

Haiti:

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Challenges for Prayer:

The earthquake of 2010 was a disaster on many levels. But it also offers hope out of tragedy. It is believed that 230,000 lost their lives, 300,000 were injured and over one million were rendered homeless. Hundreds of thousands of homes and buildings were also destroyed, including some major government buildings. Aid arrived from around the world, but coordination was difficult in the aftermath of the earthquake, and assistance will be needed for a long time to come. For a host of reasons, Haiti struggled as a nation from its very inception. This shattering disaster could be an opportunity to reshape not just the physical infrastructure of the nation, but the cultural, economic, political and societal infrastructures as well. Some points to cover in prayer include:

- a) The rebuilding efforts will take years.** Haiti's infrastructure was never good, and Port-au-Prince's was especially weak due to rapid urbanization from poorer rural areas. Countless homes will need to be rebuilt or restored; the sheer scale of money and manpower needed is staggering for the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation. Pray for the best long-term development for the city and nation, rather than quick fixes. Pray for generous assistance from wealthier neighbors and nations and agencies from further abroad.
- b) The human suffering was immense** in the immediate aftermath and will continue for years. The shared emotional trauma of the events, the massive loss of life and the long-term injuries will all leave major scars on the Haitian population. Healing from such hurts needs time, care and the love of God.
- c) Haiti was a financial and social mess** even before the earthquake. Repairing all the damage, however, will not create a healthy economy. Haiti must rebuild beyond its previous state and develop long-term plans and policies that are shaped with wisdom and justice.

Haiti must find release from the bondages of its past. The Spanish genocide against the indigenous Arawaks, and the cruel slavery instituted and maintained by the Spanish and then the French, form a tragic background. The tyrannies, cruelties and use of voodoo as a means of control have fostered a spirit of fear that permeates every level of society. More recent interventions by foreign powers have not banished the endemic problems. Pray that:

- a) The powerful spirits underlying voodooism might be bound in the name of Jesus.** Pray that the ubiquitous influence and enduring legacy of voodoo might be made subordinate to the authority of Christ – especially in the lives of Christians.
- b) Haitians who call themselves Christian might experience the transforming nature** of a personal relationship with Christ. Only through the regeneration and power of the Holy Spirit will the heritage of voodoo be overcome.
- c) This nation might enjoy stability, safety and sustained development** by removing the systemic evils holding it back and by instilling biblical values and practices on every level of society.

Haiti needs godly leaders who will prioritize the good of the nation and address its massive problems. Two centuries of misrule, tyranny and recent flawed democratic attempts have brought hopelessness and despair. Corruption is rampant, and robberies and kidnappings commonplace. The economic plight of most Haitians deepens each year, exacerbated by the events of 2010. Many seek to escape, some physically by fleeing the country in unsafe and leaky boats, others emotionally through taking drugs. Pray that men and women may be raised up whom will reverse these trends and establish justice, righteousness and long-term stability.

The spiritual outpouring of faith in God in the aftermath of the earthquake

also shook the nation and moved the entire world. When the president called for three days of prayer and fasting during Mardi Gras – traditionally a time of partying and excess – no one expected one million people to turn out. Throughout the country, churches were filled to overflowing and services were held amid rubble and in the ruined streets. Pray that this spiritual shaking would not merely be an expression of grief, fear and desperation, but would shape itself into an unprecedented turning to God that redefines the spiritual life of Haiti. Numerous traditions allege that Haiti was dedicated to Satan through its voodoo past; pray that today it might be known as a nation wholly dedicated to the Lord Jesus.

Haitians overwhelmingly identify themselves as “Christian”, but many if not most Catholics have also dabbled in voodoo (although many others actively oppose it). Haiti is often referred to as “90% Catholic and 100% Voodoo”. The credibility and impact of the Catholic Church are sorely compromised. Pray for renewal, reformation and the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit to sweep through this massive and influential denomination.

The steady growth of Protestant churches is no surprise – no other faith offers the spiritual hope and practical help available to evangelicals. Yet there are areas for prayer:

a) The rural poor are the most responsive. Illiteracy, marginalization in society and lack of adequate teaching have all reduced the Church’s potential impact. But evangelicals are doing a great job of addressing these challenges via radio, children’s education and pastoral and lay training.

b) Denominational fragmentation on issues of personality, charismatic growth and liberation theology confuse and divide Christians. The Protestant Federation and the Council of Evangelical Churches give Protestants a platform for speaking with one voice to the government and for cooperating in social, evangelistic and prayer initiatives.

c) Spiritual opposition. Recently, those who practice voodoo have been more outspoken, especially through the media, about their animosity toward Protestants. Pray for spiritual purity and for the love and power of Christ to shine through believers.

Leadership training is too limited because of the poverty of churches. A rigid traditionalism of imported theologies and systems is widespread. Many pastors have little training; some are barely literate. Pray for the 20 or so Bible schools/seminaries and the many TEE programs that seek to meet the need. Pray for Haitian leaders to be men of faith and spiritual authority, which are not diverted by material inducements. Pray for resources in Creole that will foster lay training and leadership development.

Desperate physical and social needs attract a wide range of Christian community development agencies, such as WVI, Tearfund, World Concern, the Mennonites and many others. Sensitivity and wisdom are needed to preserve the indignity, integrity and independence of the churches and their leaders and to not create further dependency. Pressing needs must be addressed regarding ecology, agriculture, healthcare, AIDS, education and children at risk. Pray that every expression of Christian concern might have long-term redemptive impact and draw people to the Savior.

Particularly needy or strategic groups:

a) The Mulatto elite are wealthy, French-oriented and isolated from the majority. Few realize their need for a personal faith. The wealthiest 15% of Haiti’s population control 90% of its resources; active Christians who wield such influence could make a great difference in the nation.

b) The youth. Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and constant turmoil that disrupts the education system all make for a difficult context for Haitian youth. Guns and gangs are the paths many take to cope. Too few churches have active programs designed for young people. GBEUH(IFES) has three full-time staff and around 25 student groups; CCCI and

Navigators are also active.

c) Refugees. The Haitian Diaspora numbers in the millions – in the USA, Cuba, Bahamas and elsewhere. Their destitution and need make them spiritually receptive. A number of missions (**WT, OMS, CoN** and others) seek to minister to them. Aiding or harboring Haitian illegal refugees in other Caribbean nations can bring legal consequences, creating a dilemma for those seeking to show compassion. Pray for more workers called to reach the Haitian Diaspora.

d) The restaveks (from the Creole – “stay-withs”) are effectively child slaves, numbering 300,000 to 400,000 – or 10% of all children in Haiti. They are easily available to be bought or sold. They are usually orphans, runaways or poor rural children whose parents can’t afford to care for them. These children labor endlessly; they have no education and no health care. Pray for God to raise up people and organizations dedicated to showing compassion and love to the *restaveks*.

Missions plays a valuable supportive role to the national Church. Upheavals and violence have forced most missionaries out of the country at one time or another; many never return. Pray for these servants of the Lord, for their testimony and service, and that they may contribute to the maturing of the Haitian Church. The larger missions are: **CCCI, OMS, CW, MAF, YWAM.**
diverse body – ecumenism,