. Had the mother just given up? Did she not bring him to the hospital? Was he alive?

The nurse then asked us if we were possibly talking about the woman and child sitting in the corner of the waiting area. They had shown up just a few minutes earlier but didn't have any money and therefore couldn't be seen inside the hospital.

We turned our attention to the corner of the room but while the woman looked familiar the child on her lap did not. The child was sitting up asking his mother for a drink of water. There was no way this was Kerwens. Or was it?

Our medical intern rushed to him and began to look him over. His eyes were focused and his breathing was normal. She began touching his head to examine the injury. I will never forget that moment for my entire life. She began to cry out loud with her hand in the place where the dent was and exclaimed, "I just felt the dent go away. I felt his head heal with my hand over it. I just felt that."

What do you do in that situation other than give thanks to God? We laughed, cried, prayed, and stood in amazement in that moment. When the ambulance showed up they took him to the hospital in Port-au-Prince to make sure he was healing properly. We already knew the answer.

The hospital ran scans and images of Kerwens' head. He was completely fine. It was as if nothing had ever happened. He was not a toddler on the verge of death. Instead, he was a toddler running around. The hospital even asked if we were sure the accident we described had actually happened.

I had the chance to see God perform a miracle. I was there and I give testimony to God's Greatness at that moment.



### **Mark 5:21-42**

*21 When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. 22 Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. 23 He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." 24 So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him.*

*25 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 26 She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. 27 When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." 29 Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. 30 At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" 31 "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'" 32 But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. 33 Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."*

*35 While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?" 36 Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe." 37 He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. 38 When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. 39 He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." 40 But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). 42 Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished.*

As you read Kerwens story, what stood out to you?

I firmly believe the prayers of God's people in that moment made the difference in Kerwens' LIFE. While we worked so hard to get him to good medical care, the prayers that were made on his behalf rang loud and clear in God's presence. Is there something in your own LIFE that you need to spend time right now praying about? Is there a decision you are facing, a conversation you need to have, a procedure you have put off because you're afraid of what you might hear or see? While the earthly outcomes might not change like they did in Kerwens' story, your heart must be drawn nearer and nearer to God each day. You might have heard that so many times before but will today be the day when you do something about it?



When you read the story in Mark 5 do you notice the desperation of the girl's father in the story? Can you relate to that? Why do you think the father came to Jesus with the story of his daughter? What keeps you from coming and falling at the feet of Jesus with your own concerns?

Did you also notice the woman in the middle of the story of the desperate father? How would you have reacted if you were the girl's father and Jesus stopped to talk to a woman who had touched him? I can only imagine how I would be dragging Jesus to get Him to go and pushing Him to be where I wanted him rather than letting Him be God. I don't know if I would have been happy for the woman who had been healed knowing my own child was still sick. I am humbled in this moment knowing God can do multiple things at once and hears each of our prayers at the same time. He doesn't get caught off guard.

Is there someone you should celebrate with today that you haven't acknowledged yet because you are focused on your own needs?

When Jesus entered the house there was no acknowledgement that true hope had arrived. Instead, death was at the center of the story. When Jesus saw this His words to the girl's father were so powerful, "Don't be afraid; just believe." Jesus knew what He was doing but the father didn't. This was a moment of complete trust.

Look at the faith of the girl's father in the midst of his own home. The house was filled with dread and wails. People were actually laughing at Jesus, but this did not keep Jesus from the little girl.

How can your day focus on Jesus? How can you find peace in the chaos? Are you trying to rush Jesus? Are you afraid or are you trusting Him?



*Kerwens the day after he was released from the hospital*

# DAY 2

## A LIFE-LONG DREAM

BY: MISSY WILSON



*"He had every opportunity and reason to give up but his dream wasn't just his dream, it was a God-sized dream..."*

On one of my first trips to Haiti I was placed in a group that was going to host Vacation Bible School for the week at a nearby village from where we were staying. We packed up all our supplies and began the walk down the sugarcane path that led us to the next village. Walking close to me was a young man who would be our translator for the day. I felt this would be a great opportunity for us to talk and get to know a little more about his village and his country.

His name was Peter Mesiline. He was 17-years-old and he grew up in the village of Neply. As we continued to walk and talk, I asked Peter if he was still in school and what he wanted to do in his future. He looked at me and quickly responded, "My dream is to be a doctor." He was so confident, so bold in his statement, and so sure of what he was declaring.

Peter and I grew a friendship on that day. Years later when myLIFEspeaks was created, he came to work as the commUNITY Involvement Director and I was able to witness God work through many obstacles in Peter's LIFE.

Fast forward five years from the first day I met him and Mike, Peter, and I were riding on a bus together. We had been sitting in stand-still traffic in the heat of the Haitian sun for most of the day. We were hot, sweaty, and ready to be home but what an amazing opportunity it was to sit and talk about dreams.

Mike asked Peter, "What happened to your dream of being a doctor?" Peter smirked and said, "That dream wasn't for me. I am not from an area or have the money to make that dream come true, so I had to let that dream go." As he made the statement, I saw his face drop. It wasn't the confidence I had seen from him in the past. It was a look of defeat and sadness. We both told Peter on that day that it didn't matter where he was from or what he did or didn't have. If this was his dream and it was what God had created him for then God would provide all his needs in His timing.

Peter received a huge blessing not long after this conversation. He was told he would be fully sponsored for medical school if he could pass the test and get in. Peter enrolled in medical school in Port-au-Prince and took the test. He scored very high on the entrance exam and the administration came to him and told him they didn't see his

exam; "It was lost". The school eventually "found" the exam and told him they did not see how it was possible for someone like him, from the Province, to be able to score this high and they felt he might have cheated and he would need to take the test again. Peter stood strong, re-took the test and scored higher than he did on the first one. YES!

Peter went through five long, tough years of medical school. His faith was tested many times but I am happy to say today, Dr. Peter Mesiline is in his first year of residency in St. Marc (2021).

He will complete his residency in the next 18 months and then he will begin his speciality in Gynecology. He will be the first person from Nepley not only to become a Doctor but also to be a Gynecology Specialist!

I am beyond proud of the perseverance I have seen in Peter over these last several years. His faith has been a testimony to many. He had every opportunity and reason to give up but his dream wasn't just his dream, it was a God-sized dream, which he is now living out to the fullest.

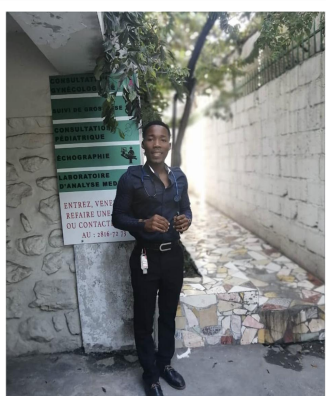
When we are able to connect with what God has designed for us, follow Him with all our hearts, and live through exactly what the scriptures say, all is possible.



### **James 1:1-4**

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

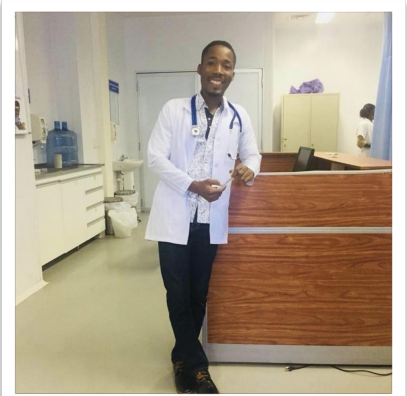
1. What God-sized dream do you have that you might have given up on because it seemed impossible?
2. How can you persevere to see the finished work God has in store for you?
3. How can you encourage others to persevere to do the same?



*First Day of Residency*



*Peter visiting the US*



*Dr. Peter Mesiline*

# DAY 3

## THE GREAT I AM

BY: ANDREA PRICE



*"There is no power in Hell or any who can stand, before the power and the presence of the Great I Am!"*

Throughout our lives, we hear testimonies of how people came to know God or how God grabbed their attention; whether it's through a prayer, a song, a sermon at church or a near death experience. My first real encounter with God the Father happened on the hot, dusty day of July 13th, 2016 in Nepley, Haiti. The seed to this encounter had been planted in April of 2012 with a dream. During that season in 2012, I felt like my world was crashing down. Because of the dream I had, I woke up with the "Peace that surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). I wouldn't encounter and recognize that same Peace again until that hot July day in 2016.

I was sitting in the education office on the campus of myLIFEspeaks. I heard an EXTREMELY loud noise. I was a little startled. However, extremely loud noises are common in Haiti so I didn't think anything of it. Within 30 seconds of the noise, I heard one of our summer interns sprinting up the steps. I was then alarmed so I met her at the top of the steps. She was bent over and out of breath trying to tell me what the loud noise was. She could barely speak because she was panicked. She muttered "The gate.....a kid...it fell on...." And before she could finish her sentence I was already down the stairs.

Our campus is made up of 2 two-story buildings that are divided by a courtyard and connected by a very large, iron, blue gate. It measures 15 feet wide and 11 feet high and takes almost all of my might to open it. I like to pretend I still have the same strength and power I did in my collegiate athlete days but let me tell you, THIS GATE IS HEAVY.

When I arrived downstairs this was the scene: the big blue gate is on its side. There is a large crowd. People are screaming, "She is dead! The little girl is dead!" I found out that the little girl was standing out front of the gate and when it derailed, all 15 x 11 feet of iron, came crashing down onto her. There was nothing to take to blow off the fall except her head.

I see my boss Missy on the ground hovering over the little girl. It is one of my dear friends' seven-year-old daughter, Quinn. She is not breathing. They can't find a pulse. Her skin is grey. Missy looks at me and says, "Dre YOU NEED TO PRAY RIGHT NOW!" When I closed my eyes to pray everything around me stopped. There was no noise. There was no crowd. I don't even remember where I was standing or what I was saying. All I remember is hearing God's voice for the first time ever saying: "Don't worry. She is already healed!" The Peace

that surpasses all understanding was back. It poured down my body like water. God knew I was confused so He repeated Himself, "I said don't worry! I've already healed her."

Immediately after that I saw my first vision. I saw the crowd that was gathered around Quinn. I saw my boss and first responders around her (just like what I saw when my eyes were open) but this time Jesus was there in a white robe with a purple sash around His waist crouched down beside her. This took my breath away. I gasped and my eyes opened. My first thoughts were, "What in the world just happened?! What did I just see? What did I just hear? Why am I not scared? Why do I know deep down in my soul that this little girl is gonna be okay?"

When I came back to reality, I was the **ONLY** person in sight. Initially when I closed my eyes, there was a crowd of at least 25 people and chaos. But now I was standing in the middle of the street with my hands in the air, alone. How long had I been there? There was **NOT A SOUL IN SIGHT**. It was silent. I was very perplexed. Still to this day, nobody can tell me how long I was standing in the middle of the street.

I decided to go inside to see if I could find someone and there she was, little Quinn. She was sitting up on the table crying telling everyone to "LEAVE ME ALONE!" The fact that this girl was even breathing was without a doubt a modern day miracle. There is absolutely **NOTHING** else that can explain it. I asked God, "How is this possible?" He again responded, "Because I am the Great I Am."

Not a day goes by that I don't look at that gate and hear those words, "I am the Great I Am." Not a day goes by that I don't marvel in awe of why and how God spoke to me that day. How He really does have grace for us all. He really does know us. He really does redeem our past and He really does have specific purpose for **ALL** of us. My **LIFE** has **NEVER** been the same. You can't go into the presence of God and come out the same.

**\*\*For those of you wondering, Quinn and her family ended up flying out of Haiti that day and went to the hospital in Miami, Florida only to find that her CAT scan and x-rays came back 100% CLEAN. MIRACULOUS.**



### **Psalm 77:14**

*You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.*

Have you ever been in a situation where you would say you have been in the presence of God? If so, what was that like?

How can this story impact you today?

Do miracles still happen today? Is Andrea's story one you read and discount or is it something you can identify with?

# DAY 4

## BÈL EWO: BEAUTIFUL HERO

BY: BETHANY JOSEPH



*"Even out of something negative, God can work all things for good."*

Bèl Ewo is a support group myLIFEspeaks began for parents, caregivers, and family members of people with disabilities. God is moving in this program and it is evident by how He is blessing it. We have had verses of the year the past two years and I have seen how helpful it is for the members to memorize a verse so that it is always in their mind when they might need it. Last year we focused on Deuteronomy 31:8, "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." As a parent, caregiver, or family member of a person with disabilities, it can be easy to feel afraid, forsaken, and discouraged. It may be easy to feel alone and feel like God has forgotten them. Every meeting we had this past year, we read this verse and talked about it. It was amazing to watch the members of Bèl Ewo live out this verse and become stronger in their faith. This verse was a helpful reminder for me as well. This past year was full of unknowns and craziness. I had to remind myself daily that the Lord goes before me and is always with me.

This year we are focusing on Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." LIFE as a special needs parent can leave people wondering why they have to suffer and why their LIFE has to be so hard? This year we will focus on the fact that even out of something negative, God can work all things for good. At Bèl Ewo we discuss some of the good things that have come out of LIFE's hardships. Each member has gone through difficult times, but we hope that after this year, when they go through trials and suffering, they will remember that God will somehow, someway God will bring good out of it.

Bèl Ewo is not just a task for work for me. Each meeting I attend, I come out filled with the Spirit and ready to face the hardships of LIFE. It has helped me celebrate the good things and also sustained me during hard times. The more we focus on God and on the Gospel, the stronger our Bèl Ewo program becomes. I am in awe daily at what He is doing for the members of the program who have become like family to each other. God is allowing members to be vulnerable, open up to each other, and open up to Him, in a culture that is not keen on showing emotions.

Today, we have members that are able to look at these verses and share their testimonies on how God is working in their lives.



I pray that these two verses give you hope like they have given our Bél Ewo members. I encourage you to look at the verses we have focused on the past two years and use them as encouragement when you are facing hardships in your LIFE. I also encourage you to take some time to pray for each of our members. Pray that the program continues to grow and that our members grow closer to each other and closer in their relationship with Christ.

**Deuteronomy 31:8**

*The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."*

**Romans 8:28**

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*



*Bél Ewo members praying for and over each other.*

*A day of respite at the beach together as a group!*



# DAY 5

## WHERE SPORTS & FAITH COINCIDE

BY: ELI WILSON



*"Glorify God with the gifts and abilities He has given us."*

What do sports mean to you? For most of us sports are an athletic activity requiring skill or physical power with a competitive nature. There are multiple different types of sports, but sports aren't just meant to be played. I believe that sports are a way to bring people together; old, young, big, or small. It's a way and reason for people to gather in a way that brings enjoyment, but also challenges and opportunities for growth.

In Haiti, soccer is the primary sport played throughout the country. However, as the leader of Sports Development, my goal is to bring other sports to Haiti. What if someone really wants to play soccer but they just aren't good at it? In Haiti, if you aren't a good soccer player then are considered to have no athletic ability. However, people have different athletic gifts. We aren't all meant to play soccer. I am passionate about helping people find out what their gifts are.

If you look throughout history you will see great athletes like Tom Brady, Michael Jordan, Dale Earnhardt, and many more were considered the greatest of all time in their sport. I want people who don't enjoy soccer to be able to have the opportunity to find something they are passionate about and potentially have the opportunity be the greatest of all time in that sport.

I am excited to come along people in our commUNITY to find a sport that they are passionate about and love! Our current sport we are focusing on is basketball. Right now we have 13 awesome players who want to improve their basketball skills and abilities. But myLIFEspeaks' Sports Program is so much bigger than just sports. We use it as another way to glorify God with the gifts and abilities He has given us.

Christ is the center of our program and in every game players strive to use their athletic abilities to glorify His kingdom. It is really inspiring to see a group of people come together and want to glorify God while enhancing their ability to play the sport that He's called them to play. Every practice is a gift to watch what God is doing in the player's lives. It is a privilege to witness the children in the commUNITY continue to look up to our team and and view us as role models because we play sports in a Christ-honoring way. We have this responsibility to live our best LIFE on and off the court for Christ.





Some might say that playing a sport can't be a ministry focus but we believe differently. Many of the players who choose to play basketball have not yet chosen to follow Jesus Christ. The goal of the sports development program is to not only teach basketball (sports) but to also share the love of Christ with everyone we come in contact with.

### **1 Thessalonians 2:8**

...Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

How can you share the Love of Christ today as you go throughout your day?



*Sports, Jesus, and LIFE together!*

# DAY 6

## THE WOMAN ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

BY: KELSEY WILSON



*"The kindness of a stranger overwhelmed me... She was motherly, selfless, loving; everything I needed in that moment."*

In 2018, I was in Haiti to photograph a wedding of one of our myLIFEspeaks' employees. Unfortunately, I woke up the morning of the wedding with a virus that did not allow me to keep food down. As the day went on, I began feeling lethargic and weak but knew I needed to push through for the bride and groom. If you've ever visited Haiti before, you know that being sick in the very hot and humid country is less than ideal. In addition, bathrooms aren't as accessible as they are in America and finding a cold room to relax in during the peak hours of the hot day is non-existent.

I left the myLIFEspeaks campus to meet the bridal party at the local mango grove, roughly a 10-15 minute drive on dusty backroads, for photos. I laid in the back of the off-roading vehicle with a pillow when I told the driver to pull over because I was feeling nauseated. On the side of the road in an unfamiliar village, the overwhelming feeling of dehydration, heat, and embarrassment to be publicly ill was quickly interrupted by a hand resting on my shoulder. I opened my eyes to see a woman, unfamiliar to me, holding a bowl of water and motioning me to drink. She began pouring water into her hands, wiping my face, and praying over me in Creole. This angel of a woman was a complete stranger to me and came to assist me during a vulnerable moment. She was not concerned about contracting the unknown virus and only focused on my well-being. She was motherly, selfless, loving; everything I needed in that moment.

After several minutes of sickness, we continued on to the mango grove. As I again laid in the back of the vehicle I had tears rolling down my face; too weak to wipe them off. The kindness of a stranger overwhelmed me. I never had a chance to ask for her name or to thank her for her selfless act but I pray for her weekly.

Unfortunately, I've come in contact with many people who have openly admitted when they think about Haiti, they think "poor, helpless, full of problems." However, when I think of Haiti I think of the selfless woman on the side of the road. The woman who didn't have much to offer but offered everything I didn't know I needed in that moment. The woman who didn't know my name but knew she could bring a bowl of water and a helping hand. The woman who, without knowing it, reminded me of my own mother who would hold my hair back when I was sick and who would rub my back to remind me she was there. This woman offered her presence, kindness, grace, and motherly, gentle spirit.

The Lord reminds me every day that although Haitians don't have many tangible items to give, they do have time; time to care, time to make a difference, time to pray for someone, time to help, time to be present. The woman gave me her time; a selfless act I am still so thankful for. Haiti, although full of its hardships, is also full of people like the woman on the side of the road.



## **2 Corinthians 12:9**

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

Have you ever needed help in a strange place or situation?

How do you react when you need help? Do you accept it willingly or do you resist? What about when you need help from God?

Have you ever offered help to someone in need?

How can you offer assistance to someone in need today?



# DAY 7

## ROMAN: STANDING ON FAITH

BY: RHONDA NISBETT PIERRE



*"There was nothing more they could do. Take him home to die..."*

I constantly get calls, messages, and emails for referrals for patients in need of rehabilitation. One morning I received a call from a doctor in a nearby town who had had a mobile clinic about 30 minutes from Neply.

He said he just saw a child who had a leg injury a year ago and now couldn't stand or walk. He heard myLIFEspeaks offered physical therapy services and was wondering if he could refer this boy for evaluation. I agreed but didn't give him any guarantees we could help, especially given the length of time since the injury happened.

The boy never showed up, so I forgot about it. A few days later, the doctor called to apologize that he got word the family wasn't able to make it because transportation fell through. He asked to try again. I said "sure", thinking again there was a 50/50 chance I would ever see him.

The next day, I was notified there was a mom and a child waiting to see me. I walked into myLIFEspeaks' commUNITY center to see a 10-year-old boy being lifted off of a motorcycle and carried inside with his mom following behind, carrying a thick file folder of papers and x-rays. I'm introduced to this young boy, Roman Innocent.

While examining Roman, it was quickly obvious there was more going on than just not being able to stand or walk. He had multiple open wounds on his right leg, left leg, and hip. One wound on his knee was so deep I could see the quadricep tendon. His left leg was unable to flex at the hip or knee.

His mom sat quietly as I read through the medical chart she brought. Upon reading and inspecting his wounds, I came to understand he most likely had chronic osteomyelitis or a bone infection that started around a year ago. The infection likely occurred after a simple fall while playing soccer in which bacteria managed to enter through a scrape or cut on his leg. I asked his mom about Roman's hospital history.

"They told me there was nothing more they could do. Take him home to die... And if he doesn't, then maybe you can bring him back and we will see if we can do anything else." Roman didn't die.

I looked into Roman's and his mom's eyes and told them, "I know it's hard to trust and you don't know me, but I won't give up because I believe in God and He doesn't give up on us."

I gave him a walker and taught him how to use it, telling him to practice standing. I assured him we wouldn't give up on him like the hospital did. I asked them if they believed in God and Roman's mom said she did, but that it was really difficult where they live because her home is surrounded by people who believe in YouDou. They tell her everyday that she believes in a God that has done nothing for them.

But that isn't true because God has been there every step. He never promised it would be easy or that we wouldn't face hardships or a testing of our faith. I told them that it wouldn't be easy but God is here and God has a purpose for Roman and kept him alive for a reason.

Roman was helped by myLIFEspeaks and our ministry partners and was able to undergo multiple operations and receive the medical care he needs. His leg still has the presence of underlying infection that we continue to work on and pray for complete healing. However, today by faith and God's Grace, Roman is able to stand, walk, and run!



### **James 1: 2-4**

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

In James 1, we read that through perseverance in tough times we mature in our faith and are able to stand strong. God does not give up on us. God is here and we have to lean into Him.

We have to seek Him and stay strong in our faith in Him. If we give up on God, we give up on LIFE.

### **Psalm 86:9-13**

*All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name. 10 For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God. 11 Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. 12 I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. 13 For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead.*



*Roman visiting the  
myLIFEspeaks office*



*Almost healed up!*



*Today. All grown up  
and doing well!*

# DAY 8

## FRANTZKY: CHANGING THE WORLD THROUGH A SMILE

BY: SYDNEY MILLER



*"We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do." - Mother Teresa*

Have you ever thought to yourself or asked, "What difference can one person make?" Sometimes even our greatest efforts can seem like just a drop in the ocean. Let me tell you a story about a little boy with special needs named Frantzky who changed my LIFE forever. I think his story will impact your LIFE too.

Frantzky was an 8-year-old Haitian boy with special needs, who had been discarded and abandoned by the very ones who were supposed to love him unconditionally; his family. He never spoke a word or even took a step and yet he had a lasting impact on every single person who was lucky enough to meet him... with nothing more than a joyful smile.

Frantzky had the joy of Jesus living inside of him and it could be felt by those close to him. How could this little boy who had been through so much in his short time on Earth, have that much joy?

The only answer is that Frantzky's joy wasn't of this world.

Frantzky was born with clubbed feet, a simple fix for a child born just 800 miles north in America. But in Haiti, this deformity made him different and with the influence of Voodoo culture, deemed him cursed and disposable. Unfortunately this false perception led Frantzky's birth mom to abandon him, like many other children born in Haiti with a disability.

At 3 years old, he was left on a dirty mattress on a front porch to fend for himself. This is when myLIFEspeaks staff found him after hearing what they thought was a wounded animal crying. But what they found was an extremely malnourished 3-year-old boy weighing only nine pounds.

After a lot of effort and attempted empowerment on myLIFEspeaks' part, it became clear that Frantzky's birth mom didn't want him, even with myLIFEspeaks' help. It was then that Haitian Child Services released Frantzky into myLIFEspeaks' forever care.

In that moment, this beautiful little boy was given a second chance at LIFE. All he needed was for someone to love him and speak up when he couldn't for himself. And that is exactly what myLIFEspeaks did.

***Proverbs 31:8 Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.***

Frantzky was immediately welcomed with open arms into the myLIFEspeaks family. For the first time in his LIFE, he was loved for exactly who he was. He knew he belonged. This love quickly began to heal him.

Frantzky received nourishment, care, physical therapy, and endless amounts of love. He began to smile more. But, his new chance at LIFE still had residual issues from the past. Frantzky had significant developmental delays and brain issues when he was placed in myLIFEspeaks' care, either from birth or from neglect. With occupational therapy, he was able to develop and grow.

However, shortly after coming into myLIFEspeaks' care, Frantzky's health worsened and it turned out he had a rare strain of malaria. He was getting sicker and the medicine he needed couldn't be found anywhere in Haiti. His future was looking bleak.

This is where God provided one of many miracles at the hands of myLIFEspeaks and this special little boy. Through divinely orchestrated connections and several phone calls, within 24 hours a UN jet from the United States met Missy at the Port-au-Prince international airport, with the LIFE-saving medicine Frantzky needed.

This opened the eyes of many in the village of Neply to see that if God loves Frantzky, a special needs child who was discarded and believed to be "cursed", this much to send an airplane with medicine to Haiti just for him, then God must love me too.

Because of this grand display of God's Love for a little boy with special needs, many hearts were opened to the Gospel, eyes were opened, and many believed. Because of Frantzky, the doctors and families who were involved in getting him the medicine were compelled to start a medical clinic together at myLIFEspeaks to bring basic, yet LIFE-saving medical care to the village.

Today, LIFE Clinic serves thousands of patients each year, from Neply and far beyond. The Public Health pillar of myLIFEspeaks also includes LIFE Therapy Clinic and our new LIFE Lab for diagnostics.

Throughout his LIFE, Frantzky constantly gave us a glimpse into the magnitude, depth, and beauty of God's Love. And the incredible thing is, he did it without ever saying a word. He didn't need to. His LIFE spoke.

Frantzky was adored by his new forever family at myLIFEspeaks. He lived at one of myLIFEspeaks' Family Homes with his mom Tania, and five siblings, Sarah, Darbens, Olivier, Athems, and Theingrid. His sister, Sarah, who has autism and other undiagnosed disabilities, had a special relationship with Frantzky. We believe Frantzky understood Sarah, when no one else could.

At LIFE Academy, Frantzky had many friends and was loved for who he was. For the first time in his LIFE, Frantzky wasn't seen as different. At myLIFEspeaks, he was family and an integral part of a commUNITY. Frantzky was a beloved brother, son, grandson, friend, neighbor, and classmate.

To know Frantzky, was to love him.

Unfortunately, the lack of basic but essential medical care in Haiti was a recurring theme in Frantzky's LIFE but the last time his care was in the hands of prejudicial Haitian healthcare professionals. LIFE clinic can handle many of the basic medical needs of the village but when it comes to bigger health battles myLIFEspeaks still has to rely on public Haitian hospitals.



Good health and medical care is hard to find in Haiti. Unlike in America, you aren't guaranteed LIFE-saving care or even basic medical needs like IVs, oxygen, and around the clock check-ins. This is especially true if ignorance and prejudice is involved. Heartbreakingly, this is what happened in 2019 when Frantzky got a virus and it got worse to the point where he needed to go to the hospital.

After myLIFEspeaks staff took him from hospital to hospital, facing complication after complication, the Haitian healthcare system failed Frantzky. Ignorant doctors and nurses refused him basic care because of his "differences" and he passed away as a result.

A horrific and unimaginable tragedy, at the hands of doctors who were trusted to help a child in need. But, Frantzky's legacy doesn't end here.

His LIFE continues to touch and change the hearts and minds of those who hear his story and see his smile.

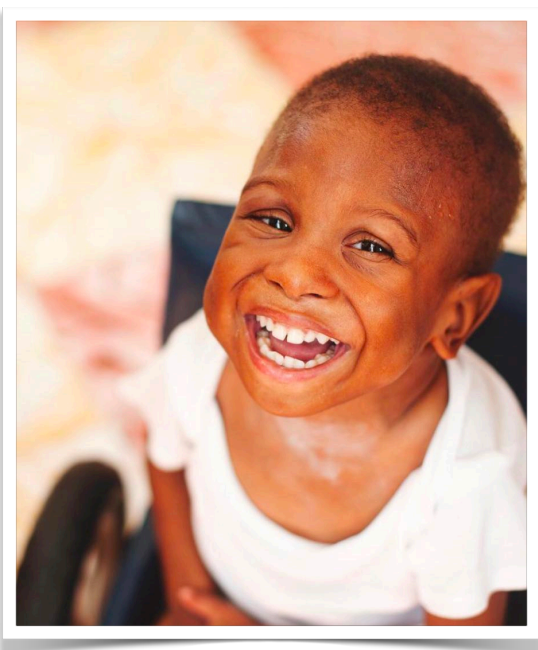


Two years later, we still cannot begin to understand or answer the thousands of *why's* of this heartbreaking situation, but we know that God won't let his death be in vain. As much as we could argue we needed Frantzky here, God must have needed him even more.

We have peace knowing Frantzky is with Jesus, running, dancing, and singing without any pain or suffering. We know we will see him again. And although it is hard to imagine his smile being any brighter than it was here on earth, it is certain that in Jesus' presence Frantzky's smile is radiating bigger than ever.

If one little boy with special needs in a third-world country can impact thousands of lives with a smile, then your LIFE speaks too.

What will it say?



# DAY 9

## ACHO: HIS LIFE, HIS LEGACY

BY: MISSY WILSON



*"I have nothing to fear, my future is in His Hands."*

I first met Acho over nine years ago, before myLIFEspeaks was founded. I was in Nepley visiting some of my friends who used to translate for Mike and I. We were introduced to Acho and his brother, Cajuste. I immediately noticed their beautiful, clear, blue eyes. They were captivating and I felt as if they drew me in from that very moment.

Over the next few years, I was able to learn more about Acho and his family. I realized they believed differently than I did. They believed in more of the mystical, Voodoo powers and not in the true hope of Jesus. I learned Cajuste is the Voodoo Priest in Nepley. It was during these first few years I actually would spend more time talking with Cajuste than I did Acho. I would always tell Cajuste I was praying for him and I prayed for God to show him all he had planned for him and his future. He would look at me and respond with a slight giggle and then respond with, "Missy, don't pray for me, Voodoo is my LIFE and if I don't have it then I won't have anything." My prayers for him continue to this day.

However, there was something different about Acho. I got to know Acho more as he started coming to our church services on Sunday mornings and then attending myLIFEspeaks' Elderly Program on Wednesdays.

He loved hard, he opened up, and he engaged in a way I never expected. He would show up at church almost every Sunday, sporting his fedora, as only Acho could. He always dressed for success and was always ready to share anything we were ready to listen to. He would come up after service each week and say something like "I never knew that" or "That really touched me today," smile, and begin walking back home. I never really knew where Acho stood with his relationship with Christ or if he believed as his brother did but one thing I did see was Acho's heart to know more about God.

The more I got to know Acho, the more of an impact he made in my LIFE. He brought a sense of joy, peace, and contentment whenever he was around. He was always smiling and happy even when he didn't feel well.

Acho's health began to decline, due to his liver disease, causing swelling in his extremities and shortness of breath. He fought to continue coming to church and Elderly Program until he couldn't make it anymore. He became very

sick and was placed in a hospital in Leogane. I was able to visit Acho twice during his hospital stay. The first time I went in he made sure to tell me how much Pastor Mike means to him, how much he loved us, and how much he had enjoyed being part of the church and Elderly Program.

He talked a lot during my visit and I remember thinking Acho was going to be fine and God was going to use him to impact his brother and others in his daily LIFE. I was able to talk to Acho that day about his LIFE with Jesus and if he had ever accepted him as his personal Lord and Savior. Acho's response was one I will never forget. He told me he had been converted, a term used in Haiti when you become a follower of Christ, and Jesus was the only one for him. I asked him if he was scared because he was so sick and he replied, "I have nothing to fear, my future is in HIS hands."

The next time I went to visit Acho, he was sleeping, laying there with a peaceful look on his face. He opened his beautiful blue eyes and at that moment I realized this would be the last time I might see those eyes, this side of heaven. Acho passed away that afternoon. He was at peace with his LIFE, at peace with where he was going, and at peace with how he left this world.

Acho was a legend in Neply. He spent many years sharing his LIFE with so many people here, but for me, Acho's LIFE is one which will forever have an impact on me. He taught me how to live my LIFE with joy, peace, and contentment and to live my LIFE confident in my relationship with Christ no matter how others around me might live. So many days my mind remembers the sweet smile and those crystal blue eyes which captivated me from the first day we met. I love you Acho and you will FOREVER be in my heart!

I long for the day we will be able to see each other again. Until then, I will continue to carry out your legacy in praying for your brother everyday!



Take a few moments and think about your LIFE. Have you ever stopped to think about your legacy? Thinking about the legacy we leave on this earth isn't something we do very often. Usually, we think about someone's legacy AFTER they have passed away. We don't always think about our legacy while we are alive. Often, thinking about our legacy means we have to evaluate what we are really living our lives for.

Take a look at the verses below and answer the questions.

Matthew 6:19-21 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

*James 1:12 - Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of LIFE, which God has promised to those who love him.*

1. What legacy are you leaving in this world?
2. Does your LIFE speak in ways others can see it without even having to say a word?
3. If you had to write out your final words you would say if you knew you were about to die, what would you say and how would you hope it would impact others?



*Acho at Home*

# DAY 10

## POWER IN THE NAME OF JESUS

BY: ANDREA PRICE



*"If you are so battered down and worn out from the storm and all you have is a whisper; you have everything you need."*

The first thing I do in the morning is start the coffee pot and grab my journals and Bibles. This is when I delightfully have my time with Jesus. It's a great start to my day and fills me up and prepares me for the day ahead of me.

What happened on this day in August of 2016 was nothing I ever thought I would be prepared for.

It was 8 a.m. and I was sitting in the commUNITY center of myLIFEspeaks. Suddenly someone walked in and asked me, "Have you heard about Susie? (Named changed for privacy purposes) She is possessed by an evil spirit."

I look into my cup of coffee and try to compute what I just heard. I flip through all the files of scripture, stories and books in my mind trying to remember the D.P.E.A.P (Demonic Possession Emergency Activation Plan). Still looking at my coffee, I told the Holy Spirit, "I'm not sure what you want me to do but..." and the next thing I hear is Missy's voice saying, "Andrea! Lets go!" Off we went.

We walked 40 yards to the woman's house. There she was, sitting on the porch forcefully flicking playing cards one at a time. By this time, I am shaking like a chihuahua in a snowstorm. When I look back and think of this moment, I knew I was shaking because of the Spirit of God that was about to be unleashed and not out of fear.

Missy and Breanna, another myLIFEspeaks staff member, said a few words to her and all of a sudden the woman's head turns toward me in a very distorted way and we locked eyes. At this point, I wasn't in control of my body but it was the Spirit of God. I *whispered*, "Jesus." I simply whispered the name of Jesus and the demon-possessed woman started screaming, JUMPED to her feet, and ran into the house. We ran in pursuit declaring the name of Jesus over her. This time we were not whispering! I'm so glad that the Holy Spirit was in control of the situation and my body. If it were just me, there would be absolutely NO WAY I would have known what to say or do in that moment.

We continued to declare that she was a blood-bought child of God and that the demonic spirit must submit and LEAVE her body in the name of Jesus. There was lots of shaking and screaming and then... a moment of peace. The woman came to and this time it was just her. She was confused and didn't understand how she got there. I

asked her if she knew what happened; she said no. I told her that the most important thing she could do in that moment was accept Jesus as her Savior and she would be saved. She said she was ready to do that. I told her to just say the name of Jesus, just get His all powerful name out of your mouth. She tried to say the name Jesus but when she got the "J" sound out of her mouth I KID YOU NOT THAT SPIRIT CAME RIGHT BACK AND POSSESSED HER BEFORE SHE COULD ACTUALLY SAY JESUS. The spirit then said to us, "It's ok. We don't need to say the name of Jesus. We are ok. You can go now." NOT TODAY SATAN! We pleaded the Blood of Jesus over her again. There was more shaking and screaming. By this time three of our Haitian kitchen staff employees were by our side helping swing the Sword of the Spirit and saving this woman's soul. The spirit eventually left for good and a few months later, the woman came to understand Our Father and she accepted Him into her heart.



Read Mark 9:14-29. It is the story of the father who brought his son, who was possessed by an evil spirit, to Jesus. Stories like this seem appropriate in the Bible but why do they seem so foreign to us today? As you read about the woman in the village, do you recognize the goal of the enemy is to draw our attention away from the Call of God so the enemy will be left alone? How does your spirit react to a modern day story like the one above?

There are some big takeaways from this encounter.

1. We don't have to be these well seasoned leaders in the biggest churches for God to use us. He wants our hearts and that's it.

**2 Chronicles 16:9** *For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.*

2. Never in my life did I ever imagine I would witness this kind of moment play out before me. Never in my life did I imagine that the God of the Universe would use my lips to bear the "Name above all other names" to MAKE A DEMON FLEE.

**Luke 10:19** Behold, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you.

3. When you hear the song "Break Every Chain" and sing the lyrics "There is power in the name of Jesus," Y'ALL, THERE REALLY IS! IN THE SIMPLE WHISPER OF HIS NAME DARKNESS WILL FLEE. If you are so battered down and worn out from the storm and all you have is a whisper, you have everything you need.

We have authority over every situation. We just have to remember that He has given us authority and all its takes is whispering His Mighty Name.

# DAY 11

## NIGHT TO SHINE

BY: BETHANY JOSEPH



*"How are you letting your LIFE shine?"*

Night to Shine is an amazing night where we are able to celebrate people with disabilities from all over Haiti and all over the world. It is a night that the lives' of all our guests can shine for others to see their value and worth. I always love watching the villagers' reactions to Night to Shine and seeing what they think about us celebrating people with disabilities. All of our guests were made in the Image of God so it is awesome getting to see the villagers see God shining through our guests with special needs during Night to Shine. Their lives shine everyday. They shine joy, happiness, hope, and the love of God on whoever comes in contact with them.

When thinking of Night to Shine, Matthew 5:15-16 comes to mind, "Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." We use Night to Shine as a way to let the lives of those with disabilities here shine and give light to everyone else.

I can't help but be affected by the joy, happiness, hope, and love that shines through each and every guest that walks down that red carpet. I can't help but see the glory of God throughout the night of the event.

In most Night to Shine events throughout America, there is a respite room for the parents or the churches provide some sort of way to let parents have a break and have fun during the event. We tried that our first year, but the parents wanted to be with their children watching them have fun, so since that year, we invite our parents to be a part of the experience. During the event, I see Christ shining through the parents too. To see their love for their children and the attention and care they give to their children is amazing.

I love watching it and always hope that others at the event see it too. In Haiti, it could be easy for the parents to have a light that is burnt out, due to persecution from others and the hardships of raising a child with special needs in general. But we have an amazing group of parents who are plugged into programs like Bèl Ewo (our parent support group) and know the value, dignity, and worth of their child with special needs. The support of a likeminded commUNITY or small group helps the parents be strengthened in Christ, thus reflecting His light to others. I encourage you to find a small group of others, like Bèl Ewo, that will help relight your flame when it burns out.



How is your LIFE shining?

What in your life may be acting as a “bowl”, covering up your light and causing it not to be seen by others?

I encourage you to examine your LIFE and get rid of anything hindering God’s Light from shining through you. I encourage you to use God’s Light in a way that glorifies Him. Like our guests and parents at Night to Shine, let joy, happiness, and hope shine in your life.



Akym & Obasen on the Red Carpet at Night to Shine



# DAY 12

## FRIENDSHIPS

BY: ELI WILSON



*"The friendships that I've made here are ones that I'll have till the day that I pass on from this earth."*

Friendships are one of the many things that God has given us. Friendships should be a relationship with someone that you can fully put all of your trust in and who you can tell anything to. Friendships should be a relationship that is built on trust and most importantly the foundation of Christ.

Everyone has a certain friend that they think about when the word friendship comes to mind. A best friend is someone who you don't just look at as a friend but more of an extended family member. It's someone who understands you at your best and at your worst. What some people forget is that it's a good thing to have more than just a couple friends. God created humans so that we may live in commUNITY with each other and serve Him. So when we surround ourselves with people and with friends who serve the Lord above all else, that is best and that is what God wants.

The reason I'm so passionate about this is because that is how the village of Nepley lives every single day. While it may not be the best looking village to the people on the outside, when you get to the heart of Nepley you truly experience what real friendships are. Everyone here watches out for and cares for everyone; not just their family. Because here everyone is family, everyone lives in commUNITY.

For me personally, before I came to live in Nepley I never got to experience the true commUNITY aspect of friendship. Yes, I have a best friend (and you know who you are) but I never got to live out my LIFE with a **GROUP** of people together for the Lord and for His Kingdom. The longer I live here the more I see how God intended for friendships to be. I don't think God put me in Nepley at the time that he did on accident. God put me here at the right time and the exact moment that was best for my LIFE. If it wasn't for that I don't know if I would have found out what true friendship is. The friendships that I've made here are ones that I'll have till the day that I pass on from this earth.

We all need to find a group of friends who we can praise and glorify God together with through our relationships. Doing LIFE together in Christ is glorifying to Him.



Have you ever stopped to think about the friends that are mentioned in the Bible?

**Proverbs 18:24** *One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

Friendships are important to everyone. Even Jesus had a group of friends (Disciples) that He shared His LIFE with. In that group of friends, he had three of whom He was very close with. One of them was known as, “the Disciple whom Jesus loved.”

Have you ever thought about Jesus’ relationship with His friends? They were with Him in so many situations and they still didn’t always understand what He was doing. They even left Him when He was arrested and only John was with Him at His crucifixion.

How did Jesus interact with His friends after his resurrection though? Did He remind them of all of their failures?

As you think about your friendships, who comes to mind immediately?

How has that person influenced you in your walk with Christ?

I hope you will reach out to someone today to let them know what they mean to you. If you don’t have someone that you can reach out to, pray that God reveals that person to you in the next 24 hours.



# DAY 13

## THE ORPHANAGE

BY: KELSEY WILSON



*"Children belong in families."*

My first trip to Haiti in 2016 was through an organization in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti's capital. Our days consisted of touring Haiti and traveling in "tap taps," Haiti's taxi system. I'm thankful for the days that I adventured and witnessed the beauty of Haiti; from drinking coffee in a local's home on the mountainside to playing soccer in a dry, remote village.

The day that will remain engraved in my mind was the day we visited an orphanage in Port-Au-Prince. We pulled into the 12-foot-high, metal-gated property and dozens of children were standing on the porch, peering through the windows of the building. From memory, there was roughly one adult for every 10-15 children. We walked through the building with children climbing on us to the "backyard" of the orphanage. The yard had a rusted swing set, a basketball half-court with a missing backboard, and two plywood buildings at the back of the property. I use "buildings" loosely.

Within the rooms of the dark plywood structures was a concrete floor, wooden pallets laying flat, and water dripping down areas of the wall causing mold to grow. I remember asking someone what the purpose of the rooms were and they responded, "This is where the older children sleep. Girls in here, boys in there," as they pointed from building to building. Immediate nausea filled my body.

As our tour was wrapping up, we were left in what they described as the "baby ward." The nausea grew worse as I saw what looked like dog cages stacked from the floor to three-fourths of the way up the wall, with a baby in each cage. In complete shock, I immediately laid belly-down on the floor to see a baby who could only see our shoes as we walked by. I began smiling at this baby, putting my fingers in the cage, and tried baby-friendly tactics to get him to smile. The infant's face was stone cold; he was looking right through me with no emotion or stimulation. I asked why the babies aren't sitting and playing in the empty space of the room. The caregiver's response was, "There aren't enough people to hold them."

Our team began taking the babies out of their cages to play with them, a gut-wrenching sentence I never thought I would write because babies and cages have no sense being in the same sentence together. We played with the babies on the floor, trying to stimulate their little minds. The babies slowly began to come to LIFE; smiling, playing, and simply enjoying being held.

While holding one of the babies, questions flooded my brain about the orphanage. How did these kids get here? Do they have living parents or family members? How does the orphanage get money to feed the kids? Why don't they hire more help to hold these sweet babies? Why are the kids sleeping on wooden pallets? What happens once we leave the orphanage?

After much research, I learned that many kids in Haitian orphanage have a living parent(s) or family members nearby. In Haiti, children are placed in orphanages because families are told they don't have the ability or necessary tools to raise their children in their homes. Children are often relinquished in desperation or under false pretenses to orphanages who use them for profit. However, I quickly realized, through the mold-infested walls and caged children, that children are not receiving the promises that the orphanage once made the parents. And ultimately, when the children turn 18, they "age out" of the home and are transitioned out of the orphanage to fend for themselves on the streets of Haiti after growing up within the 12-foot walls.

Children deserve to be raised in a home-setting and not exposed to the horrific living arrangements a for-profit institution often forces on their innocence. Children desire and thrive from their parents who provide a nurturing, supportive, and inclusive environment on a daily basis. Family-based solutions reduce risk of abuse and trafficking while resulting in more positive outcomes for children. Simply put, children belong in families.

God reminds me every day that the children in the orphanage are His children and loved beyond measure, despite the sin in the world we live in. I believe God allowed me to visit the orphanage that day for a reason; to gain knowledge on the heartbreaking situation of institutionalizing children and to use my voice to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.



Think about a time in your LIFE when you felt alone and separated from others. Can you relate to a child that isn't being held, stimulated, or able to explore their world?

What is the "cage" you find yourself in most often?

### **Matthew 18:1-5**

*1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"*

*2 He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them.*

*3 And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

*4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

*5 And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.*

Have you ever considered that Jesus calls us to Him like little children?

How can you sit with Jesus today like a child in the presence of God Himself?

Spend some time just sitting with God today and let His presence comfort you. We pray you experience true peace in these moments.

# DAY 14

## STORM COMING...DENOUNCING EVIL

BY: RHONDA NISBETT PIERRE



*"And we prayed..."*

It was October 4th, 2016. Leading up to this day we had been scurrying around making preparations for the possibility of Hurricane Matthew hitting Haiti. We watched countless weather reports tracking the storm as it moved across the ocean. The eye seemed to be on track to hit directly over us. The day arrived when all had been done, we had gotten word out to as many people as we could in the commUNITY living in low-lying flood-prone areas, down to Bord Mer (neighboring village to Neply) directly at the edge of the ocean.

We had made as many plans as we could make. And we prayed. We prayed for protection as no matter how many plans and alternate emergency plans we could think of, we were still unprepared for the monstrosity of what Matthew appeared to be. The simple homes made of tarp, old wood, and metal sheeting were no match for a storm of this caliber.

We continued to wait. Anticipation of what was to come hung heavy in the air and there was unease knowing it was possible we may not see some of our friends again after the storm hit.

In the evening, individuals and then families begin to trickle into the commUNITY center seeking more substantial shelter and higher ground from the coming storm. Little did we know there would soon be another storm, a spiritual storm, swirling around us inside our protected walls.

I'm sitting in the commUNITY center helping to settle people in when I see and hear some of the staff rushing in carrying a child, yelling "Help us! Help us! He's not breathing." No one knows what happened, he was just at home and they were checking in on the family to remind them they could come in, when they found the family around the child.

I grabbed the child and laid him out on the table and assessed him. I quickly see he is lifeless, no respiration, no heartbeat, but he is still warm to the touch so I begin CPR. I am focused on this child and the methodical rhythm of performing CPR. I don't hear the chaos and crying around me. I don't see the small mob of people gathered to watch.

The only thing that enters my mind is hearing the voice of Andrea calling out to God in prayer and asking if she can lay her hands on the baby. I say yes and I continue compressions...1,2,3,4,5 and so on... There is one time I think we may be getting him back as Andrea and others continue to call on God. I can hear a small commotion as the child's family enters the room. I hear a male voice chanting and crying out and I feel as if things have turned and we are losing the battle and the baby remains lifeless.

I hear Andrea's voice shouting out... denouncing evil, denouncing Satan. I hear her tell the father of the child that he can NOT and she will NOT let him come into these protected walls and call out to his VooDoo gods. I hear her telling him that there is no power there and he cannot bring Satan in while we are calling upon the one and only God, begging for His mercy to save his child.

The father quickly became quiet. Andrea cried out to God in prayer, on her knees. Sadly, the time soon came to change our prayers from bringing this child back to LIFE to prayers as we acknowledge and fully return the child to God as his soul is clearly no longer there. We pray for the family and friends standing in bewildered grief. I cradle the small body in my arms as I pray. I know the child is innocent and has returned to our Creator's arms.

The small body was wrapped and placed into a classroom for the night until the parents could go have a small wooden casket made. Then the hurricane comes. With so much power of evil and light having swirled around the commUNITY center that night, what would come with the storm that was supposed to have a direct path over us?

We continued to pray for God's mercy over us and for His protection. The winds came. The rain came. But what was this? Nothing as harsh as was predicted. We heard of major destruction, flooding, towns completely gone from areas around our commUNITY. We went to survey Nepley. Some metal roofs and tarp homes were down here and there. There was a few areas with high water, but nothing devastating.

The large river was high and breaking down the banks. It was taking down the outside wall of a nearby orphanage... but that is another story. It was as if God literally held His hand out over the village of Nepley and sheltered us from the hurricane. We were the only spot in the surrounding vicinity that was spared by the ravages of the storm.

God saw our battle. God saw and heard us claim His Power over the storm. His Light. His Shelter. His Victory. Later, the same family from the commUNITY center returned and told us they need to know God.



As you read this story, we hope you are aware of the reality of spiritual warfare in Haiti. With no hospital or urgent care to go to when a child has a medical emergency, people often turn to YouDou because it is familiar to them and to their families. Breaking that cycle of turning to false gods is one of the main reasons God has placed us here in Haiti.

Many people in Haiti know about Jesus and what the Bible says about Him and they think He is good for them. The reality though is VooDoo has such a deep and ingrained grip on people's lives. They see Jesus as a good luck charm rather than the ONE who is Good (Matthew 19:17). They see Jesus as a good "addition" to their spiritual network instead of making Him their only hope.

You'll see the name of Jesus painted many places in Haiti but often alongside other trinkets, symbols, or ideas. We are here to stand firm in the goodness of God alone. Jesus is THE WAY, THE TRUTH, and THE LIFE (John 14:6), and we stand in Him alone.

Please pray for the truth of Jesus to be seen in Haiti today. Pray for the commUNITY to know and trust Him alone.



*Photo by: Rhonda Nisbett Pierre*



# DAY 15

## WHERE OUR HEARTS ARE, THERE OUR TREASURE WILL BE

BY: SYDNEY MILLER



*"Things of this world can never fill a void in our hearts made for another."*

### **Matthew 6:25-29**

*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.*

In America, many people are materially rich and spiritually poor. Many have everything materially that they need and could ever dream of, and yet it's never enough. The American Dream provides a "high" as long as the next sports car, dream house, vacation, or latest Apple product lasts. It brings happiness, but it is fleeting. Then we set our eyes on the next thing. And the next. And the next.

But things of this world can never fill a void in our hearts made for another. It's like trying to place a square peg into a round hole. It may work for a short time, but it doesn't ever fully satisfy.

We can try to place any number of things, people, or dreams into that hole in our hearts; but no thing or person will ever fill it. Our hearts were made by God for God. Only He can fulfill us.

In Haiti, people have nothing and yet have everything. While they are materially poor, they are rich in other ways: love, hope, faith, and perseverance. While all humans need basic, tangible resources to survive, when I visit Haiti I see minds set on the necessities of eternity.



They have placed their trust and faith in God alone. They don't have a choice. They rely on God to provide their next meal, their next paycheck, even the breath in their lungs the next day. When nothing is guaranteed, everything is a gift.

While many in Haiti aren't guaranteed an easy LIFE here, they have hope in the joy they will experience in the next. Their sights are on Heaven, not white picket fences. Because eternal LIFE is the real LIFE worth living for.



### **Colossians 3:2**

*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

### **Matthew 6:33**

*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Where is our focus: things on Earth or things of Heaven?

Are we stewarding and gathering goods for LIFE today that will fade away in the next?

Or are we setting our sights on the eternal, gathering up rewards for real LIFE on the other side?

Where our hearts are, there our treasure will be.



# DAY 16

## REFLECTIONS: THE RIVER THROUGHOUT NEPLY

BY: MISSY WILSON



*"My reflection should always be that of Christ."*

There is a river that runs along the main road here in Neply. It is lined with trees on one side and a grassy, plant-filled bank on the other. I walk down this road by the river often. There are days when the river is flowing briskly, yet quietly. There are days, after the rain, where the river banks collect much more water and spill over. There are days where the river's flow is affected by the collection of trash and muck. Regardless of which day it might be, there is something I have always noticed about this river...the reflection!

Whether it is the sunniest day or an overcast day, you can ALWAYS see your reflection in the river. You see the reflection of the trees. You see the reflection of the sky. You see the reflection of YOU. Sometimes it is easier to see on sunny days. The sun pierces through the sky, allowing the light to bounce vibrantly off of the water. The cloudy days are more difficult because the light is not as bright or bold as on sunny days. But the reflection is still there.

On this particular day, as I walked past the river, I thought about my own reflection.

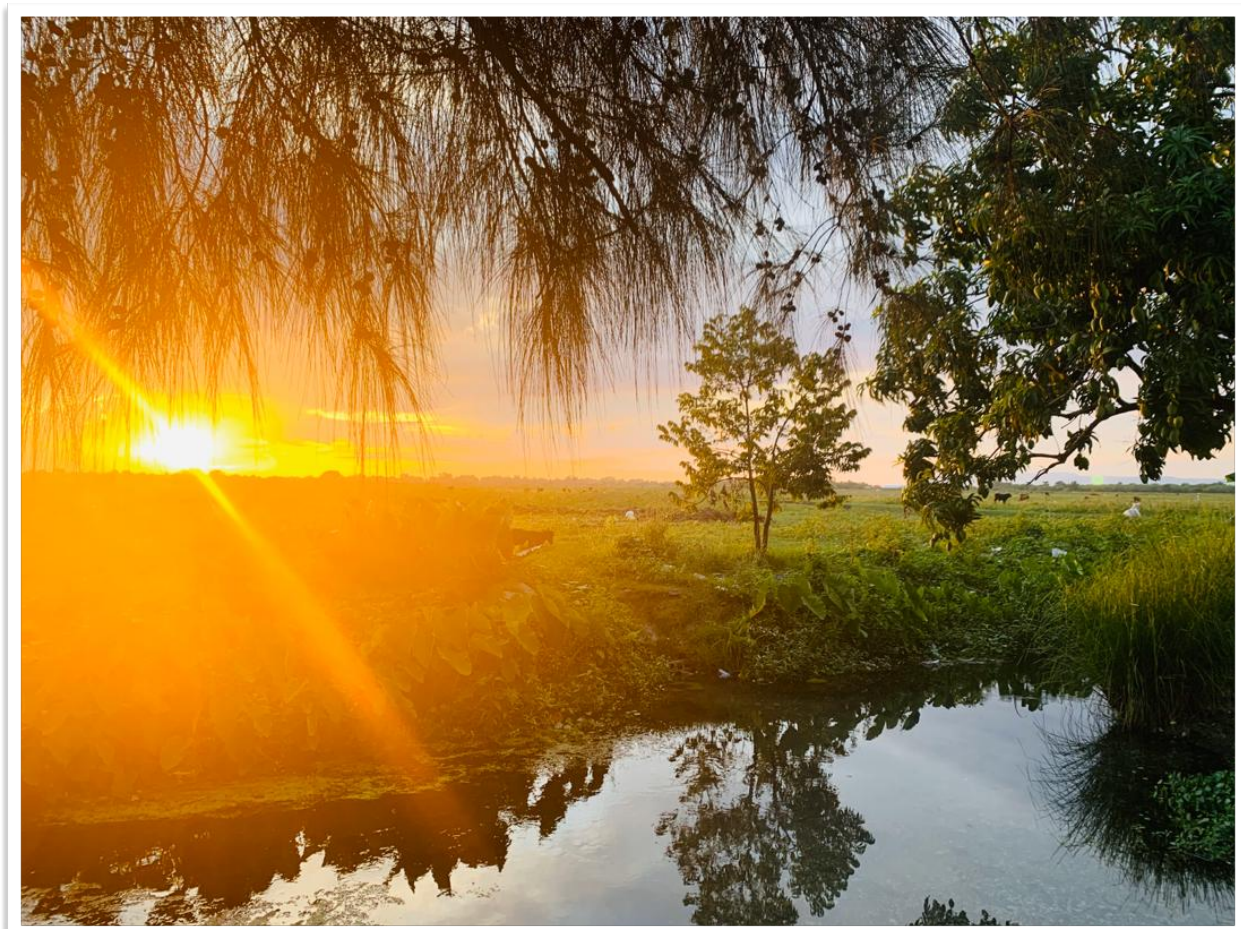


I thought about the example of this river in my own LIFE and how God might be using it to teach me. Especially things I might not understand today, but one day will as long as my gaze and focus stay on Him. I began asking myself a few questions...

1. What do I see in myself today, what am I reflecting?
2. Am I reflecting a LIFE which is flowing along briskly, yet quietly, not really knowing who I am?
3. Am I so full of Christ today that I am allowing it to flow out of me where others can see Him through me?
4. Am I full of the trash and muck of this world and negatively impacting other lives around me?

My reflection should always be that of Christ. No matter what might come my way. No matter if it is sunny or cloudy, calm or storm. I should be a reflection of Him because it is Christ who is in me! Ask yourself today the

questions above. Ask yourself, how are you allowing your reflection today to shine the light of Christ? Pray and ask Him to show you His reflection today!



*The river that flows through Neplly.*

# DAY 17

## PRAYER IS A WEAPON

BY: ANDREA PRICE



*"That was the day my heart woke up to the goodness of God."*

Growing up, I had a very shallow understanding of prayer. I knew it was giving thanks to God, asking Him for something, or begging Him to forgive me. That was it. It never sank in that prayer was more than just selfish words coming out of my mouth when I was in need. I never understood that prayer is for having deep conversations with our Eternal Father. Nor did I understand that prayer is a weapon against the darkness (Ephesians 6).

When I moved to Haiti in 2014, I still had that surface level assumption of God and who He was. The truth is I really didn't think much about prayer. However, God still took this broken vessel and poured His oil out upon me.

In the spring of 2015, I finally came to understand the truth about God, Our Father. I was called off the bench and onto the playing field. My view and understanding of prayer would never be the same. I came to understand that prayer moves the hand of God on our behalf and the ones that we pray for. I wholeheartedly know we are letting go of control in a situation and giving God the honor of breakthrough on our behalf.

It all started one sunny day in Neply. I had a friend come to me and tell me that his mom was having seizures everyday and needed to go to the hospital. Of course my first instinct was to try and gather money to send her to the hospital but I knew that I didn't have any on hand and trying to borrow some would be difficult. I decided to go to their house to check on her and assess the situation.

When I arrived, I saw his mother sitting on the bed with her knee wrapped up in a bandage. She said she hurt her knee when she fell out of bed during a seizure. I started to ask questions out of curiosity, but in reality it was the Spirit helping me discern the atmosphere and what was operating. I asked her when she has the seizures and how long they last. Everyone in the house told me that she only has them at night and she shakes so violently that she falls out of the bed. At that moment I, not knowing the power that was about to manifest in me, decided we needed to circle up and pray over her for healing. That was the only option left. The prayer circle consisted of me, the mom, my friend, and a handful of children under the age of 10. I blurted my best prayer that was mixed with faith and doubt because at this point I had still not come to realize who God really was and who He was calling me to be.

I left the house and went about my day. Their house was about 50 yards from the main myLIFEspeaks campus so the next day after work I went by there to check on the lady and see how she was. I walked in and before I could

ask how her night was, she threw her hands in the air and started worshiping God and gave me the biggest hug. Apparently she didn't have a seizure the night we prayed over her. I think I went numb out of shock that our prayer that rebuked the enemy and prince of darkness actually moved mountains like the Bible says. She was so excited and she grabbed my hands and asked me to pray again. So I did. The next day, she was still seizure free. And the day after that? Seizure free. Unto this day, SHE IS SEIZURE FREE!

That day was the day my heart woke up to the goodness of God. That day the sleepy eyes of my heart truly and fully opened to our miracle-working God and our thoughtful, kind Father.

That was the day that I became a prayer warrior. That was the day the match was lit to the fire of the Holy Spirit in me. I cannot explain the countless miracles and breakthroughs I would go on to witness because of that one encounter with God's nature in 2015. We have since witnessed the dead come back to LIFE, protection from a Category 5 hurricane, healing of tremors, blood diseases, breast cancer, automobile accidents, and many more situations the enemy has tried to steal from us. We have seen forgiveness crash through the hardest of hearts. We have seen repentance burst through hearts that had been welded shut. We have seen the Joy of the Lord in the darkest of days because the weapon of prayer slashes the eroded chains of our sinful nature.

We must put prayer back on our tool belt. The prince of darkness is trying to keep us focused on all the things going wrong instead of focusing on God and giving Him complete control through prayers and petitions. When we hand God our heavy burdens, He promises to give us Peace. When we feel helpless we need to remember that we have access to the authority of Heaven through prayer!



### **Matthew 6:5-8**

5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

How does prayer affect your daily LIFE?

When you pray, do you pray with the understanding that you are standing in the presence of God Himself?

What are you praying for today that you need God to take control of?



# DAY 18

## ZANMI POU LAVI (FRIENDS FOR LIFE): SARAH'S STORY

BY: BETHANY JOSEPH



*"A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for a time of adversity" - Proverbs. 17:17*

This is an easy verse to memorize, but is it easy to put into practice? In Haiti, people with disabilities are discriminated against, shunned, abandoned, and left alone. Many Haitians believe disabilities are tied to Voodoo curses and therefore don't want to be around people with disabilities. It is very difficult for people with disabilities in Haiti to find a friend, let alone a friend who loves at all times.

myLIFEspeaks works counter-culturally to help Haitians understand and see people with special needs as beloved children of God, made in His image. One of the ways we do this is through our Zanmi Pou Lavi (Friends For LIFE) program. We pair individuals with special needs with typically-developing peers in Christ-Centered friendships. These friendships go beyond acquaintance and toward the kind of friendship discussed in Proverbs. Children in the village who would normally be left alone or considered outcast are now building relationships with peers. The people in the Zanmi Pou Lavi program are living out this verse. They love their friend with special needs at all times, whether good or bad.

One person I think of in particular that has benefited from Zanmi Pou Lavi, is a young woman named Sarah. Sarah is part of one of our family homes and has been with myLIFEspeaks for over seven years. Sarah has, what we have diagnosed as, post-traumatic stress disorder. She also has emotional and cognitive disabilities. Sarah was brought to myLIFEspeaks after she was found in a different part of Haiti being chased by people with sticks, rocks, and bad intentions. Without the support of a family, she had been scavenging to survive. She had no friends. She had no one to love her unconditionally. She had no "brother born for a time of adversity."

After being rescued and brought to myLIFEspeaks, Sarah started slowly becoming part of different programming. She started attending school, with a one-on-one assistant, and then joined our Zanmi Pou Lavi program, called Best Buddies at the time. Sometimes it is difficult for Sarah to participate in programs because of her behavior and outbursts. This makes it hard for her teachers, other students, and other members involved in Zanmi Pou Lavi. However, members of Zanmi Pou Lavi, especially her peer buddy, Chela, have learned to love Sarah through her behaviors and outbursts. It may not be easy when she is hitting, kicking, pinching, or throwing things, but Chela has the best heart and loves Sarah through it all. Chela visits Sarah at her house, spends time with her, and picks her up for any events we have. Chela has every right to not want to spend time with Sarah, especially when she is



being difficult and violent. But Chela knows Sarah is a person made in the image of God and she knows that a friend loves at all times.

Two years ago, Sarah was having issues with seizures that would not stop. We decided she needed medical help, which involved an air ambulance (helicopter). The concern that Chela had for Sarah was that of a true friend and not just an acquaintance. She went to see her before they put her in the helicopter and watched as she flew away. When Sarah was in the hospital in Port-au-Prince, Chela continued to ask how she was doing and prayed for her.

I was in awe at this friendship. Sarah went from people chasing her with sticks and rocks to having a true friend that was genuinely concerned about her health. Sarah has found a zanmi pou lavi (friend for LIFE) that loves her at all times and loves her through times of adversity. This friendship is not the only friendship that is thriving in the Zanmi Pou Lavi Program. There are dozens of other people in the program who are living out Proverbs 17:17. Regardless if their buddy hits, spits, kicks, drools, or anything else, they are there to form a LIFE-long bond and it is beautiful to watch.



How can you be more like the members of Zanmi Pou Lavi?

Who do you know that you could be more loving to?

Who do you know that is going through a time of adversity that you could reach out to?



# DAY 19

## MR. GEORGE BY: ELI WILSON



*"He was joyful because he knew he was going to see Jesus."*

To most, Mr. George, is just another random name. But to Nepley, Mr. George was a sweet old man who lived his LIFE to glorify Christ every single day. Mr. George had a warm spirit and made you feel like you could tell him anything without judgment. He made everyone in the commUNITY feel loved and valued.

In April of 2020, in the midst of one of the hardest years, I had the opportunity to get to know this caring, gentle old man. I walked up to the familiar house that I'd seen and passed by many times but I never knew he lived there. I walked in and saw him lying on his bed. Mr. George was immobile due to illness. I moved back the curtain and was met with a great big smile. He was so excited to see me, although I was a stranger. My heart ached because this was the first time I was meeting him, when his health was declining. But to Mr. George, it was as if we had been friends forever.

Mr. George had the ability to make everyone feel loved without saying a word. I went over to his bed, bent down, and started talking to him about his illness. He slowly leaned over in my direction and told me he had pancreatic cancer and didn't have very much time left.

His joy radiated from his body. He was so happy to meet a complete stranger. But most importantly, Mr. George was joyful because he knew he was going to meet Jesus face-to-face, soon.

Mr. George never learned how to read but he ALWAYS had his Bible with him with markings in it. When I asked him how he was able to read the Bible he said, "I have people come read it to me every night before I go to sleep and I put it under my pillow that way God's Words are close to me at all times." Not being able to read didn't stop him from seeking out the Lord through His Word.

Mr. George passed away in October 2020. It was a sad time for our commUNITY, but we were filled with joy knowing he was in heaven smiling and dancing with Our Savior. I tell you this story not to be sad, but so that we may try to live our lives the same way Mr. George did; to glorify our Heavenly Father in all we do.



Read Matthew 14:1-14

When you read the story of John the Baptist's last moments on earth, what sticks out?

What do you know about the LIFE of John the Baptist? Was he a good man?

Why do you think Jesus went away when He heard of the death of his cousin, John the Baptist?

This passage ends with Jesus having compassion on the crowds that had followed Him. It is so difficult for us to see others with compassion when we are hurting ourselves.

Pray today asking God to give you the same compassion Jesus had, for those you might come in contact with today. Even when we hurt with sadness, God can, and will, use us for His Glory.

# DAY 20

## THE ROADS OF NEPLY

BY: KELSEY WILSON



*"The hospitality and welcoming spirit is unlike anything I have experienced in my entire life."*

The moment the car turns off of the main, paved road in Leogane and onto the dusty, rocky route leading into Neply, my heart skips a beat. We're almost there! I begin to see the painted trees from village to village turn into the familiar and comforting colors of blue, orange, and white. Without fail, every time I have pulled down the road leading to the myLIFEspeaks' commUNITY Center, our car has been greeted by waving hands and the happiest smiles. Neply feels like home.

I always like to take a walk through the village to see familiar faces, hug my friends, and watch in amazement as the women scream in excitement when they see my husband, Dyllan Wilson, who lived in Neply for years, walking toward them. They catch up in Creole in between the hugs and kisses on the cheek.

As we stroll down the road, the sound of splashing water from the children bathing in the creek beside me is quickly overshadowed by the laughter of the men sitting under the shaded tree playing card games. I walk in amazement past the greenery flourishing in the creek bed leading out to the open field of cows and horses. Then the honks of the motos (motorcycles) and cars on the small road reminds me that I need to move over. As if the loud Haitian music blasting from the vehicles wasn't warning enough.

We pass by the tin-roofed houses where women and children sit outside doing laundry, sweeping their porches, or catch up with their friends. Each home is unique in their own way. Some are made up of a concrete building with a big porch, some an aluminium-walled building with a dirt floor, and others a tarped room with a yard. Whatever the house looks like, this is home and they take pride in the space they provide for their families.

We walk through the center of the village back to the myLIFEspeaks CommUNITY Center and hear the neighbors greet us with a simple smile and a "Bonswa!" or "Sak Pase!" Children run up to us and grab our hands, cling to our legs, or just escort us the remainder of our walk to spend time with us. We pick the kids up and they seem fascinated with my long, straight hair, and continue to giggle and laugh at us simply because we are holding hands. The innocence and joy from the children is contagious and a quality I never want to forget.

We pass by more homes and familiar faces that invite us in and offer us whatever they are making to eat or a fresh cup of cherry juice from the tree in their yard. The hospitality and welcoming spirit is unlike anything I have experienced living in the U.S. my entire life. There are kids climbing on us as we have unexpected fellowship with



friends and continue to stay attached to us as we make our way back to the commUNITY Center.

The overwhelming thought continues to spark in my mind: This is what commUNITY looks like. Nobody spends time within the walls of their homes, watching TV, or playing in their gated backyards like we do in the States. Members of the village live within the commUNITY. They all pitch in to raise each other's children, they spend time together on their front porches, they feed each other, help with each other's laundry, and simply do LIFE together. The roads of Neply make this connection possible. They are more than just dirt paths that lead to your destination, they are routes that bring us closer together.



### **Why does myLIFEspeaks spell commUNITY like that?**

CommUNITY to us at myLIFEspeaks means coming together in UNITY for a purpose greater than ourselves.

Whether Haitian or American, old or young, typically developing or special needs, rich or poor; we all bring something unique and unrepeatable to the table. We each have a role, that only we can fill, in God's Work here on earth. We are many parts, yet one body (1 Corinthians 12:12). One human family.

commUNITY for us, is an extension of the Body of Christ. Our differences are what make us strong. Without each unique part, the whole won't prosper.

We believe that every person is made in God's Image and has a unique purpose and calling on their LIFE. We believe that every LIFE matters to God.

We believe that in commUNITY:

- we are stronger
- we are one
- we are unbreakable
- we are most alive
- we are an unstoppable force for good
- we are God's Hands and Feet on earth
- we are living examples of the Gospel

We are made for commUNITY in Christ. What does commUNITY look like to you?

As you pray today, pray for those in your commUNITY that God places on your mind and in your heart. Let them know you love them. You never know who needs to hear that today.

# DAY 21

## SOPHONIE: A MOM FINDING STRENGTH

BY: RHONDA NISBETT PIERRE



*"She has been empowered to step into her God-given call as a mother."*

One of the patients who started coming to LIFE Therapy early on was a little girl named Sophonie. This was before I lived here and was making trips in every three months. I remember the day Sophonie's mom brought her to the clinic.

It was obvious the mom had some cognitive issues herself, but in her arms was this little girl dressed up in a pink fluffy dress. Mom wanted to make a good impression, thinking maybe we would want to keep her. Sophonie was clinging to LIFE. She was starving and it was clear had other medical and developmental issues. Mom refused to come further into the therapy room and tried to leave saying, "I will be back," which often means, "I'm giving my child to you."

Staff quickly realized this was what was happening and insisted she had to at least sit at the door where they could see her until therapy was over. Mom tried everything to leave in these early days. She would often try to tell me how much I needed to keep Sophonie because she had nothing to give her.

I would encourage her every time that she had given her LIFE and that Sophonie was given to her by God and not to me. Because Sophonie (and Mom) were in dire need of some nutrition, I made a deal. For every week Mom brought Sophonie to therapy, sat there and waited, even if just at the door, we would give her a jar of peanut butter. Mom brought Sophonie to nearly every appointment, only missing when Sophonie was ill.

No one thought Mom was paying attention during Sophonie's therapy sessions. She would sit in the doorway, facing out towards the street. However, over time we noticed Mom was sitting a little further into the room. We purposely overlapped Sophonie's therapy time with another mother who had a very strong faith and a natural ease and patience about her. We hoped this other mother would be a good witness and model of how to care for more than just Sophonie's physical needs. Sophonie's mom began to show up a little early and stay a little later after therapy finished. She would wait for when the other mom came or left, spending time sitting in her presence.

She was getting to see what it looked like for a mom to interact and bond with her child. From the very beginning she knew the instinct for survival but not how to show love. Or maybe she was afraid to bond as she thought Sophonie might die. Mom came earlier and earlier to Sophonie's scheduled therapy time. She asked for a toy for Sophonie to occupy her while she sat and waited. Soon we all started seeing her playing with Sophonie when she

didn't think we were watching. She started to scoot further and further into the therapy room until she was eventually sitting next to us. Soon she was actively practicing activities we were doing to help Sophonie get stronger and develop her motor skills.

One day in particular, Mom showed up to the therapy clinic excited and eager to show us something. When it was time for Sophonie's therapy appointment, Mom came in, plopped Sophonie down into standing and said excitedly, "Look! She can walk now!" She had been working with Sophonie at home when no one was watching, taking the skills we were modeling during therapy.

As Mom matured, gained confidence, and became more emotionally bonded with Sophonie, she stopped asking me to take her child and instead began to ask for more things she could do to help Sophonie. She no longer needed the weekly jars of peanut butter for nutrition or motivation to stay for therapy.

Mom became confident in Sophonie and eventually came to us to ask if Sophonie could attend LIFE Academy. Mom did not question if Sophonie could go to school, she questioned when she could go since she now met the age requirement and was walking and starting to talk.

Sophonie started in LIFE Academy's special education classes where she quickly gained more social skills and learned how to play and interact with other children. Now she is fully integrated into general education classes. Mom is not perfect and still struggles with issues of her own, but she does continue to provide and advocate for Sophonie and her younger child. She has been empowered to step into her God-given call as a mother.



Who is someone who has encouraged you to continue on, even when things were extremely difficult?

Have you ever told that person how important they are to you?

Paul was one who wrote often in his letters about being thankful for other believers. He often described how their encouragement helped him through the most difficult times.

### **1 Thessalonians 3:9**

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

Today, take time to thank God for those who have encouraged you along the way and look for opportunities to encourage others with the hope of Christ.

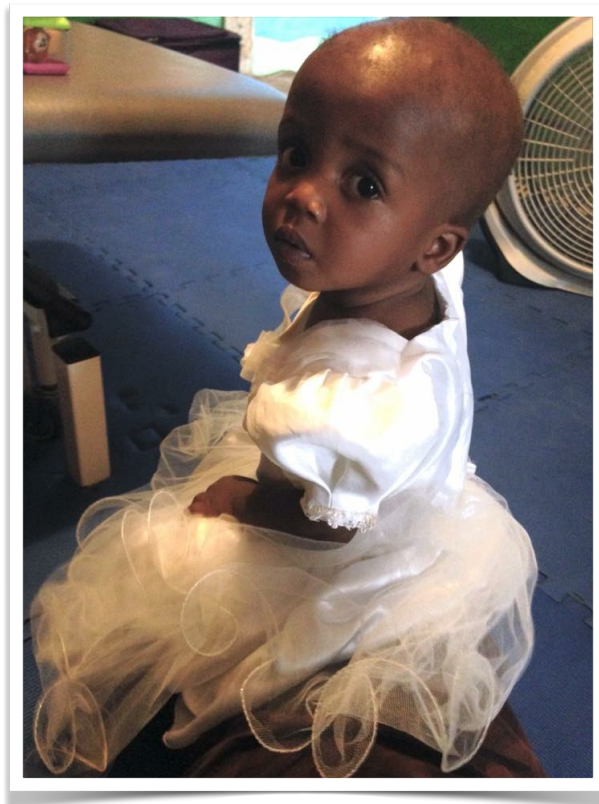




Sophonie & Mom in therapy



Sophonie & Mom



Sophonie at therapy

# DAY 22

## JOEL'S STORY

BY: SYDNEY MILLER



*"He doesn't let his inability to walk stop him from doing the things he loves and from having a good attitude."*

Luke 5:17-26

*One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."*

Joel is a dear friend of myLIFEspeaks, member of our village commUNITY, and an active participant at our weekly elderly program gatherings. He is also the father of one of our beloved House Parents, Mirlande. Joel is a friend to all and he loves to sit on his front porch and greet everyone walking by with a smile and a "bon jou"!

Joel has diabetes and due to lack of medicine, testing units, and diabetic education in Haiti, his diabetes was poorly controlled. Four years ago, Joel developed a small open sore on one of his toes. The infection continued to get worse. What started as a small infected area developed into a large wound. Joel ended up having his leg amputated below the knee to stop the spread of the infection. He was devastated to lose his leg but grateful to be alive.

We had a prosthetic leg made for Joel. He started rehabilitation at LIFE therapy, gaining his strength back and learning to walk again. He was able to resume daily LIFE activities, care for himself, and even participate again in Zumba at myLIFEspeaks elderly program. Then in 2019, Joel developed another small sore on the big toe of his remaining foot. We immediately jumped into preventative action. LIFE clinic began to treat and monitor him closely, but the infection continued to spread. Joel nearly died this second time due to the infection and septic shock. The first hospital turned him away saying "there is nothing more we can do". Between violent riots at the

time, hospitals refusing to take him, and the ambulance helicopters being grounded due to a storm; the odds of survival were stacked against Joel. But we were not going to give up on him.

Much like the paralytic's friends in Luke 5 carried their friend to Jesus, despite odds and roadblocks, the myLIFEspeaks' commUNITY rallied around Joel and persevered despite the variables stacked against him.

In Luke's Gospel, it was the faith of the friends and their determination that ultimately was a catalyst for a miracle. We believed that Joel could be saved and we were going to do everything in our power to get him the help he needed. Like the paralytic's friends, we too believed in a miracle.

Joel was unconscious and clinging to LIFE. Miraculously, we were able to get him to another hospital who admitted him in Port Au Prince and into emergency surgery to amputate his other leg and stop the infection. However, he was in such a bad state we weren't even sure he'd survive the operation.

Before he went to surgery, myLIFEspeaks Public Health Liaison, Rhonda, stepped in with Joel's family and asked to pray over him before they took him back to the operating room. As we gathered around his stretcher and laid hands on him and prayed, all the nurses and doctors working in the emergency room and those waiting for him for surgery all quietly came into the room and joined us in prayer over Joel.

Like the paralytic, Joel was metaphorically being lowered down through the roof in a stretcher surrounded by the power of prayer.

The surgery was successful. After a few days at the hospital his body stabilized without the infection and he was able to go home. A true miracle.

The commUNITY of Nepley rallied around Joel and helped with meals and housework while he regained strength. LIFE therapy staff also lived next door to Joel and were able to check in on him, do exercises with him at home, and get him a wheelchair.

Today, Joel is independent and able to transfer in/out of bed, his chair, and get around as he needs in his home. For a while, Joel was noticeably depressed having not only grieved losing a leg and his independence one time, but now twice. However, through encouragement, prayer, and the love of an entire village commUNITY wrapped around him, Joel is now back to himself. He attends weekly elderly programming with a little help from myLIFEspeaks staff coming to pick him up. Joel is also able to attend church, a priority for him, with the help of others driving him.

He doesn't let his inability to walk stop him from doing the things he loves and from having a good attitude. Despite all he has gone through and all he has lost, he still thanks the Lord and trusts in Him.

Like the paralytic lowered down through the roof, it is our faith in Jesus that ultimately heals and saves us; whether on this earth or in eternal LIFE.



How can we be like the friends of the paralytic in Luke's Gospel?

In what ways can we step up to help carry our friends' burdens with them and bring them to the ultimate source of healing and LIFE, Jesus Christ?

Who in our LIFE right now needs us to help carry them to the Lord?

The Holy Spirit will that person and give us the strength to pick up that stretcher.



Joel at home

# DAY 23

CHILDLIKE  
BY: MISSY WILSON



*"We are so much like children."*

You can learn a lot by spending time with children. I have known this for some time now but was reminded of it again just the other day. It was a lazy Sunday afternoon. I was hanging around the house after watching church online here in Haiti and I had the thought to take Nash to play over on the soccer field close to where we live. I text a friend around 11:30 am and asked if she and her daughters would like to join us. We planned to meet up at 2pm that afternoon. From 11:30 until 1:50 pm Nash must have asked me 20+ times the following question...

"Is it time to go to the soccer field to play?" to which I would respond with a simple "No, not yet."

Then I would continue with what I was doing. Then the question would come again just minutes later.

"Is it time to go to the soccer field to play?" Again, I responded "No, not yet."

Then I began to ask myself "Why can he not understand we are not going right now? But we will be going later!"

I continued with a few chores and the question continued to come with the same answer to follow. FINALLY it was time to go, we collected our toys and headed out to meet our friends at the field. As we were walking the trail, we met up with our friend and her daughters and she began to tell me she had made a huge mistake by telling her girls earlier in the day that we were going to play. She said they, as Nash had done, continued to ask over and over again if it was time. I shared with her the same story from my house and we both laughed at the excitement the kids had just to go play in the field.

As the kids began running on the hills, playing with their toys, jumping up and down, kicking the ball, their energy and excitement slowly started to fade. They began to ask for water, ask to sit down and rest a while. They even asked to lay down and take a little nap (that didn't last long...LOL) The afternoon continued on with more games, more sweat, and even a few small tears but overall it was a terrific day of play.

I learned something from the kids that day though, I learned we are so much like children wanting an answer from God right away.

We continually ask him for an answer: "Is it time? Can we go now? Can this happen now?"

And oftentimes God says “No, not yet”. We may continue to ask but it isn’t until His perfect timing, we will receive the answer. Even if we often receive what we have asked God for, the excitement doesn’t always stay the same. We begin to grow weary, tired, and need rest. This is exactly how God designed us: to come back to Him. To let him rest our souls, be the water which will never run dry, to be the everything we need at the very moment we need it.



I am sure I could have learned a lot more from those kids that day and I will make sure to pay closer attention next time because there is a reason God said in *Matthew 19:14* “*Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as there.*”

Their excitement, consistency, and passion to play that day is how I should long for heaven. I should be seeking and hoping for that day with anticipation like nothing else. I should be asking Jesus “Is it time?” and even when He answers “No, not yet,” I should be preparing myself daily to live a LIFE seeking HIM.

- What are you asking for today? Is it something which will impact The Kingdom, impact others, or is it just for you?
- How are you preparing for His Kingdom today?
- How can you be more childlike in coming to Christ today to allow Him to quench your thirst and give you rest in Him...and in His timing?



Playing with Friends

# DAY 24

## BROKEN GLASSES

BY: ANDREA PRICE



“We have to understand what our heavenly identity is.”

I am going to cut straight to the point. If you are reading this you are a blood bought child of God and God created you to be a citizen of Heaven. You are an ambassador for Heaven here on Earth. You have a divine purpose and we have to lean in to our Heavenly Father to find the rhythm of His heart and the flow of the life He has for us. He promises to never leave us nor forsake us. The enemy of God wants us to forget this. This enemy wants us to forget the Eternal Father- the God who was and is to come- intricately created you for His Kingdom. He had a plan for this world before He even created it and guess what? YOU WERE A PART OF THE ORIGINAL BLUEPRINT!!! But what does it take for us to truly understand the depth of this concept? Honestly, it takes a lot. It's not easy but it's worth it!

First and foremost, we must find out the truth about our lives and why God decided He needed \*\*insert your name here\*\* on this earth at this very second. We have to understand what our heavenly identity is. While we are in pursuit of this truth, we MUST forsake any lies we believe and understand about who He is. I know. I know. This can be confusing because the world has us fooled and has created an image of God according to what? To this world.

This world is broken and if we look to God through something that is broken, we will not see the true form of the image will we? The same way broken reading glasses would distort a text, a broken world will create a broken distorted view of whatever you are trying to look at (especially how you view God).

When I moved to Neply in 2014, I was still wearing the broken glasses of this world. I did not have a clear picture of who God was and who God said I was. I didn't even know a thing about the Holy Spirit and how God the Father has poured His Spirit out on you and I. My broken glasses caused me to see “a God in the sky sitting on a fancy chair, checklist in hand, constantly shaking his head at me because I couldn't follow the rules.”

It wasn't until I moved to Neply that I realized my glasses were broken. When I moved to Neply, I thought I was running the race for God but really I was just jogging on a treadmill of the world. We all have a tendency to run on it, and it's time to get off the treadmill.

I thought I was doing the “right things” FOR God when really all He wanted was me to do things WITH Him. I only had a textbook definition of what faith and obedience was. Little by little, He drew me closer and closer to

Him. Like Hansel and Grettle, He left little pieces of Our Daily Bread for me to find my way to His heart and the truth. And all I had to do was take baby steps. I didn't have to pray the most, I didn't have to have the most scripture memorized, I didn't have to sing the loudest. I just had to be.

Upon living here in Nepley for a year, I quickly saw what real faith was. I finally started to see what a perfect Father wanted from His sons and daughters. I saw how much this culture really put God at the forefront of their entirety and how they knew something about God that I didn't. I was obviously missing something. I see women on their knees **WEEPING** and I see grown men laid out on the floors of the church travailing. What is this? What are they doing? Why have I never wept or travailed about God?

I was so hungry for that- for what they had- but I assumed I could never be at that level with God because I was a broken vessel that had sinned way too much in my past. I thought that kind of stuff was reserved for those who had been to seminary and who are high up in their church staff. I never knew what grace was until I moved to Nepley. But guess what- this grace, this Father, isn't just reserved for people in Nepley.



This wonderful kindness of our Father isn't just reserved for underdeveloped countries. In fact, He isn't looking for "countries" He is looking for our hearts. He wants our fears and our brokenness. He wants all of the broken glass so He can take it and glue it all back together the way He intended our hearts to be from the get go with His Truth.

We all have purpose to our lives regardless of where we are and what we are doing. Even if your entire social circle doesn't see what's over your **LIFE**, God does. Everyone thought Joseph was invisible to God, but he wasn't. It took David **YEARS** of working as a shepherd in the fields before he stepped into his calling as king.

Remember- nothing is broken beyond His repair. Nothing gets past Him. Perfect love will have the last word over your **LIFE**. But that last word is actually the beginning of your life.



# DAY 25

## A NEW HOPE

BY: BETHANY JOSEPH



*"She started finding that she didn't have to feel alone and isolated..."*

Have you ever had to hide your child or worry about what people would say if you were walking around with them? This is a problem that Marie Sonie, the mother of one of the children in our special education classes faced. Her son Sonoldens was born with physical and cognitive delays, and in Haiti that is a sentence for discrimination.

Marie Sonie struggled the first several years of Sonoldens' life. Sonoldens' father did not want to be a part of his life so she was left to raise him by herself. She had many friends and family that didn't want to be around her and Sonoldens. She felt so alone and she felt like God had forsaken her. She felt hopeless, until a God-ordained moment in which she happened to be in the same malnutrition clinic with Sonoldens that myLIFEspeaks had sent another child to. Our social worker was able to talk to Marie Sonie about myLIFEspeaks and what our vision and mission is. He was able to share the work myLIFEspeaks does with people with disabilities. She was intrigued and started looking further into how myLIFEspeaks could help her and her son. Neply was 30 minutes away from where she lived but she was willing to see how myLIFEspeaks could help her.

Marie Sonie first began by enrolling Sonoldens in LIFE therapy. He was very low functioning when he started, but slowly started developing important skills needed to function. After being enrolled in therapy, his mother started asking about school because Sonoldens was the age that most children here in Haiti start school. He would not be accepted into any "normal" (this is the actual term for general education schools in Haiti) school in Haiti so she was thrilled to hear what LIFE Academy is doing advocating for education for children with disabilities. Sonoldens got put on a waiting list and the next school year he started school. At this point, Marie Sonie and Sonoldens were still living about 30 minutes away from Neply. Each day he had therapy or school they had a 30 minute motorcycle ride to Neply and a 30 minute ride back home. This was taxing, but totally worth it for her because her child was getting services that she could not find where she lived.

While Sonoldens was at school, Marie Sonie started just staying in Neply to wait for him to be done instead of going home and coming come back. She started noticing a difference in the people here. She noticed a difference in how people treated her and Sonoldens. She didn't have support from neighbors where she lived. She lived with family, but other than the family she lived with, she felt alone and isolated. When she started spending more time in Neply, she started finding that she didn't have to feel alone and isolated. She even talked about how in Neply, Sonoldens was somebody and she was somebody. She wasn't embarrassed to walk around with him. She had a commUNITY that was behind her and her child.

After much thought, she made the decision to move away from the only family that did support her and Sonoldens to move to Neply, where there would be a better life for her and Sonoldens. After moving to Neply, Marie Sonie was able to become one of our most faithful members in Bèl Ewo. She walks around the village with Sonoldens and people call his name and talk to them as they are walking. Sometimes they both will sit outside in front of the local church with other villagers.

She is so happy that she no longer feels that she has to hide him away in the house. Sonoldens is thriving in school. His teachers and classmates love him. The village of Neply has surrounded Marie Sonie and Sonoldens. It has been amazing to watch the transformation of Sonoldens and how he is growing, learning, and developing in a country that says he is worthless. It has also been amazing to watch the transformation of Marie Sonie and the joy she has now that she has hope and support. Her relationship with the Lord has grown so strong through this. Her testimony is something that is helping other parents who feel they have no hope.



As I think about Marie Sonie, Romans 15:13 comes to my head. *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* Marie Sonie felt alone, she felt forsaken, but after finding out about Neply and becoming a part of Bèl Ewo, she allowed God to fill her with joy, peace, and hope. This joy, peace, and hope now overflows unto her friends, family, neighbors, and other members of Bèl Ewo. I encourage you to let God fill you with joy, peace, and hope in abundance so that you are overflowing and affecting others around you.



At the Christmas Party



At Night to Shine

# DAY 26

## LIFE 46:4, THE ELDERLY PROGRAM

BY: ELI WILSON



*"Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you." Isaiah 46:4*

Life 46:4, to some people, is just a program we have here at myLIFEspeaks, But to me, it's so much more. It's not just a program full of old people who come to sit and color and play games. It's a program that makes the elderly feel loved, wanted, and that they have a voice to be heard. It's where they come together and get to smile, laugh, and play games. But most importantly, they learn more about the Gospel.

In Haiti once you reach a certain age your voice appears useless. Some people think you are too old to have an opinion worth listening to. What LIFE 46:4 is doing is making sure that their voice is heard, because they are so much wiser than any of us could imagine. We want them to feel loved not only when they come to program every Wednesday but EVERYDAY of their LIFE. We want them to know that just because they are older doesn't mean they are any less valuable than younger generations.

Every Wednesday we have an average of around 48 elderly people who participate in LIFE 46:4. In the program, we only have enough room for 55 people and some people can not physically come due to illness or other reasons. Each week we have to turn some people away because we simply don't have the capacity in our building to host all the people who desire to be involved. We have a waiting list for this program. God is moving through this program and people want to be a part of it.

We wish we could accompany all who want to join and someday we hope to have that capacity. People even come to LIFE 46:4 saying, "just let me be a part of the program and you don't have to give me food." In Haiti that is unheard of, people don't ask to be a part of a program and not receive food. So for me, that just means what we are doing here in the LIFE 46:4 program is not about us and not even about them per se. It's truly about coming together as Disciples of Jesus Christ. It's showing how we can Glorify His Kingdom, and how we can serve our commUNITY in the same way Jesus Christ did when He walked this Earth.

This program has shown me what it truly means to be a Disciple of the Lord. Because for me and my past, I would have never thought I would be able to share God's Words with other people. But that's the way God uses us, he takes our past and molds it into something so much greater so that we may be able to glorify Him. Yes, I may be the leader in the LIFE 46:4 program but everyone in the program is leading me too.



In many parts of Haiti the elderly are not well cared for. It might be hard to imagine, but people sometimes have a difficult time caring for someone else when they don't have enough themselves.

Today, we hope you will shine the light of Christ on someone in need. Do you know an elderly person that doesn't have family near or who needs someone to check in on them? Sometimes, being willing to physically be there is a gift they haven't received in a while.



*Checking in on a friend*

# DAY 27

## TAKE MY CHILD BY: KELSEY WILSON



*"She thinks you will be able to care for her child better than she can."*

"Take my child."

"What did she just say?" The woman spoke in Creole and I wasn't yet familiar with the language as it was my first trip to Haiti.

Our translator sat there on the bed of the slowly moving pickup truck, looking at his feet, shaking his head.

I asked again.

"She told you to take her child."

Me? A stranger? Why would she want a complete stranger to take her child? She didn't know me, my heart, my intentions, my name, and she wanted me to take her child from her?

Our translator, filled with grief replied, "Because she sees you're white, so you automatically have more money than her. She thinks you will be able to care for her child better than she can."

The moment replayed in my brain like a broken record. Our team was driving down a dirt road to a remote village of Haiti. The mom, holding her 4 year old's hand, lifted her child's arm towards us and asked us to take her child.

The questions flooded my brain as I tried to gain knowledge and perspective without judgement on this mother. What level of desperation did the mom feel to need to relinquish her toddler to someone? Was this a common occurrence for Haitians? Did the child understand that their mom was ready to let go of motherhood?

I sat in the bed of the truck, tears rolling down my face, confused at the scenario, and asked The Lord to speak to me. "Tell me why, Lord. Why did that just happen," I repeated.

The answer was simple. The mother *loved* her child.

Although asking an American stranger to take an innocent child away from its mother does not seem like stereotypical love, I believe the mother loved her child so much that she was willing to go to any length to see her child healthy, happy, and thriving. However, what the mother wasn't convinced of was that she was the perfect person for the job.

*"Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him."* - Psalm 127:3

The Lord called this mother to love, know, and lead this child before the beginning of time. God's will for her life always had her child in it. God chose this mom for her child and this child for her mom. Whether she believed it or not, God blessed her with a beautiful child and will continue to use her for His Kingdom.

*"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb."* - Psalm 139:13

This mother's moment of desperate love has allowed me to share this story, not to judge or condemn her, but to look at the story from a different perspective. A perspective of unconditional love.



As you read this story, what emotions do you feel?

Read Ephesians 2:11-22 and reflect on what it looks like to not have hope. The Hope of Christ should be our standard as believers but many don't yet know that True Hope.

Today, will you pray for the children and families in Haiti that have been destroyed because of the lack of hope?

As you pray today, we ask you to pray for mothers and fathers who don't see a hope for their child's future.

Pray for the children that are seen as not having value.

Pray for families to be strengthened in the Hope of Christ above all else.

# DAY 28

## SUNSET - SOLEÛ KOUCHE

BY: RHONDA NISBETT PIERRE



*"From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised."* Psalm 113:3

Some people rise early for the sunrise and some people wait for sunset. Looking at photos, you often wouldn't know the difference if you didn't know the direction or the time of day as they mirror each other in the sky. They are both beautiful and a daily event. We tend to look at one as the beginning and the other as the ending.

One gives us hope for the new day and one gives us time to reflect and put the day to rest. It's a cycle that has continued since God created the Earth and created light and dark, and placed the sun and moon in the sky. In Genesis 1 it is said after each time span of work "and there was evening, and there was morning" after which God worked again on His creation.

A sunset is a marker of the day passing at which it is time to put things to rest. To me, sunrise and sunsets are both beautiful but I am drawn to the sunset. Partially, maybe because I'm not an early riser, but it sure is a reward for those that are up early. I find at sunset I have time to sit, to watch, to reflect, to rest in the glow of the sun and the myriad of colors as they reach across the sky. Each evening is different yet each evening is the same progression as the sun sends out its last moments of glory before laying its head down in rest.

In Creole, sunset is called "solèy kouche" or literal translation the sun lays down. And that is what it does. It lays its golden fiery head down, shakes out its multi-colored blanket, and cloaks the sky in a tapestry of color before it finally settles to darkness. I find my mind turns to wonder and awe at the show as God paints the sky in colors and patterns. My spirit is full of praise and joy in the beauty of the Master's painting before me and my soul finds peace no matter the difficulty or heartache of the day.

I let my heart release the tensions accumulated and my head empty of all but His glory that is displayed before me. I am able to have a clear conscious in order to prepare for restful and peaceful sleep to refresh for the next day dawn. To start anew and fresh.



Have you experienced this kind of peace in something as simple as a sunset.

Read Matthew 11:28-30 and sit in the peace of Christ and focus on the rest for your soul.

If you haven't watched a sunrise or sunset recently, take some time to enjoy the grandeur of God's Creation.



*Photo by Rhonda Nisbett Pierre*



# DAY 29

## TRASH TO TREASURE

BY: SYDNEY MILLER



*"These children had eyes to see what I did not."*

One thing that has stuck with me every time I have been blessed to visit Haiti is the children's creativity. Where you and I see a punctured tire, empty Coke bottle, or "trash", children in the village see opportunity. While I see an old, dirty lotion bottle with a hole in the side, a child in Haiti sees the body of a car.

They add some bottle cap wheels, straw axles, and broken fishing line tied to the front bumper and they're off and running with a toy car trailing closely behind.

Where you and I see a discarded bike tire on the side of the road, children in the village see a game to play with their friends. Children gather together and with a stick, hit, propel, and guide the upright tire next to them running down the dirt roads.

Witnessing this creativity has left me in awe several times, especially in contrast to American culture where children have bins and bins of toys and still somehow end up "bored". It's not a comparison or bashing, it just shows the endless possibilities when we are forced to be creative.

But bigger than seeing "one man's trash is another man's treasure," I see this as a larger parallel with LIFE and the way God sees us.

We may see ourselves or others as broken, disabled, poor, too far gone, ugly, crazy, less than, or fill in any other negative adjective in the book. Like the trash on the side of the Haitian dirt roads, I didn't give them a second glance. But these children had eyes to see what I did not.

Likewise, even the most "broken" or "overlooked" among us, God delights in and calls His Beloved Child. God doesn't make mistakes and He doesn't make junk.

You are not an exception.



Today I challenge you to allow the Lord in to open your eyes to see yourself and others the way God does.

Ask Him to heal your blindness.

Ask Him to restore your vision.

Ask Him to help you see others through His Eyes: with love, mercy, kindness, and humility.

Maybe where we once saw "trash", we will see God's treasure.



*A homemade truck from a baby powder bottle*



*A box can be a toy if you use your imagination*

# DAY 30

## WORSHIP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MUD, HEAT, AND FRUSTRATION

BY: MIKE WILSON



*"Be still, and know I am God." Psalm 46:10a*

Have you ever worshipped outside in the middle of nowhere? I'm not asking if you've ever been to an outdoor worship service but I'm asking if you have ever worshipped the One True God in a moment when you find yourself away from everyone in the middle of nothing. There is a difference and if you've never experienced it, I pray you will.

One of the things we used to do in Neply when we had visiting teams was a night of musical worship in the sugar cane fields on the west side of the village. Those nights gathered together as a group sitting on blankets and chairs, someone playing guitar, and friends from the commUNITY joining us as we sang and worshiped were some of the most memorable moments I've had in Haiti. I didn't think things could get much better than that. The sound of Americans singing in English, Haitians singing in Kreyol, the sun setting in colors only God could create, and an occasional cow mooing in the background mixed together to create something I can only describe as a little piece of heaven on earth. I felt like we were collectively worshipping before God Himself.

I thought those moments would always be the most powerful moments of worship I could ever experience, and they did, until I found myself walking out into the field by myself one day. On that day I was walking into the fields one afternoon looking for an area where we could shoot a video interview. I remember being frustrated with the heat, the mosquitoes, the muddy ground, and just about everything else. Every time I found a quiet place to set up for the video where we would be away from passing motorcycles and trucks it seemed every cow in the village started to moo. When the cows quietened down, the roosters seemed to be battling each other to see which one could be the loudest. Finding a quiet place in Haiti seems like it's impossible. I knew I was 100% overthinking every single thing about the project I was working on but I had a specific way *I wanted it to play out*. Ever had one of those days?

I finally sat down in the mud and took a moment for a quick inventory of my thoughts. Why was this moment so difficult? Why was I so overwhelmed? The answer came quickly and quietly to my mind. I was making this all about me and in that moment I was the only one who could make this video "perfect." I remember I actually laughed out loud at that thought. I was sitting in a muddy field, in the heat, with mosquitoes all around me laughing at myself, I'm sure this was a sight to see. I was sitting in the middle of a field full of cows asking for silence.

In that moment, I lifted my head towards the sky, closed my eyes, and silently asked God to help clear my head and my heart. It wasn't a deep prayer and it wasn't something that would earn me 5 stars on any human review but it was from my heart. I needed God to clear my thoughts out and give me His. In my frustration and perceived hopelessness I was immediately reminded of Psalm 46:10 (He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be

exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”) and I knew the noise of my external and internal worlds had loudly done their best to drown out the peaceful calm of the Spirit of God.

I quietly bowed my head and began to ask God to calm and still my mind, my body, and my Spirit, and then I sat there. I sat in that moment of internal quiet and stillness and I worshipped my creator. I didn't have a guitar or a piano; I didn't sing at the top of my lungs; and I was covered in mud and sweat, but in that moment I worshipped God by simply turning everything I was concerned about over to Him. I asked Him for His wisdom and calm to strengthen my weakness. I cried at the thought of God's holiness being available to me in that moment of my physical and spiritual filth. This was one of the most overwhelming moments of my LIFE and I almost missed it because my focus was on the external problems and I wasn't being quiet and still in my Spirit. Maybe you need to quieten your own heart today.



Psalms 86:9-13

All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name. 10 For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God. 11 Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. 12 I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. 13 For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead.

Have you ever had a day when the noise of your external and internal worlds overpower the Spirit of God or simply distract you from seeking His direction? Have you ever found yourself in the midst of complaining and wining because your circumstances made you both uncomfortable and without control? How do you handle those moments? Is your first thought to examine your own heart and actions or to try to immediately fix the situation to the best of your abilities?

When you read Psalms 86:9-13 what sticks out? Do you live in comfort and trust that you can rely on God's faithfulness? It isn't easy when we are constantly moving and looking for a solution on this earth.

When was the last time you sat in your discomfort and frustration and worshipped God without feeling rushed? It is difficult to make time to spend with Him when we have our own timetable or deadline.

Today, set a time to spend looking for ways God has delivered you from the depths. Just the thought of that scares some of us. What if something else (that's more important) comes up? What if I'm in the middle of something else? My job won't let me just stop for 15 minutes in the middle of my shift to focus on God.

Sometimes we are so busy looking for excuses that allow us to rely on ourselves that we completely miss out on the moments when God is speaking. It has often been said that Satan's most dangerous tool is busyness and an overfull calendar. Since Satan can not harm the souls of believers, his goal is to keep them from being completely focused on God's Voice.

Today is Day 30. As we conclude this devotional book, take some time today to listen for God's Voice more than you tell Him what you need.

We are praying for you as you continue on with the journey of finding God Moving in your own LIFE.



**Meet the Authors**

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



*Andrea Price*

Andrea (Dre) Price grew up in Terrell, TX and moved to Haiti full-time in 2014 as the Director of Education at LIFE Academy. But she wears the hats of copier repair woman, janitor, counselor, referee, or nurse on any given day.

One of her favorite things about her job is that she gets to witness the moments in people's lives when they step into their God-given potential and identity. She loves the Dallas Cowboys and a fun fact about her is that she played collegiate soccer at Texas A&M Commerce.

Her favorite color is "blurple," a mix of blue and purple. She loves all things outdoors, exercise, sleeping in, dancing in the mirror, and riding her bike around the village. Her favorite things about Haiti are people's faith, hospitality, the culture and food.

Her favorite book is "Let's All Be Brave" by Annie Downs. The best piece of advice she's ever been given is that "I am the one who has control over my happiness in life. It's up to me if I'm happy in every situation that arises in my life. I'm the only one that can choose to be happy."

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



*Bethany Appleton-Joseph*

Bethany Joseph is the Director of Special Needs Programming at myLIFEspeaks. She has lived in Nepley, Haiti since 2014. Bethany lives with her husband, stepson, two daughters, two cats, and the occasional mouse. You will find her cheering for her favorite Indiana teams: Colts, Pacers, and Purdue Boilermakers. She is an Enneagram “Tri-Type” 5-1-3. She is quite possibly the most organized person you will ever meet but she’s also a huge introvert, so don’t expect to see her at a big event or party anytime soon. She will however plan the party for you!

Bethany loves being able to make people with disabilities in Haiti feel special. She loves helping people see they are created in the Image of God. While the YouDou influence of Haiti calls them cursed, Bethany works hard to help people see how they are blessed. She enjoys the commUNITY in Haiti. She is encouraged that everyone is ready to step up and help each other out when someone is in need.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



*Eli Wilson*

Eli Wilson moved to Haiti full-time in 2018 but grew up spending half of his LIFE in Haiti and half in the US. He is the son of myLIFEspeaks Co-Founders, Mike and Missy, and has been heavily involved in myLIFEspeaks' ministry from the time he was little. Today, Eli serves as the Sports Development and LIFE 46:4 (Elderly Program) Director at myLIFEspeaks.

Eli loves that he gets to do what God has called him to do and what he loves - teach others about sports and how they can glorify God and bring the Gospel to the elderly in our village commUNITY.

His favorite thing about Haiti is the sense of commUNITY; everyone in Neply watches out for each other. Eli's favorite sport is basketball and he is a loyal Memphis Grizzlies fan. He is also a huge shoe aficionado and can always be seen wearing sweet, colorful shoes and often an NBA jersey or Hawaiian or colorful graphic shirts to match.

Eli has a heart for the Lord that is contagious and a sense of joy and personality that you know when he walks in the room. That is if his colorful shirts don't give him away first. He is a huge part of our ministry and his passion and love for Haiti and her people runs deep in his veins.



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



*Kelsey Wilson*

Kelsey Wilson was born and raised in Southern California and moved to Tennessee in 2017 when she married her husband, Dyllan Wilson, Mike and Missy's oldest son. Today, Kelsey works in our U.S. office in Nashville as myLIFEspeaks' Executive and Developmental Assistant. She is also an amazing photographer and graphic designer!

Kelsey pours her heart and soul into myLIFEspeaks' ministry. She lives with her husband, Dyllan, Australian Shepherd mix, Maggie, and is expecting a baby girl in June 2021!

Some of Kelsey's favorite things are springtime, sunshine, flowers, iced lattes, Chick-fil-a, unsweetened iced tea, quality time with her husband, and antique shopping. She is a huge Marvel fan and also loves the shows Gilmore Girls, Friends, and The Office.

Kelsey's favorite thing about working at myLIFEspeaks is seeing/hearing the work God is doing in Haiti on a day-to-day basis. She loves that her job allows her to hear incredible stories that aren't common in the U.S. and is able to share those stories with friends and family.

Her favorite thing about Haiti is the people, especially in the commUNITY of Nepley. She loves the strength that Haitians have, the zest for LIFE they embody, and the laughter that follows them.

Kelsey is an Enneagram 1 and thrives on routine, a clean space, and minimalism.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



*Mike Wilson*

Mike Wilson and his wife, Missy, began myLIFEspeaks in 2012 after 9 years of short-term mission trips to Haiti. Mike and Missy, have 6 beautiful children (Dyllan, Lane, Eli, Naika, Tia, & Nash), 1 amazing daughter-in-law (Kelsey), a grand-baby on the way, 5 dogs, and as many as 25 people have lived in their house at one time.

Mike spent years traveling full-time and speaking to groups of all sizes. He has put his talents to use as he continues to share the passion and vision of myLIFEspeaks with others around the globe. Mike and Missy moved to Haiti in June 2014 with 5 children. They added #6 in 2014 when the Haitian Government brought a little boy that they suspected was blind and deaf to myLIFEspeaks. He has proven to be the perfect addition to the family.

Mike & Missy live a crazy LIFE. Mike is currently living in Tennessee with his 2 daughters while they finish high school and Missy is living full-time in Haiti with 3 of their sons. While this isn't ideal, the decision to make a sacrifice for their daughters has proven to be a tremendous opportunity for their family.

Mike & Missy excitedly watch God move in ways most people never experience.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



*Missy Wilson*

Missy Wilson is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of myLIFEspeaks. She has lived in Haiti full-time since May 2014 when she and her husband Mike, sold their house in Nashville, TN and moved to Neply following a call God put on their hearts.

Missy and Mike have six children, four boys and two girls. Kelsey, who she considers her own too.

Missy loves the calling God has placed on her LIFE but also that her family gets to be part of what God is doing through myLIFEspeaks in Haiti. She loves having the daily opportunity to utilize her gifts to help further the kingdom of God through relationships and daily LIFE.

Her favorite things about Haiti are the people, their resiliency, and the raw simplicity of LIFE here. Missy lives in Haiti with her family and also seven others who have become like family including Lane's nannies and their children and Eli's best friends, Akym and Mondy. They also have five dogs who live there as well. Needless to say, there's always something going on in the Wilson household.

Missy loves Jesus and American Football. She is a huge University of Alabama football fan. So much so that she wants her granddaughter on the way to call her "Bama". ROLL TIDE!! Her favorite drink is Dr. Pepper or sweet tea and she is happy anywhere she gets to hang out with her family. Her favorite food is steak and grits (shrimp is optional).

Missy's favorite Bible verse is Micah 6:8, "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



*Rhonda Pierre*

Rhonda Nisbett Pierre moved to Haiti full-time in August 2016 after coming to myLIFEspeaks for physical therapy missions since October 2012. Today, Rhonda is myLIFEspeaks' Public Health Liaison and Director of LIFE Therapy Clinic, working closely with therapy patients and overseeing public health operations at myLIFEspeaks.

She loves that she gets to bring years of physical and occupational therapy experience and education, she gained in the US, to share with eager-to-learn Haitian therapists, students, and staff.

She loves that we are able to provide hands-on rehabilitation and other medical care in Haiti without restrictions of third parties. If something needs to be done, and we can do it, we just do it and she loves that we can hop right into action to help those in need.

Rhonda can often be seen jumping into action and emergency care when motorcycle accidents, injuries, and other medical emergencies happen in and around Neply. She has been a huge part in helping save many of the lives and stories we share with you as some of the miracles God has done in Neply.

Originally from Texas, Rhonda now lives with her husband, Frandy, in Neply. Her favorite thing about living in Haiti is that it is a more uncluttered way of life and forces you to just be. But at the same time she feels that she is leading a more fulfilling life in doing God's Work as she has been called to in Haiti.

She loves Haiti's sunsets and her favorite place to sit and reflect is by the ocean. Rhonda has been to 49 of the 50 United States but instead of going to Hawaii she moved to Haiti so she's not sure if she will ever make it to the 50th state. She loves kids, books, photography, mint chocolate chip ice cream, and Dr. Pepper.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



*Sydney Miller*

Sydney Miller fell in love with Haiti after a short-term immersion trip with myLIFEspeaks back in 2014 that changed her LIFE. It was in meeting a little boy with special needs, Frantzky, who had never taken a step nor spoken a word, yet with a smile, forever touched her heart. In his eyes she saw clearly God's Love and purpose in every LIFE.

Sydney is a born and raised Hoosier, growing up in Carmel, Indiana and later attending Indiana University where she fell in love with storytelling: especially 'good news' stories. Today Sydney lives in Nashville, TN and works in Digital Marketing and Storytelling for myLIFEspeaks - a dream come true, full-circle moment from the one holding Frantzky many years ago.

She loves that her job allows her to share the stories of how the Lord is changing lives in Haiti daily through myLIFEspeaks and loves being even a small part of His Work. She loves the simplicity of LIFE in Haiti and how God's Presence is so tangible because all first-worldly distractions are stripped away. She loves the Haitian people. She loves their love, reliance, and trust in the Lord. They inspire her and help her everyday; begging the question in her heart, "who is really helping who?"

In her free time, Sydney loves spending time with family and friends, anything outdoors, being on the lake and in nature, hiking, adventure, traveling, snow and water sports, listening to country music, and all things fitness. She runs on Jesus, coffee, and country/christian music and has a huge sweet tooth. She has never met a dog she didn't like or want to pet. A random fun fact is that she can say the alphabet backwards on command.

She loves being part of the myLIFEspeaks family and team and is humbled to be part of what God is doing in Haiti through myLIFEspeaks.

We hope you have enjoyed this devotional. Our goal is for you to see each day as both a gift and a blessing. As you go throughout your day, we hope you might see something that you haven't recognized before. We hope you see God's Hand at work all around you.

Let us know what God is saying to you. We would love to hear from you. Feel free to email us: [info@myLIFEspeaks.com](mailto:info@myLIFEspeaks.com)

