

Jamaica: Building faith while building houses

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I am convinced God has a sense of humor. He takes the most entertaining situations and uses them to build his character in us.



Josiah David Cooper Our first experience in Jamaica was a three-hour bus ride from Montego Bay to Harmons. Many in our group were very apprehensive of the narrow roads and steep exposure, and we trusted the experience and ability of the driver. Life is sometimes like that bus ride—exciting in the beginning, but as we get into the twists, blind turns and hills of life, we realize our need for dependence upon God to guide us safely to our destination. By the end of the ride, we are grateful to have arrived where our rest awaits.

We spent our week pouring ourselves into service for the people of Harmons. Alongside other teams and the Jamaicans, we dug pits, mixed concrete, hauled marl (mudstone), sang songs, told jokes and built relationships.

One afternoon, we visited an infirmary. Patients included the homeless, the aged, the maimed, the lame and the mentally ill. We were blessed to reach out to them in love, reading Scripture to them, talking with them, and giving them value that they otherwise would not have as outcasts of society.

One pastor and I went around singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, bringing light to the darkness of the infirmity. We met some beautiful souls who, though weak in body are strong in spirit. One lady, bent with age was seated outside with two of our girls, and as they held her hands and painted her nails, the pastor and I sang praises to Jesus.

As we finished the song, her frail form came to life as she raised both hands and shouted “Hallelujah!” Suddenly, it became so clear to me that the faith of these people is their source of life.



Missions volunteers join a Jamaican in singing praise to God. This point was driven home as our visit came to a close. The joint teams had gathered around a lone man who was singing hymns. The man was mostly blind, and as we sang “Amazing Grace” with him, the beauty of faith was perfected as he sang, “was blind, but now I see.”

I realized, as I spoke and served with these people, that they understand this world is not their home, that the trials and hardship of this life is not their final destination. I became almost jealous of their faith in God, because they realize their need for him far greater than the average believer in America. They know what it is to trust God for their daily bread, something to which our privileged American lifestyle is hard pressed to

relate. They hold on to this hope, and share it eagerly with their brothers and sisters.

Of course, not everyone shares this hope. There is much despair from the poverty that abounds in the small communities for lack of industry and consequent unemployment. Pray that those who don't know Jesus will receive hope from the faith of the Jamaican Christians. Pray for the pastors who teach the grace made available by the cross. Finally, pray for the staff of the ministries in Jamaica that God will continue to be the source of their strength and shine his light through them.

I was challenged significantly by the faith and love I experienced in Jamaica. I know God sent me on this trip for a reason, and feel that the experience He has shown me is only the tip of the iceberg. Given the opportunity to return, would I? "Ya, mon!"

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