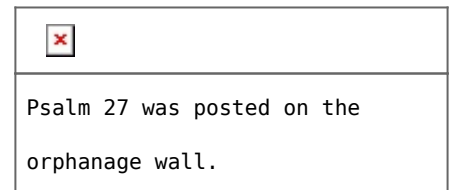


Uncommon Courage During Haiti's Crisis

How

a Pennsylvania pastor led a four-man team into the quake zone in Port-au-Prince to save a handful of orphans.



At

the Rescue Children Orphanage in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, a small sign was hanging on one of the building's concrete walls on Jan. 12, the day the city was leveled by a devastating earthquake. It was a verse from Psalm 27, written in English and Creole: "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me."

Those

words have rich meaning today, not only to the 11 children in that orphanage who survived the quake but to Randy Landis, a charismatic pastor from Allentown, Pa., who helped lead a dangerous search-and-rescue mission when he learned about the calamity. He knew the children had survived the quake, but when phones went dead he had no idea if they had food, water or protection from falling debris. So Landis and a small team of men from Lifechurch of Allentown

sprang into action.

“At one point I cried for 45 minutes. I just felt I wanted to do more than I could do to help.”—Pastor Randy Landis

While most Americans were still learning the facts about the disaster, the men packed 400 pounds of medical supplies, said goodbye to their families and caught a flight to the Dominican Republic. Two photographers from MSNBC tagged along.

Landis told those reporters: “I don’t think Jesus would be in America sitting and watching television. If He had a way to get to Port-au-Prince, He would get there. He would be a first-responder.”



These are
the 11
children
who
survived
Haiti's
earthquake
after the
Rescue
Children's
Orphanage
was
damaged.

The

odds of this ragtag team actually getting into the quake zone were not good, but a string of miracles made it possible. On the flight to Santo Domingo, the guys met an Haitian doctor who knew key people in the Haitian embassy. When they arrived in the Dominican Republic and went to the embassy, they were ushered past lines of people and into an official's office. He promised safe passage through the border into Haiti.

The

men rented a vehicle and loaded it with tents, gasoline, potatoes, bananas, vegetable oil and other supplies, and then drove more than four hours on rough roads until they arrived at the orphanage.

When

they pulled up in front of the building they found the children and four adult workers sleeping in a courtyard under the stars. The

compound's walls had collapsed, and the 7-bedroom structure was cracked and uninhabitable. The men called out the names of every child to make sure they had survived.

All the kids were accounted for. There had been no casualties.

Landis tried not to cry in front of the kids, but he's been shedding lots of tears since that emotional reunion. "I haven't cried that hard since my daughter was born with Down syndrome," Randy told me last week. "At one point I cried for 45 minutes. I just felt I wanted to do more than I could do to help."

Each day after the quake, things grew more volatile because people in the area were without food, water and electricity. Up to 100 people a day came to the orphanage seeking help. Sometimes they simply wanted to recharge their cell phones so they could try to call missing relatives.

"We were about to run out of food," Landis said. "And at one point there was another 4.5 aftershock."



This Haitian boy is all smiles after the Life Church team arrived from the U.S. to aid the Rescue Children Orphanage.

It

soon became obvious that the men could not keep the children at the Rescue facility, which Lifechurch had started operating in 2009. Through another series of small miracles, Landis learned about an orphanage operated by the Tampa-based Love a Child organization in the town of Fond Parisien. He soon got approval to transfer the orphans from Rescue to the Love a Child facility.

Said

Landis: "Our kids were a little apprehensive when we drove into the Love a Child compound. It had horses and swing sets. But then all 70 of the Love a Child orphans came out to greet us. They started embracing everyone."

Landis

actually went back to the damaged Rescue orphanage and set up a makeshift relief center that is still being used today to treat victims of the quake. In fact, it has been tagged by the United Nations as a designated "safe place."

The Rescue facility has been compromised structurally, but Landis is already making plans to build a new orphanage for his kids. He came

home last week for
a few days but is planning to go back to Haiti on Feb. 11.

Meanwhile
the children from Rescue Orphanage are reminded daily of the
promise from Psalm
27:10 that used to hang in their former home. When everything
around them
shook, and even their national palace crumbled, the Lord gave
these Haitian
children a future and a hope.

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to Lifechurch's
work with Rescue Orphanage in Haiti, go to .