

God provided for me and my family during this trip to Haiti. I had never been away that long, especially leaving Sherri with our two months old baby and three other children. I thank God for the mommy helper and others who have helped with the older kids during my absence.



Levanjil as a ministry started from two observations: (1) Pastors do not spend enough time in the Word to prepare to teach and preach to their congregation; (2) Churches do not support their pastors adequately. This is our fifth year travelling to Haiti seeking to see our Lord and Savior Jesus-Christ lifted up in the heart and soul of Haitian Christians.

For each trip we tried to address some spiritual and material challenges in Haiti by training Haitians to apply the Gospel in every aspect of their lives.

The main objective of this trip, however, was to promote Expository preaching and Biblical Theology as a way to get the pastors more “interested” in the Word of God.

### The First Sunday at Philadelphia Baptist Church, Cayes

I was asked to preach at Philadelphia church on Friday evening during the drive from the airport. Having spent almost the whole day Saturday at a wedding, I only had the evening to prepare - typical of a Haitian pastor and the very thing that I planned on speaking against ;-(.

The Lord drew me to the book of Amos that evening. I walked them through the whole book that morning in 45 minutes!

- Have you ever compared the following verses?
  - Exodus 7-11 (The plagues of Egypt) vs. Amos 4:6-11
  - Exodus 11:4 (not passing over) vs. Amos 5:17b
  - Exodus 11:6 vs. Amos 5:16,17

The Lord loves the people of Haiti too much to leave them in their sins. God did not pass over Jesus so that they may be free from sin. I called the church to repent or to be prepared to meet their God.

### CMBH (Baptist Missionary Fellowship of Haiti) Convention

I was also invited to preach at an association of churches convention for three days on the theme “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). The expectation was for me to lean on this verse and use it as a support to tell them all the great things that they can accomplish with Jesus for three days. This did not seem to support the main objective of my trip.

Moreover, a huge chunk of the time is generally allocated to choirs singing and people dancing and very little time is left to the preacher. After the **body** has gotten to a certain temperature, the preacher is

expected to maintain the same intensity and charisma to satisfy the *spirit*. And that generally is confirmed with several amens from the congregation.

I wrestled for a while with the way to go about preaching on that theme. How do I preach expositionally to a group who are only used to topical preaching? How do I speak at the level of the educated pastor and the illiterate? How much longer would my brothers and sisters to bear after two hours, sweating in this heat and humidity?

God was gracious to me and His people. He gave me the faith to believe in His Word. I preached four sermons. I read the text, prayed, explained the context, got to the main point of the text, drew a few gospel themes, and shared some application points. I kept the first three sermons short.

One of the benefit of preaching from one book, as my pastor advised me to do, every time you preach, you can have an opportunity to recap and complete what could have been missed in previous sermons. And for me, that was very helpful. I was able to show all the things that Paul has gone through joyfully and all the things he has also called them to do joyfully for the sake of Christ sermon after sermon.

I faced yet with another challenge. I left off at chapter 2:18 in my third sermon. I could preach nine more sermons before I get to 4:13. I was using a French Bible (word-for-word translation) for the first three. But this time, I switched to a Creole version (very dynamic). I read each section from 2:19 to the end of the book and shared the main point and Paul's aim at the end of each section. I was very nervous to do it but I had to. You may be wondering why all of these details. I will tell you now.

A few observations:

1. The people were very attentive and patient because it was in a **language** they understand very well (Haitian Creole).
2. It was easy for them to follow because the sermons were simply the unfolding of a **story**. A story that they've been learning about for the last 3 days.
3. I did not feel that the illiteracy of the audience was an impediment to following Paul's logic when exposed. Why do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit or do all things without grumbling? Because Christ did not do that when he came to save us. And you played that out for them. Why does Paul talk about sharing his trouble? Because they are also partakers with him of the grace of God.
4. I also tried to feel Paul's affection through that letter, his love for the Philippians which I likened to the love of a Father to a son or even a groom to a bride - Have you noticed how many times he called them brothers in this book? My heart melted every time I read "my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown..."
5. Because I was **personally** affected spiritually and emotionally by that story, I was able to passionately share it with my brothers and sisters. I told them I understand and I know that their greatest worry of the year is approaching. They need to stand firm in the faith even if they can't send their kids to school this year.
6. I had all the Amen (s) that you could get as in an African-American church.

At the end of the conference, I met with a large group of pastors to talk about the Biblical exposition training program. Could you guess what the reaction was?

**Could your church support a training program in one region?**

## MEBSH (Baptist Churches Mission in the South of Haiti) Pastors Conference

I went back home Sunday afternoon, ate lunch, and closed the door again to put a lengthy last touch to my presentation for the next day. I hardly slept that night because of the heat. This was very unusual for me.

By way of introduction, I stated that the church was the most important institution of MEBSH; that the pastor of a church plays a very important role in the spiritual maturity of the church members; that the Word was central to the spiritual life of the Christian; and that the preaching to the Word was the primary responsibility of the preacher.

I translated and printed some excerpts from the Expository Preaching book (Dave Helm) which served as the basis of what I planned to go through with them. We covered some flaws in contextualization and Exegesis and did a 20 minutes exercise on Habakkuk 2:20, John 2:1-11, and Phil 4:13. They worked in groups to identify the common misapplications that preachers make when preaching or citing these verses. Here are a few examples that came out from their exercise:

- Habakkuk 2:20 is commonly used to ask the congregation to be quiet at the beginning of service. That verse is actually painted on the wall of a lot of churches in Haiti. At the end of the workshop we debated on what to do when they return home. They all agreed to paint over that verse in their church.
- The Wedding at Cana is widely used during marriage ceremony to exhort the couple to invite Jesus into their marriage too. There were also bizarre applications on the first serving of the wine which I can't recall anymore.

We then resumed to talk about Habakkuk's first audience, the purpose of the book, the temple, and how important it was to read the whole book.

We also reread John 2:11 and talked about the purpose of the Gospels to show that Jesus was not just going around doing magic to help people.

The next day, I took a different approach. I had them read Genesis 37:12 to 38, summarized 39-43, read 44 and asked them the question on why chapter 38 in the story.

We then went through Amos, Daniel, Esther, 1 Samuel, and Philipians. I then closed with a testimony about the work that I had to do to teach from Hebrews 4:11. I basically walked them through the book and made reference to Ephesians 2:11-22. The picture of the court and inner court, the holies of holies and the high priest, being once an alien and now called to draw near over and over again (7:19, 7:25, 10:22, 11:6) were vivid! Again, "why all those details?" you may be asking again.

1. The hearts of those pastors were melted when the Word of God was unfolded to them. They were different. They were eager to know more.
2. One stood up and thanked me for the sacrifice I made to come and train them. He acknowledged that they have a lot to learn. He also told his colleagues that I was not there to tell them what to do about ministry but rather show the necessity to dedicate time to it.
3. I truly believe and pray that most of the pastors present during these two-day seminar would not feel at ease to simply take 15 minutes to prepare on Saturday night anymore.
4. I encouraged them to study the Word together during their monthly regional meetings.
5. I shared with them the three-year plan to go through all literary genre in Scriptures.

6. They are ready, even with no Seminary degree.
7. Some regions would like to have their own training program.

### **Would your church adopt a region?**

#### MEBSH Youth Leader Conference

Finally, I had three sessions with the Youth Leaders. The first one was on how to study and teach the Bible. We must not neglect this group. They are at times carrying as much of the burden of the church as



the pastor. I reused some of the content that I shared with the pastors. Most of them understood that Expository preaching was the way to go in place of thematic preaching for the growth of the Church.

Then, I had a workshop on identifying our riches. At the end of the workshop, each regional representative stood up and promoted their region. It was an amazing experience. Nobody talked about poverty but only riches. I gave them

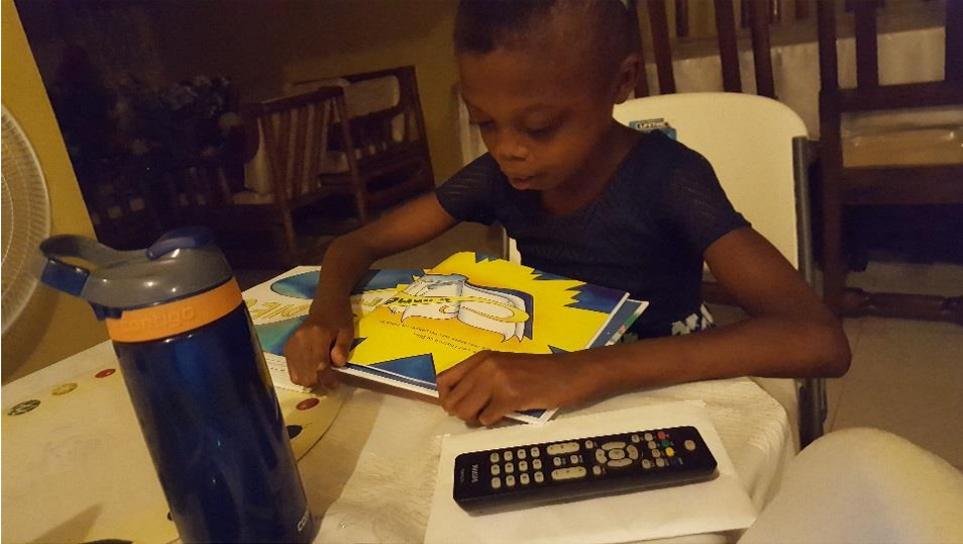
different tips on how, as young people, they could develop and promote even more of these riches. I would like to print their work one day.

Lastly, we had an open discussion about the sins that characterize the Haitian church. I then closed with a call to integrity.

### **Would you help send somebody?**

#### Miscellaneous

I also met with different partners and ministry leaders. I want to continue the discussion about the Sunday school curriculum for next year with Past. Gardy and Mrs. Marie.



This is Mona, a girl that was completely abandoned because of severe health issue, reading “The Big Picture Story Bible” in French. So precious. I can’t wait to put one in the hands of every pastor and Sunday school teacher.

The ladies missed a lot Teren who spoke at the last three Women’s conferences this year as they struggled to find a speaker. ;-(

The tools we sent a while ago are being gathered now in one place. Jean Nesty, one of carpenters had me visit an abandoned school that could be used as the wood-working shop. He is in charge over them now.

I shared the Gospel with several individuals, addressed some sin issues with some, and encouraged others in their walk with the Lord. I was also encouraged by the devotion of some brothers to the Gospel. They have abandoned fructuous career to commit their time to the Church. Others, even retired, continue to serve faithfully in their capacity keeping the light of the Gospel burning. God is at work in Haiti.

For all of this, leaving aside all the trouble I went through, I call this trip a great success.

Next trip: December 2016

Thank you for your prayer support.

Pierre

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