

## COULD INSPIRING MORE “WE DID IT” STORIES HELP BREAK THE DEPENDENCY MINDSET?

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/ Dan Carl (BPS, Bellevue University, Bellevue, NE) is co-founder of International Living Stone Ministries and lived and worked as a full time missionary in Haiti for 10 years. He is currently working with World Mission Associates to inspire a movement towards local sustainable ministry in Haiti. He lives with his family in Omaha, NE and seeks dialogue with missionaries, Haitian leaders and organizations that are interested in exploring answers to the question, “How can we share Christ in Haiti without sharing a culture of dependency?” Dan travels to Haiti regularly and by invitation. (see [livingstonehaiti.com](http://livingstonehaiti.com) and [wmausa.org](http://wmausa.org))

**D**uring my 10 years in Haiti I was involved in numerous construction projects. On one occasion, I arrived a few days in advance of a larger team to finalize the foundation for a church school which was being 100% financed with US dollars.

Although the local church had participated in the demolition of the old earthquake damaged building, they had yet to contribute even a small amount of money. Thinking I would further inspire local participation, I suggested the pastor take an offering from the church to help offset some of the costs of serving lunch to the workers. Although an offering was taken, no one from the church congregation gave any money.

When I asked the pastor, “Why?” I was told, “It’s because the people see you are an American missionary. They know you always have enough money to pay for everything. Therefore, they don’t give.” Besides feeling hurt and disappointed, I remember asking myself, “What would this congregation have done if we Americans had never

contributed to their school?”

This past February, a Haitian friend of mine helped answer my hypothetical question while we were co-conducting a symposium in Haiti centered around the theme, “What is the current state of the Haitian National Church?” Valery Vital-Herne, a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation pastor and the Country Director for Micah Challenge said:

The Haitian Church is a dependent church and a church full of initiative. How can a church be dependent and at the same time full of initiative? The Haitian Church is a poor church and a rich church at the same time.

We’ve been receiving missionaries for years—Missionaries investing in education, investing in orphanages, investing in building churches, investing in everything. The result in part is having dependent churches, dependent church leaders who said, “To build the next school we need to have a *blan*.” (foreigner) “We need a *blan*! We need someone from the United States.”

But at the same time, when those churches receive a “No No!” from a *blan*, or have struggled to find a white missionary, when they don’t

find that white missionary, guess what? Years later you find a big building. And those pastors will tell you proudly, “We did it! We searched for international help. We didn’t find it. So, we told the church, ‘We serve a big God. Let’s put our hands together and let’s build that.’”

And you feel a sense of pride and a sense of ownership. That’s why I said, at the same time, the Haitian church is a dependent church. That dependency mindset is still there. But when they don’t find it, they work together and start schools and start churches. Some of the big buildings you see downtown or in Delmas are debt free, paid for only by Haitians.<sup>1</sup>

Why is being able to say, “We did it,” really important? As Valery shared about Haitian churches saying, “We did it” and “the sense of pride and sense of ownership” that pastors and their congregations experience through trusting in a big God, I was reminded of a couple of important principles.

The first is local dependence on God. In Revelation chapters 2 & 3, we learn that the Lord is watching each local church to see how well

it utilizes the gifts and resources he has entrusted to it directly. Zambian missionary Dwight Kopp says, "If this were not so, Jesus would not have written seven separate letters to the churches in Revelation. Instead one letter could have been sufficient—blaming them all for the sin in the church of Sardis."<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, he multiplies "few" resources into "many" resources based on faithfulness (Mat 25:21) and according to the power of the Holy Spirit at work within a community of believers. (Eph 3:20)

With these in mind, could it be

that when we as Westerners give towards church building projects in a foreign land, that along with creating dependency on us, we are actually hindering that local congregation's intimate trusting relationship with God? How often do we unintentionally bypass God's process of maturing faith and steal the real blessings of "satisfaction" and "sense of ownership" God wants to instill in every local church? Instead of writing more checks to building projects, I'd like to suggest we look for ways to inspire more "We did it!" stories. ☺

<sup>1</sup> Vital-Herne, Valery, 2013, audio transcription from presentation, "Ten Characteristics of the Haitian National Church", [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqd7WhJS7II](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqd7WhJS7II)

<sup>2</sup> *Awake Africa!!!*, Dwight Kopp, Feb 19, 2006. Copyright (c) 2005 Evangelism and Missions Information Service (EMIS)

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**THE CHURCH WAS BURNED. NOTHING WAS LEFT.**

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