



Live a life fully

Surrendered to Christ



CHARIS

Newsletter | May 2022

Charis Family,
Greetings to all of you! It has been a long couple of years and it is so good to get back to some level of normality in our lives. Joy and I pray that you are all healthy and doing well. We also want to sincerely thank you for your continued prayer and financial support despite your own difficulties during these trying and unprecedented times we are living through. That shows the true level of dedication and commitment you all have to this ministry that God has assigned to all of us. It is a real joy to be a part of this ministry that God has so adequately equipped for spiritual and physical success through all of you—thank you!

As many of you know, Haiti remains in the grip of crisis as insecurity and instability torment the people. The country remains extremely dangerous as 10 kidnappings a week are occurring on average. Inflation has reached as high as 22.95% in previous months. Gas shortages continue

to plague the country. Food and medicine imports have been severely limited due to ports being controlled by powerful gangs.

To add further difficulties, the Dominican Republic recently initiated the construction of a 244-mile border wall between their country and Haiti to stop the inflow of Haitians who are attempting to flee the poverty, sickness, and instability of Haiti to find work in the DR. Plans for a Haitian election have been foiled for unknown reasons, and recently the prime minister, who is acting as the interim leader, has been accused of working with the gangs. This has created a very desperate and uncertain situation in Haiti.

Adding to the problems, recent demonstrations have turned violent and airplanes belonging to mission organizations were destroyed and burned. As a result, Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF), an organization that transports missionaries, has ceased operations in Haiti for now. This is truly a sad situation for the Haitian people who are living in fear every day as their desperate situation seems to worsen with time.



The Dominican Republic started construction of a 244 mile border wall to separate Haiti.



God continues to be faithful

With all this frustrating and disappointing news, the temptation to become discouraged in the work is strong. However, God is so good as He continues to encourage Joy and me with awesome displays of His grace, power, and love towards our Haitian brothers and sisters in Christ. The evangelization of new communities (that I mentioned in our last newsletter) by our church leaders had resulted in the formation of churches that are regularly meeting now twice a week. In accord with the mindset and goals of Charis, 3 of these communities have autonomously instituted meetings specifically for the widows, and this greatly blesses our heart.

All three of these communities are in the mountains: La Montai has 21 widows meeting every Thursday, MonDezi

has 44 widows meeting every Sunday afternoon, and LaKobat has 10 widows now in community with one another, meeting every Wednesday. This adds 75 more widows to the overall Charis widow community that now spans 6 villages with a total of over 200 widows!

The aspect of the widow communities that most blesses our hearts is the sense of unity and brotherly love that they are organically displaying that wasn't taught to them by men, but rather placed in them by the Holy Spirit. For instance, when one widow is sick, we receive news (and pictures) that all the widows in the respective community travel as a group to go and see her. They pray with the one who is sick and out of their poverty they collect a small offering to buy and prepare a little food and tea to help strengthen the one suffering. We also see this occurring in the church as a whole.



Our new widows group in MonDezi.



Deliverance is one of our widows that is sick.



Please pray for Saint Hilarie, one of our widows who is also sick.

Wilfred and Edna

A couple of weeks ago, an elderly brother named Wilfred lost his wife of over 50 years. He was heartbroken and couldn't stop sobbing, but the church was physically present by his side to console him and pray with him continually as different groups from the church body took turns sitting with and embracing him. This is how the church of Jesus Christ is supposed to function, and the Haitian believers continually teach Joy and I through their example of living as a true body of Christ.



Mobile clinics in the mountains

The mobile medical clinics continue to serve distant communities in the mountains that are void of medical care and medication. Portions of your monetary donations go toward stocking the clinic with the medications required to make these trips, so thank you! The church leaders, led by Pastor Abony, have been praying and asking God what He wants them to do, and they heard God telling them to travel into unreached areas in the mountains to perform evangelism for weeks at a time.



Ti Bab starts evangelizing

A converted vodou priest, nick named Ti Bab (pronounced tee-bob, which means "little beard"), is very zealous for Jesus and has requested to join the church in all of their mission trips. He wants to be the one to testify to any vodou priests or priestesses that they may encounter. The church in Haiti has traditionally been afraid to engage vodouists in their mission efforts, but Ti Bab will allow our group to effectively engage these priests and priestesses in gospel conversations. This is a beautiful thing considering that Ti Bab has been saved for only a little over a year!



Ring the bells for more group weddings

The group weddings are also continuing. I am sure many of you remember that two group weddings were performed and funded by Charis last year as many of you made these weddings possible through your donations of wedding dresses, rings, suits, tuxedos, and shoes. At the end of this year we are planning to perform another group wedding. Currently 12 couples are interested, and we are certain that there will be many more in the coming months. To date we have married 22 couples who are now living in obedience to Scripture, and many of them have become church leaders helping us with our lack of church leadership in Haiti.

Rosalie's 30 lb tumor

Furthermore, many of you who have been to Haiti have met Rosalie. She was born with a disease called neurofibromatosis which results in countless tumors all over the body that vary in size. Rosalie unfortunately had a rare 30-pound tumor form that surrounded her entire right lower leg. The tumor became infected, and her life was at risk. When we received this news, we immediately responded with the funding needed to get her to a hospital that was 7 hours away, as it is difficult to find a hospital with a surgeon who is capable of effectively treating such a large tumor.

To make a long story short, they operated on her and successfully amputated the lower part of her leg that contained the tumor. She has now made a full recovery and is living free of the tumor burden that had made her life so incredibly difficult—Praise God!! Once again, this was a result of the Haitian church coming together, calling us to make us aware of the situation, and supporting Rosalie through all of this—even to the point of traveling with her and staying for the 6-week duration required to complete the medical/surgical procedures and recovery period.



Rosalie after a successful surgery where her leg was partially amputated.

“My stomach might be empty, but my heart is full”

As Joy and I witness all the good that is occurring in Haiti and how the church is really living within the glory of Biblical Christianity, it causes us to self-reflect and consider our own Christianity. Latigue, (the ex-vodou priest who I have frequently written about in past newsletters), said something once that will always stick with me. There was a period of time after his conversion to Christ, that he fell upon hard times. Since he did ‘not want to bother us’ he didn’t tell us that he hadn’t eaten for 2 days. As Americans, we can only imagine how hungry he must have been. However, in his physical hunger, he stood up in a group Bible study that I was leading and said, “I haven’t eaten in 2 days, my stomach might be empty, but my heart is full, and even though I’m hungry right now, the joy of Jesus fills me up and that’s enough for me”.

What a profound statement from an illiterate, uneducated man who has lived 60 years of his life in service to Satan. But at that moment God allowed me to understand very clearly something about Latigue—he is better than me. In terms of his living day-to-day as a Christian surrendered to Christ, Latigue is better than me—and I say that with a heart that is full of love for Latigue who I am so proud of and honored to call a brother in Christ!

Without seminary, Bible school, or studying, Latigue had crucified himself and yielded to the power of the Holy Spirit within him, actively living by the words of Zechariah 4:6, despite having never read them himself, “ ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit’, says Yahweh of hosts.” This teaches us that the strength of the Christian to overcome temptations lies in God and not in himself.

While many of us understand this, how many of us live within this truth? The temptation facing Latigue that day was to yield to the physical consequences of not eating which included hunger, complaining, anger, frustration, desperation, etc., but he had yielded his mind and heart to the power of God and the Holy Spirit within him. As a result, he actively overcame his hunger and focused on the joy and happiness that came with his status as a son of God who was now saved from all his sin and had eternity in the presence of God in heaven to place his hope in. I want to state that I firmly believe this is the key that the Christian must possess to unlock true Biblical Christian living!

A surrendered life

In Haiti, Latigue is no exception as a great majority of Haitian Christians, many of whom have been saved out of vodou, have cast themselves aside and daily live within the power of the Holy Spirit to display a life surrendered to Christ that doesn’t rotate around self. Many of the widows who go to pray, provide, and sit with their sick sisters in Christ (discussed above), are hungry and in pain themselves but they overcome the temptation to stay at home by the power of love that God has placed in their hearts for each other. The individuals that put aside their own plans and instead traveled 7 hours away to

accompany Roselie to the distant hospital that performed her surgery and were willing to stay with her for 6 weeks to ensure that she could eat every day and be properly cared for. Surely, they were tempted to remain at home and do what they wanted with their families, but they surrendered to God’s power and displayed the same type of unconditional, selfless agape love that Christ showed to us.

Many of these individuals, widows, and ex-vodou priests and priestesses are uneducated, illiterate, and have lived their lives in extreme poverty and bondage to Satan. However, secondary to their new birth and new nature as Christians they are living out words of Scripture that they have never learned nor personally read for themselves. The fact that God allowed us to plant these churches in Haiti and witness their love and faithfulness towards God and one another, greatly helps me understand how Paul must have felt when he wrote the following words to the church that he planted in Thessalonica.

“We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is only fitting, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another increases all the more, so that we ourselves boast about you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.”

–2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

In contrast, many of us in America have heard thousands of sermons, have access to Biblical teaching, can study Greek and Hebrew lexicons, can access hundreds of thousands of books on Christian living, can study early church father’s writings, etc. Despite all of this we fall very short of living our lives in the power that God has promised to provide us to empower our living as Christians in this world. Let us consider several verses that reveal both the availability of this power to us, and the Divine expectation that we are to live within the confines of this power.

“The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.” –Exodus 14:14

“Casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.” –1 Peter 5:7

“Trust in the Lord with all you heart and lean not in your own understanding.” –Proverbs 3:5

“It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.” –Psalm 118:8

“Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His presence continually.” –1 Chronicles 16:11

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble.” –Psalm 46:1

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me.” –John 14:1

When Peter was allowed to come out and walk upon the water with Jesus, as long as Peter kept his faith in the power of Jesus to keep him on the water, all was fine and Peter remained walking on the water. As soon as a strong wind came and successfully tempted Peter to fear, he then began to sink. Peter had doubted Christ's power to keep him on the water while putting faith in the wind's ability to take him down. After Jesus saved him from drowning, He asked Peter a question, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14:31b). The same question could be asked of us today. The consideration of this has never been more important as the world around us falls deeper and faster into the clutches of Satan. The world desperately, and urgently, needs a true representation of Biblical Christian living, and this is founded in living in the power of God and not in our own power.

Normalized American culture

At this point we can rightfully ask, ‘what does it look like to live like this today in America?’ I think the better question to ask would be: what doesn't it look like? It doesn't look like getting our pleasure from the world and not from God. We fall to this temptation every day as many of us fail to realize or even consider these pleasures as temptations because American culture has not only normalized them but has exalted them to the status of rewarded expectations that we should seek and desire.

For example, every weekend we are tempted to seek ways to entertain ourselves. We ask the world what it has to offer us in terms of enjoyments, and we weigh our options: restaurants, music, movies, amusements, Netflix series, shopping, malls, salons, etc. All are temptations that involve very temporary gratifications. What we fail to realize is, while we engage ourselves in these self-serving activities that we justify under the banner of ‘I deserve it’, or ‘I earned it’, we shortchange God by not prioritizing Him, time in His Word, prayer, or sharing the love of the gospel with others. We also show an unbelieving world that we love, yearn for, and engage in the same things that they do—what makes them happy are the same things that make us happy.

We may ask, ‘what's the big deal?’ God asks, ‘why we don't obey His Word?’ Doesn't the Bible tell us to “come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them, says the LORD. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you.” (2 Corinthians 6:17). Additionally, Scripture reveals how God feels about all of these worldly things that we elevate so highly, “For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” (Luke 16:15b). God instructs us to separate ourselves from unbelievers and He further tells us that what

man honors He considers abominable. The only way we can separate ourselves from the world and acquire a distaste for the world's seductive offerings is through the power of God, as leaning on our own power will result in certain failure—or, at the very least, living a life on the never-ending roller coaster of sin-confess-sin-confess-sin-confess.

A new reality, a new nature

Paul says two things that come to mind as I write this. “I count all things to be loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ and be found in Him.” (Philippians 3:8-9a). Paul also says, “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20). Paul understood that his salvation produced a new reality and a new nature within him. His new reality produced a full realization that his past accolades, including being educated by the greatest educator of his day, being a Pharisee who was rising faster in the ranks than all his contemporaries, and being powerful and looked highly upon in Jewish society, had served no other purpose than to keep him distant from Christ. With this clear understanding Paul considered all those past things, that many of us would consider good things worthy of seeking, as trash. Paul's new nature revealed the crucifixion of the old, unsaved Paul, and the rise to life of Christ within him—a new life sustained and kept through faith in the Son of God Who had died for him! In other words, Paul was living in the power of his salvation and His Creator, and secondary to this, Paul showed the world Christ through living within the power of Christ.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we must agree to live within Calvary's power. When Christ died, His elect died with Him—and that's you and me. The power that raised Him from the dead is the same power that we must allow to raise us from the dead life, dead works, dead aspirations, and dead entertainments that once functioned so passionately within us. The reason that our Haitian brothers and sisters can so easily live in the power of Christ after their salvation is because they don't have the same magnitude of worldly seductions, temptations, and enticements that we do in our wealthy, materialistic, technology-laden, hyper-sexual culture. While poverty and status as a *developing* country may earn the world's spite and produce great physical hardships, it conversely gives spiritual advantage. James reveals this as he writes,

“Listen my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to those who love Him?” –James 2:5

Living in the power of God involves our wills. This power is clearly offered to all born again believers, but are you going to grasp hold of it and abide in it? To do this we must realize that most aspects of our lives in America are sinful in God's eyes. Entertainment, pleasure,

spending, worldly advancement, etc., are all things that our culture applauds, promotes, and endorses to the point that we all have been conditioned to believe that there is nothing wrong with these things, when in fact the Bible teaches differently.

King David realized that there were things in his life and mind that were offensive to God, despite the fact that they were outside of his awareness. His awareness of this ignorance led him to cry out to God, “Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.....Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.” (Psalm 19:12,14). And Paul warns us of this reality in the last days, “... in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money,..lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.” (2 Timothy 3:1-2a,4b-5).

Our wills are unfortunately bound to social constructs around us that include our culture, surroundings, upbringing, etc.—and things that are bound are not free. While we have a will, the idea of free-will is an illusion that is pushed by this Satanic world system. When our wills are bound by the world around us, they cease to be free and thus we choose wrongly and sin in the process. We must surrender our hearts and minds to true freedom that only exists in the power of Christ and His Word. Christ said, “If you abide in My Word...you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31b,32).

Surrender to Christ

Therefore, to be truly free we must rest in the power of Christ and His Word. I urge all of you to get on your knees in prayer and completely surrender to Christ, ask for His help in this, and turn away from our culture’s determinations and definitions of success and pleasure. Only then will we begin to become effective representatives of Christ in our

world. The Haitian believers teach me and inspire me as I watch them so naturally surrender their physical lives to the power of Christ and break free from the bondage to Satan that they lived in prior to their salvation---we must follow their example. While we (the Charis family) are instruments used by God to save the souls of the Haitians; the Haitians, in turn, are used as instruments by God to give us real, living examples of what true faith and living in the power of Christ looks like in this life. As our country rapidly plummets in spiritual free-fall, God is looking for soldiers and representatives who are going to stand in His offered power so that He may show up powerfully for them. Let’s refuse to be deceived by our culture’s attempts to keep us in the bubble of pleasure and self-worship, and outside of the power of God that we could and should be living in!

“For the eyes of the LORD roam throughout the earth, so that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.” -2 Chronicles 16:9a



Mission Statement

Charis (Greek for God’s Grace) operates in complete obedience to God, giving Him His rightful place in determining the path and goals of His ministry that He has, by grace, allowed us to perform. Charis primarily focuses on the unseen spiritual needs in Haiti, and secondarily on the seen physical needs, always remembering that our success is completely dependent on the will of God, the gospel of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit working effectively through us, His willing servants.

