

Unexpected Grace by Bonnie Bennetts

As always being away from my family and home reminds me of the depth of gratitude I hold for my boys Zaq and Elijah, our Camille and our life here in Santa Monica.

I wanted to share with you all my gratitude for the gift it was to be a part of this powerful service opportunity and life experience. I had many unexpected moments of grace in connection with this trip not the least of which was an email I received from my friend Sherry on a Monday afternoon back in December?

Would I be interested in joining her on this mission?

Yes! Of course....this kind of service was something I had been dreaming of for many years.

The team of people was exactly right and Todd and Sherry the best choice of leaders. All is perfect in Gods world.

One of the next moments of grace was when my hands were being blessed before we left and the magnitude of what we were all asked and answered. My hands and heart were opened wider each day by the love and trust the people of Haiti and Sobier showed us.

The first morning we were woken yes! by the ever eager roosters and a boisterous goat on occasion. But our tent was on the side closest to the kitchen and the woven wooden hut used for cooking. There were three lovely women who cooked these magnificent meals for us each day. So lovingly prepared, like something out of Betty Crocker Sobier Edition. On the first day of work as I was laying in my tent in a drowsed state it was still somewhat dark out but I began to hear singing!

It was gently at first, like your Mother might have done on the first day of school and then as I woke further and had the wherewithal to grab my phone to capture this special moment other voices joined in! Spectacular... God's grace!

Each day we left the compound our hands were joined with little ones looking to just be with us, guiding us along the path, protecting us in friendship... a family.

Getting to the site one day about halfway thru the week I met a chicken. His name was Paul :)

I was waiting for what our directions for that day's work - there's another gift I often try to remember to pray for and had actually received there- patience. Listening to someone else and not having to be the boss! Miracle :)

I sat down on a pile of rocks and smiled at this beautiful man and the gorgeous chicken he was holding and it reminded me of how much I missed my boys and animals at home...I asked if I could pet his chicken and he said yes and promptly lifted him into my arms. All thoughts of Elijah's admonition to not touch the animals went out the window as I held this beautiful animal in my arms and felt its warm belly and quickly beating heart. What a moment of trust and friendship. I was soon called to my task for the moment and had to give the rooster back.

However when I returned to the site the next morning I spotted Armand and Paul the chicken and I went over to greet my new friends. As I sat down next to them for a quick little moment, Armand asked me to hold my hands out while he grabbed something out of his bag. It looked like 2 eggs but I thought no, it can't be, there is too much poverty here, the children too hungry ...why would he give food to me? It was 2 eggs that had been carefully wrapped in a little bit of clear and pink stripped plastic, so precious and generous to a new friend. I was awestruck and honored and I thanked him and kissed each of his cheeks and thanked Paul and then went to ask my team leader- (because I'm patient now and can follow rules!) if I could take the eggs back to my new friends in the kitchen to share for a meal. I was so moved.

Each morning when I woke, I was greeted by the three new sisters outside my tent... I ran to them as if it was my own mother and my sister waiting for me and I would hug each one ...long, deep, real hugs where perhaps it was me holding on in that give and take of strength so we could all move forward together...in such gratitude for how well they were taking care of us and also in that space of family...we were all together, not alone. Working to help one another with our gifts of time, patience, cooking, building, and smiling or eggs.

We were a family not only on our team but with the men, women and children of the community.

My hands, my heart, are open... blessed, ready to do what you would have me, God.

Thank you.