

## **A Pastor's View of Haiti Disaster Response: How Your Church Can Help**

*A Travel Free Learning Article*

By

Bill Howard

Ministry Associate with The Columbia Partnership

Voice: 803.467.3843, E-mail: [BHoward@TheColumbiaPartnership.org](mailto:BHoward@TheColumbiaPartnership.org)

Web Site: [www.TheColumbiaPartnership.org](http://www.TheColumbiaPartnership.org)

January 12, 2010 a devastating earthquake struck just outside Port-au-Prince, Haiti, leaving 250,000 dead, 300,000 injured, and over one million people homeless. The earthquake affected up to three million people.

I had been training three young pastors who were in Port-au-Prince during the earthquake. Scripture tells us to pray without ceasing. I fulfilled that commandment as I prayed continually for the safety of my young friends and sat glued to the television as CNN and others reported the unfolding of this enormous catastrophe.

Did you see it?

Because of a lack of supplies heroic doctors were practicing what they called "civil war medicine". Moms and dads dug through concrete rubble pleading for someone to help them rescue their children who were holding on to life beneath the debris. It was September 11, 2001 multiple times over.

After six days of seeing people plead for food, water, and medical help, while these very supplies sat stockpiled at the airport, and after learning that one of my young pastors had died in the earthquake, I could take no more. The Lord was telling me to respond. On January 19<sup>th</sup> with a pocket full of money and suitcases full of medical supplies, I boarded a plane for the Dominican Republic and mapped out my strategy for entering Haiti.

Two days later with a rental car loaded with antibiotics, cleanings solutions, food, and water, I started running rescue missions back and forth across the border of the Dominican Republic and Haiti. I delivered the medicine to a hospital, and the food and water to the neighborhood where my young pastors lived. For two weeks I lived with them in a small tent city where the residents of that neighborhood gathered every night to worship God and praise Him for sparing their lives.

What was it like? A country in chaos. Destruction. Panic. Desperation. Corpses piled in the streets. Overwhelmed hospitals and clinics with patients spilling out into the yards, and IVs hanging from tree limbs. Amputees lying on sheets in the hospital yard or down the sides of the crowded hallways; their blank faces showing obvious signs of shock.

"Tent cities" made of bed sheets and sticks housed a million homeless people; 300,000 of them injured. After losing everything they owned, home now consisted of a bed sheet tied to four sticks, with your neighbors tying in all directions to your sticks, and their neighbors tying to theirs.

Where do all these people go to the bathroom? Where do they cook? Where do their children play?

No facilities, no food, no access to water, no protection. Orphaned by the quake, six-to-nine-year-old children were standing at busy intersections, tapping on car windows, and begging for food and water.

Can you imagine this? Can you imagine crying till you run out of tears? Can you imagine walking away from people begging for medical help? Can you imagine a six-year-old boy with desperation

on his face, clutching the hand of his four-year-old brother, and you drive away after giving him a bottle of water and three protein bars?

This country was in dire need before the earthquake. After this disaster, the needs are indescribable.

Now is the time for God's family to step forward. Now is the time for Christ to come forth from Christians. Would you like to help? Has your church been looking for an avenue to get involved?

There are a few things you can do that will have an immediate impact:

**1. Pray:** Pray that God's Spirit would be released in a mighty way on the Haitian people and especially their government. The people of Haiti have suffered for over 200 years from the satanic effect of voodoo and from a corrupt government. Pray that God would turn the hearts of the leaders back to Him.

**2. Give:** Find an organization who will put your money to work directly on the streets of Haiti and give generously. A donation of \$25 can send an impoverished child to a neighborhood school for a year. A donation of \$40 will buy a sand water filter that will give a family clean water for life. A \$100 donation will feed a family of seven for at least two weeks.

As a result of my visit, my church and I started an orphanage in Haiti. "Alex's House" was started in dedication to my friend who died in the earthquake. We rescue homeless children, and provide them with food, shelter, an education, and the love of Christ. Your love, encouragement and prayers can change the life of a child who has lost everything; including their family.

**3. Go:** If God calls you, then go. Search out a reputable Christian missions organization and schedule a trip; whether in Haiti or another part of the world. You can read about missions forever, but your heart and faith becomes alive again once you participate. Sending money is wonderful and greatly needed, but your heart and faith will be changed forever when you hold the hand of a homeless child, when you pray for someone who is overwhelmed with grief, when you work side by side with a Haitian family as you help them rebuild their home.

If you would like to partner with us in reaching homeless children and ministering to the people of Haiti, I would welcome a conversation with you, or would welcome the opportunity to speak at your church. You can contact me at [BHoward@TheColumbiaPartnership.org](mailto:BHoward@TheColumbiaPartnership.org) or [www.WillowRidgeChurch.org](http://www.WillowRidgeChurch.org).

### **Important Things to Know**

Bill Howard is a Ministry Associate with The Columbia Partnership. He is also Lead Pastor with Willow Ridge Church in Lexington, SC. He is a Capital Campaign Consultant for The Columbia Partnership and would be glad to talk with any congregations, denomination, or parachurch organization considering a campaign.

The Columbia Partnership is a 501(c)3 non-profit Christian ministry organization focused on transforming the capacity of the North American Church to pursue and sustain Christ-centered ministry. **Travel Free Learning** is a leadership development emphasis of The Columbia Partnership. For more information about products and services check out the web site at [www.TheColumbiaPartnership.org](http://www.TheColumbiaPartnership.org), send an e-mail to [Client\\_Care@TheColumbiaPartnership.org](mailto:Client_Care@TheColumbiaPartnership.org), or call 803.622.0923.