

Live a life of

# Radical Generosity



**CHARIS**

Newsletter | October 2023

Charis Family,

Greetings to you all! Joy and I hope that you all had a blessed summer and were able to spend quality time with your families and friends. As school begins again and the cool air approaches, we can all appreciate the beautiful season of autumn and all the holidays that rapidly follow.

As I was drafting this newsletter, a strong emotion fell upon me concerning all of you; and I had to pause and thank God for how He built and structured this ministry. The support efforts received by many missionaries are confined to the boundaries of a denominational affiliation. Their funding and support come from a denominational board, or individual churches that exist within the denomination more independently. Therefore, in a vast majority of missionary work, denominational affiliation exists as the sole reasoning behind the support, prayers, and giving to missionaries. This creates a situation in which most missionaries have more of a relationship with a denomination than they do with the individuals that make up the churches that support them. I see this as both unfortunate and regrettable.

Joy and I LOVE the fact that when we see your names, or the name of a church that supports us, our minds immediately see each of you whom we know and have personally spoken to. We have also had the honor of spending time with many of you in your homes, at restaurants, and even in Haiti on mission trips—and the fact that we have these kinds of personal relationships with so many of you is just awesome! So when I begin each of these newsletters with the word, “Charis Family”, I really mean that—God has put this Kingdom-minded family of believers together to serve and glorify His Name through serving His people in Haiti—what a blessing and an honor.





## Henderson Family updates

Our summer was very busy with ministry and family. Ministry in Haiti gets more and more demanding and urgent as things just refuse to improve—I will discuss this more thoroughly below. Joy and I have also had a full schedule of traveling and meeting with people and churches here in the States, as we continue in our passion to give a voice to the voiceless through raising awareness about the current situation in Haiti and the plight of the Haitian people.

Additionally, our family dynamics have been chaotic due to the various schedules and needs of our children. The most exciting thing to happen this summer, if some of you have not yet heard, was that Joy and I became grandparents on August 12th when we welcomed little Koa Evan Riikola into the world! On that joyous day our oldest daughter Destinee, and her husband Reece, became the proud parents of Koa, who entered the world as a 10-pound 5 ounce, 22 inch long, baby boy!



They are happily living in Knoxville, Tennessee. We are so thankful that the Lord has blessed Destinee with 3 months of paid time off from her work as a nurse at the trauma center at the University of Tennessee emergency room. The maternal bond she is making with little Koa greatly blesses Joy and me to see.



Tiara is working as a 6th grade middle school teacher in a Chicago suburb and is really enjoying it. She is still planning to apply to PA (physician's assistant) school this January for the 2024 autumn start date, but we will see if this new role as junior high science teacher will tug at her heart enough to change her course—God knows, but we are praying for her discernment of God's will for her.

Ciaran feels called into missions, specifically Poland. The Lord blessed Ciaran with a trip to Poland over the summer with a mission team from a church that our friends attend. Ciaran felt greatly connected to the Polish people and was even offered a pastoral position at a rural church where the pastor was leaving. Ciaran politely declined saying that he needed more time in God's Word and prayer to help him discern the exact course that God has prepared for him. This did greatly excite him though and affirmed that God was indeed in this with him. Ciaran is now working a part time job to save up money to go to Poland again, and he is daily studying Scripture and spending long periods of time in prayer. It will be a great blessing to see where God places him in Poland and the timing surrounding it.



Lastly, Kanye is now 19 years old and a junior at UIC (University of Illinois at Chicago). He is in the pre-veterinary medicine program and is working at the Medical District Veterinary Clinic that is part of the UIC system. His boss is on staff at the University of Illinois Veterinary School (currently the 15th ranked vet school in the country), where he teaches anatomy. So, God has really blessed Kanye with this job where his boss has a lot of influence at the vet school that he wants to attend. If he does well academically this semester, he can apply to Vet school at the end of this year and enter Vet school in the fall, foregoing his senior year of undergraduate work. We will see what God has in store for Kanye and his inherent love of animals.





## Acting in brotherly love

Several weeks ago, I wrote and mailed a letter to all of you concerning the great need in Haiti, and I just want to thank you all for your loving and generous response. Your continual benevolence toward the Haitian people brings my mind to Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 8:14a which reads, "at the present time your surplus is available for their need." God has blessed us all so greatly in America. Many of us do not even truly know what it means to be starving. Your willingness to share your blessings with those who cannot provide for themselves is the Biblical definition of godly. In 1 Peter 1:7 we learn that godliness precedes brotherly love. Claiming brotherly love is a very different thing than acting in brotherly love, and you all have done just that—ACTED in brotherly love toward your Haitian brothers and sisters. I want to thank you on behalf of all the Haitians who continually ask us to thank all of you for aiding them in their despair and hunger.

With your help, we were able to purchase thousands of dollars' worth of food to fully stock our food depot. Pastor Abony (our main pastor who oversees all our churches) and his wife were able to effectively oversee the purchasing, storing, and distributing of food. They made sure that the food was distributed to those who were in the most need. Single mothers and their children are especially affected by hunger and potential starvation, and getting to feed them is a blessing that transcends human expression. This kind of work makes your soul jump with joy, and I write this so that all of you can share in this too. With so much of today's human passion directed toward sinful lusts, it is a great blessing for Joy and me to work with all of you whose passions are directed in the heavenly direction as we all share the passion of serving our fellow man.



## The blessing of Sano's son

I wanted to give you an update that hopefully blesses you as greatly as it blesses Joy and me. Last year we presented you all with the story of Sano and his wife. Sano's wife was pregnant at a time when every hospital and clinic were closed due to the extreme danger and gang activity that was occurring at that time. We told you about this, and several other issues that were affecting Haiti at that time, and you all responded wonderfully. Sano's wife went into labor and Sano miraculously found a doctor who was willing to deliver her in his upstairs apartment that functioned as a makeshift clinic. The support, both medically and financially, was immediately provided for the emergency c-section delivery, blood transfusion and the antibiotics to treat the mother's abdominal wound infection that ensued weeks after, as well as the 4 weeks of oxygen for their premature baby. We just received photos of this beautiful little boy, and I wanted to share one of these photos with you. As you look into the eyes of this little one in the photo, just know that he and his mother are alive because of all of you, and I can't think of anything more honoring and rewarding than this—the gift of life that was almost snatched away due to poverty. What an absolute blessing you have been to this boy, his family, and this ministry—Thank You!!



## Medical clinic now open all night long

Additionally, with your giving, we were able to purchase thousands of dollars of medication. We were also able to bring additional beds into the clinic to help serve more patients. As I stated in the letter, cholera is ravaging the Haitians right now. While it is easy to treat, the treatment must be administered in a timely fashion, and this frequently requires overnight stays to ensure proper treatment and response to the treatment. With your giving we also purchased solar panels for the clinic, enabling indoor/outdoor lighting and power to remain open all night.

Dr. Job and Evania (who run the clinic), called us and asked if we could help them remain open all night to best serve the community. So now, I am proud to say that our clinic is the only center offering medical care throughout the night. Every other clinic and hospital in our area is closed all night, and before we opened for 24 hours there was no option for medical care from 10 PM to 6 AM. You all have provided our area with an incredible blessing, and all our nurses, Dr. Job, and Dr. Evania greatly thank all of you.



## The Charis ministry is strong

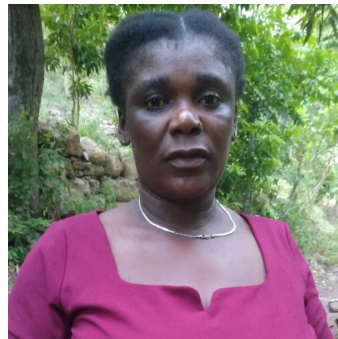
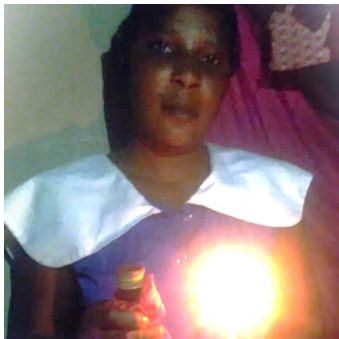
From a spiritual standpoint the ministry continues to powerfully grow despite the devil's best efforts to thwart all Christian ministry efforts in Haiti. God has greatly blessed us with some strong and fearless leaders, who don't back down from ministry even when the social climate makes ministry potentially dangerous—even life-threatening. When I think of our pastors, leaders, and evangelists traversing through the mountains and engaging in both the spiritual battle against vodou demons, and the physical danger surrounding the brutality and evil of the gangs, I frequently remind our Haitian leaders of the Apostle Paul who, in an especially difficult time in his ministry, received these words from God.

*“And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are My people.’” –Acts 18:9-10*

We currently have 2 divisions of evangelists going out to share the gospel every week. The first group travels into villages to share the gospel with the general population of people. Over this last weekend (that included the first Sunday in October), we received word that 22 people gave their lives to Christ following the efforts of our evangelism team. These 22 new believers were in a village named Barak. I have personally traveled to Barak and it was the most difficult trip I have ever made. After 5 hours going up the mountain on motorcycles the road ends and you must walk an additional 2 hours to get there. I am so proud of our team that is willing to traverse these difficult paths, after which they are extremely fatigued physically, fueled by their love for the people in these villages who they want so badly to be saved.

Our second team of evangelists focuses only on the vodou priests and priestesses that reside in the villages being evangelized. This team is made up of ex-vodou priests and priestesses who have been saved and in whom the evidence of a new creation in Christ is undeniably evident. The testimonies of these men and women is beyond inspirational, and strongly shows that no one is beyond the reach of God's mercy and salvation!

In the last month we have had a vodou priestess, named Mona Celestin, and a vodou priest, named Wilner Jean Jaques, both saved out of vodou bondage. Our team informs us that they are continuing to evangelize multiple vodou priests who are open to Christianity but because of fear and uncertainty have not yet committed to God through Christ—so please join us in praying for these individuals.



## Haitian leaders teach the Bible

As many of you know we have multiple Bible studies throughout our communities that meet weekly. This is probably the thing I miss most—weekly teaching the new Christians in Haiti about the Christian life and how to live it according to the Bible. With that said though, I am SO very proud of our Haitian leaders who continue to hold and lead these Bible studies. These studies are absolutely critical for our churches in Haiti as life there presents constant temptations due to the reality of ongoing poverty, hunger, and sickness. Succumbing to these temptations will lead to sin. Therefore, these mid-week Bible studies are the foundation of the ongoing sanctification (progression to live and think more like Christ) process within the hearts and minds of the Christians in Haiti. Our leaders report to us that just this last week 2 members of Latigue’s community were saved at the Bible study that meets weekly at his house (led by Pastor Gary). There have been dozens of additional salvations that occurred at the Bible studies



at our church in Jacmel, and in 4 of our many mountain community churches (specifically in La Montai, Corail, Ka Serin, and Te Rouge). Please join us is praying for the teachers and leaders that oversee the Bible studies—that the power of their Biblical teaching and gospel presentations be, not from themselves, but rather from the power of the Holy Spirit.

## Expanding the Kingdom of Christ

These evangelists, pastors, leaders, and Christian brothers and sisters in Haiti are such an inspiration to Joy and me. It is an honor to witness their absolute commitment to expanding the Kingdom of Christ. As I consider the lives and passion of these Haitian leaders it makes me think—isn’t it interesting that Christianity expands the fastest when the social/cultural conditions are the most difficult? Areas where suffering, poverty, danger, and persecution of the Christian Church exist are the areas of the world where Christianity is growing the fastest. Conversely, security, comfort, wealth, and religious freedom appear to be the greatest hindrances to the growth of Christianity. So why this seeming paradox?



The answer is simple really, and it deals with the flesh—our physical, material self—as opposed to our spiritual, non-material selves. The Bible tells us that the flesh and the spirit exist in complete opposition to one another, and feeding one means the starving of the other. You can’t feed both the flesh and the spirit at the same time as they require very different diets. If we live in an environment that coddles and feeds our physical being, then our spirits will at the worst be wasted away, and at the best be underdeveloped. However, if we live in environments that offer no benefit to our physical selves, then our physical lack, or suffering, will result in a focus on spiritual things that offer a transcendence over the physical.

This is why you commonly see members of developing, impoverished countries living lives that focus heavily on religion and the spiritual realm. One thing I find fascinating in Haiti is that you don’t have to try to convince anyone that the spiritual realm, including God and Satan, are real. In fact, they would consider you a fool if you didn’t believe in their existence, and for this reason there isn’t even a word for atheist in



the Creole language. America, on the other hand, is full of atheists who will tell you that God, Satan, and spirits don't exist. The reason that this is the case in America is that our physical existence is so catered to and embraced, that the thought of a spiritual reality that wants to impose any form of dictation upon our lives in the physical world is considered as an unwelcome and unwanted threat to our comfort and pleasure-seeking autonomy. This internal civil war not only continues to exist after we are saved, but it intensifies.

## Internal war

The internal war that exists within Christians also exists in non-believers. In their case, however, the flesh reigns supreme because non-believers don't have the Holy Spirit within them. In spite of this, the truth remains that all humans are born in the image of God with the 'fingerprint' of God on them, imprinted on the conscience. This is why morality is constant (for the most part) throughout the world irrespective of religion, ethnicity, and social rank. Things like adultery, murder, lying, stealing, etc. are universally considered as wrong. Every human is born in the image of God and this endows us all with a sense of right and wrong. However, image bearing does not equate to salvation. Once we are saved, the Holy Spirit enters us and now, according to 1 Corinthians 2:16b, "we have the mind of Christ." The Mind of Christ stands in complete and powerful opposition to the mind of our flesh. Our flesh desires carnal pleasures, while the Holy Spirit desires purity. We see this inherent opposition revealed in Scripture frequently:

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*"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do."* –Galatians 5:16-17

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*"For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."* –Romans 8:6

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While it is true that the poor and suffering in this world desire carnal pleasures too, there is a difference between their desires and ours. We can, most of the time, satisfy our desires with little effort, but the poor, while they want and desire many of the same things that we do, because of lack of wealth, education, opportunity, and health, cannot ensure the fulfillment of their desires like we can. This results in an interesting dichotomy that exists between the 'rich' and the 'poor'. Our ability in America to ensure the fulfillment of our desires results in a voracious carnal appetite that is never quenched.

As soon as we satisfy a desire of ours, the subsequent euphoria is short-lived, and the excitement and anticipation that was attached to the pursuit is quickly quenched. Therefore immediately, in an effort to experience the same euphoria, we begin a new pursuit for the next more exciting, and frequently more excessive and perverse, desire.

This is illustrated perfectly in celebrities. When the status, power, and wealth of a celebrity is considered, anything they desire they can most likely have. When the normal gets boring, to maintain the euphoric excitement they've grown accustomed to, they must enter the realm of all things excessive, abnormal, strange, and perverse. This is not normal behavior, but when the normal can be easily attained then it is no longer exciting, and the insatiable nature of the flesh must be fed and excited. Therefore, deeper, and deeper excess, perversion, and debauchery is engaged in.

The poor, on the other hand, due to their inability to fulfill their desires, experience frustration at the continual failure of their carnal pursuits, and this progressively leads to depression and hopelessness as the flame of hope that burns in their hearts is slowly, but surely, extinguished. When the flesh cannot be satisfied, the hopeless individual will desire hope, and we know that hope comes through faith in Jesus Christ. The poor are open to this hope more than the rich who aren't necessarily seeking something they don't feel they really need. I strongly believe this is why we see Jesus and James say the same thing concerning the poor and their receptivity of the gospel through faith:

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*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor."*  
–Luke 4:18a

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*"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

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Through studying the Bible, we learn that the poor have been given the gift of being rich in faith. This truth lies in juxtaposition to another truth, and to reveal this additional truth we need to pose and answer a simple question: What does faith in Christ result in? It results in salvation, and when we understand this, it can be clearly stated that the rich faith of the poor results in high receptivity of the gospel message. Thus, the poor will hear the gospel, believe it, and be saved to a greater degree than the 'rich' will. This is consistent with the words of Jesus.

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*"Only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of God. Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God"* –Matthew 19:23-24

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The Bible also contains many words of truth and wisdom concerning the rich, but we will focus on Paul's words to Timothy in his first letter written to his young 'son in the faith':

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*“As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”*  
–1 Timothy 6:17-19

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We must understand that we, as Americans, are the rich of this world, in a relative sense, and therefore this verse is speaking to us. We are instructed in this passage to not put our hope in riches, to be rich in good works, to be generous and sharing. In doing this we will take hold of what is really life. If we meditate upon this instruction, we can see that we, as the rich of the world, will only know that which is really life if we are generous and share, not making money our idol of hope. What we then see in Scripture is how God deals with the issues surrounding the poor and the rich. God, in His Sovereignty and perfection has chosen to give the poor a GIFT (faith), and the rich INSTRUCTION (share and be generous). This leaves us with a profound and awesome truth concerning poor and rich Christians.

The poor Christian has been gifted with an abundance of faith, which he/she surely needs in order to endure a life of constant difficulties. When the poor man cannot eat, cannot find clean water, cannot see a doctor, or receive medical/surgical treatment, etc. he must turn to prayer, praying in faith that God hears him and will sustain him irrespective of the seeming hopelessness of the situation. Following his prayer, the poor man must look for God’s answers and wait.

The rich Christian has been commanded to share with a heart of generosity. This creates a life in which the sanctified rich Christian, seeking to please the Lord, will continually be praying and both looking and asking for opportunities in which he can practice obedience to this command. If both poor and rich are living in this way—a way that honors Christ, then the reciprocated blessings that result are simply beautiful—let me briefly explain.

## Our center and foundation

Christ is the cornerstone and foundation of our faith. Everything in our Christian life orbits Christ as He is the center and foundation of our hope, life, salvation, justification, adoption, sanctification, and our eventual glorification in heaven, and this truth is displayed

perfectly here. The poor Christian man (or woman or child) who is suffering in diverse ways, will please God through putting his faith in God and asking Him to provide and relieve his hunger, thirst, sickness, nakedness, etc. When God observes this, how does He most frequently answer his son who is poor in this world? Does God make food fall from the sky, does He instantaneously cure the sickness that is ravaging the body, does He touch a body of water and purify it? While God could do any of these things, this is not the way that He generally chooses to provide an answer to the poor brother or sister’s prayer.

What God most commonly does is touch the heart of one of His sons or daughters who has much in this world, giving the wealthy brother or sister the honorable opportunity to serve as His answer to the brother’s prayer who has less. The positive response to God’s pricking of the rich man’s heart will greatly please God because through this action the rich man is living as the Bible instructs. If the poor and rich live in awareness and obedience to Scripture, then they both are honored with seeing Christ. The poor man, knowing what he has asked for in prayer and now looking for God to respond, will undoubtedly see you and I as Christ’s answer to his prayer when we come to the poor man’s aid—so our decision to meet the need(s) of the poor Christian brother or sister, allows us to represent Christ to the poor. On the other hand, Christ tells us in the Bible that “whatever you do for the least of these brothers of Mine, you do for Me.” When we, as the rich in the world, help the poor in this world, then Jesus told us that we are doing it for Him. This allows us to see Christ in and through the poor—only when we are coming to their aid. Both the poor and the rich get the blessing of seeing and experiencing Christ when we stay true to the Biblical instructions given to both of us—to pray and ask in faith, and to share generously, respectively.

## Live generously

I want to thank all of you for being the generous, sharing Christians that I talk about above. Let’s all continue to generously share all that God has given us and allow the Biblical truth to continue to guide us in this endeavor. That truth being that God identifies Himself with the poor and allows us to see Him in the poor. We give to Him through giving to the poor. We glorify Him as we show a materialistic, non-saved world that this world and its offerings do not control us, rather the Spirit of Jesus Christ within us does, and compels us to generously share with those in need. We love you all and thank you so very much for putting your love for the Haitian people on display through your generous prayers and support! Let’s continue in this ministry together and always remember that generosity and sharing will allow us to, “take hold of that which is truly life!”

## 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.