

## **I saw Jesus in Haiti**

### **By Dave Baker**

I'm going to be honest: Haiti is not easy. The devastation is debilitating and uncomfortable. Houses and schools and hospitals have crumbled, disease runs rampant, housing is mostly makeshift tents, and water and food are always in short supply. It's hard not to feel hopeless in the face of such extreme poverty. Yet despite what appears like mostly despair, there is hope, there is light, there is joy.

I saw Jesus in Haiti. It was unexpected, but very real. I caught my first glimpse in the orphans as they sang songs of praise. With voices raised they were almost shouting as they worshipped a God they had never seen, but believed in with all their hearts.

I saw Jesus in the joy of the families who quickly claimed their transitional home we had built for them. A sparse wooden frame, a tin roof, and a tarp were all it took to bring a sense of home and security to their lives. How humbled I was to stand in that space, in that joy, and realize how much I take for granted the secure roof I sleep under at night.

I saw Jesus in Ketia, a small but mighty orphan who lives at the Mission of Hope. In her eyes I saw a life touched by tragedy and loss. Yet her resilient spirit and strong heart inspired our entire group to pause in wonder at the human capacity to recover, adapt, and live life vigorously.

I saw Jesus in a soccer game when my friend Billy announced each boy's name before running onto the soccer field while we clapped and cheered. The boys' smiles and tears of pride when they heard their names announced touched my heart as I reflected on the importance of a sense of worth.

I saw Jesus in many other moments during our trip, in the amazed and bewildered faces of the kids who watched my slight of hand trick during our end of the week carnival, in the sigh of relief as a mother gathered her child from the doctors arms after being examined during our medical clinics, in the innocent and elated look of a small orphan who got his own balloon as he hit and jumped at it for hours as we waited for our ride back to camp, in the tears then squeals of happiness from the cooks who made us food all week after we gave them a monetary gift at the end of the week, in the precious look of the children who had their faces painted for the first time.

These are the moments I choose to focus on when I think of the future of Haiti. I remember the children and their hope, courage, their strength. I think of those who dedicate their lives to make these moments possible and to help rebuild a country worn down by so much more than just an earthquake. I think of Jesus, and how I saw him more than once in the most unexpected places.