



Bobby & Sherry Burnette
Your Missionaries in Haiti

Thanksgiving in Haiti...



“Seven-year-old Darline had made the dangerous trek along the path to the ravine many times... but this time it was very different.”

Shoe Soles for Door Hinges

The morning sun began to shine through the cracks in the old wooden door. Seven-year-old Darline knew it was time to get up. Each night, she slept on a **straw mat** that laid on the ground inside her family's hut with four other siblings curled up beside her. As she opened the door that morning, it made a squeaking sound. The door was fastened together with the **soles of her father's old shoes** and a few nails that were used as “hinges.” Each time she opened the door and saw those “shoe hinges” she thought about **her father** and **how much she missed him**.

The Haitian village of Chappell was nearly **6,000 feet high up** in the mountains. Darline's father had tried hard for years to grow a garden. His hands had been cracked and bleeding and calluses had formed from the grueling work. The **soil was poor and full of rocks, and there was very little rain**.

Kwashiorkor... the Giant Vulture

Darline looked back at her little sister, Nachadine, who was four and her brother Benson, who was five. They were both still asleep. She loved Benson the most. Three years ago, Darline and little Benson suffered from severe **Kwashiorkor malnutrition**. Someone once said, “**Starvation flies over Haiti like a giant vulture, looking for its prey.**”

The **Kwashiorkor malnutrition** had come from eating a diet of only rice and corn. There had never been a chicken to eat that Darline could remember, nor eggs, milk, or beans... just corn and rice. Their little bodies had swollen so badly from the retained fluid, and **their arms began to split open from the severe swelling**.

Darline's mother and father had carried both her and Benson down the mountain to a mission clinic, where they stayed for a long time. Darline's father had told her that she and her brother were little “miracles,” so Darline had always felt especially close to Benson.

A Six-Year-Old and an Open Fire

Juline, Darline's other little sister, was **just six** and had **already learned how to cook over an open fire**. Juline would gather three big rocks, carry them inside to one of the other rooms of their mud hut, and place them together on the ground. Then, she would put some small sticks under them and light the fire. Squatting down, she would gently blow until the fire started.

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Thanksgiving in Haiti...

A Sick Mother

The children's mother, Madamn Eliana, was very sick with asthma and a respiratory infection. Little did she know that all the years of **breathing in the charcoal smoke** from inside their hot, tiny mud hut, was just like smoking "two packs of cigarettes a day."

In the corner of their hut was an old mattress stuffed with dirty clothes. It was propped up on blocks. Darline's mother would sit on the edge of the mattress and **struggle for each breath she took**. She was extremely weak and sick all the time. She was not able to work.

A Dirty Sack and a Handful of Rice

Today, Juline would cook the handful of rice that was left in the **dirty, torn sack** lying in the corner of the hut. When the little bit of rice was cooked, Madamn Eliana would ration it out, **putting some in each child's hand**. Many times, **there was not enough to go around**, so Darline and her older brother Chener **would not eat**. They would suffer in silence **so their younger siblings could be fed**.

Chener had **just turned eleven** and was now the "**man of the house**." He was trying to earn a little money by caring for four "scraggly-looking sheep" that belonged to another man who lived in the village. Each day, Chener had **to walk very far** to get the sheep and then, **walk even further** to try to find a little grass for them in the dry, rocky ground. He worked all day, taking care of the four sheep for just pennies. **It was hardly enough to buy food for everyone**.

The Ravine... a Four-Hour Walk

It was Darline's job to go to the ravine each day to fetch water. The ground was dry and all the cisterns were empty. It was a **four-hour walk** to get the water and come back. The trail that ran along the ravine was **very steep**. At times, it was so narrow that Darline only had room to put "one foot in front of the other." When she took a step, rocks would fall off the sides of the mountain to thousands of feet below.

If that wasn't bad enough, above her were **towering mountains** and **rocks would always fall down** from them too. The path leading down into the ravine was so steep that **Darline could not walk down it**. She had to "sit" on the ground and scoot down the mountain with her plastic bucket in her hand. Oftentimes, **grown men and women had fallen down into the ravine** and gotten hurt or killed. Here, was a little seven-year-old girl doing such a dangerous task that even adults dreaded.

A Little Girl, a Large Bucket of Water, and a Treacherous Mountain

Darline **was bare-footed**. She was more concerned about her bucket than she was about stepping on rocks, or a piece of glass, or a rusty tin can. If she dropped her bucket into the ravine, she would lose "five gallons of precious water." **Darline was hungry, tired and extremely weak**.

Carefully, she **slid and scooted down the steep ravine** to where the water was and filled up her bucket. Then, she began the trek back up the mountain carrying the heavy bucket of water. All of **this was done on an "empty stomach"**. The bucket of water was so heavy that **Darline's little arms and hands trembled and shook as she climbed straight up**. She held the bucket with one hand and used the other to hold onto small tree stumps, thorny trees, or bushes. During this struggle, she was always careful not to spill or drop the bucket of water.

Thanksgiving in Haiti...

Darline was just about half way up, and as the sun began beating down on her, **she became covered in sweat.** She was reaching for a small, dried tree stump when her feet began to slip out from under her. **Darline's face filled with fear.** She either had to let go of the bucket of water, **or she would fall down into the ravine to her death.**

Desperately crying and shaking, the little girl **grasped with all her strength** onto the small, dried tree stump as her fingers **let go of the heavy bucket of water.** It tumbled far down below her and into the ravine. **It was gone, forever.**

A Little Girl and a Long Journey Home

As Darline finally made it over the edge of the cliff and onto the dirt path, she sat down with her head between her knees and her hands covering her sweating face, still **stained with tears.** This would have been stressful even for an adult, but for a poor child in Haiti, it was almost unbearable. No adult could have made this dangerous trip on an empty stomach, let alone a tiny little girl who earlier had almost died from malnutrition.

Darline's trip home was a long one. Now, there was not only no water, but there **was no food left in the sack in the corner of the hut.** They would need to wait for Chener to return from taking care of the four "skinny sheep." Maybe he would have **a few dollars to try to buy rice or some bread for the family.** How sad... **this is the only "Thanksgiving" that Darline and her family will have.**

While God has blessed our children so much in the states with iPads, game boards, expensive clothing, and tennis shoes costing several hundred dollars, as well as with large, Thanksgiving Dinners with our wonderful families, it is so difficult for us to comprehend what children go through **"just an hour and forty-five minutes away by plane" from Miami.**

In Luke Chapter 10, a rich, young ruler asked Jesus this question, **"Who is my neighbor?"** And Jesus told the story of the poor man who was robbed, beaten, hungry and abandoned on the road all while the religious leaders **"passed by on the other side."** It was the Samaritan who eventually helped him.

Jesus said, **"They are our neighbors."** You have never met Darline, but now, we have shared her story with you. **Darline is your neighbor and she needs your help, right now.**

The Lord has blessed us to be able to receive containers of a nutritious mixture of food donated by Feed My Starving Children. The food is made especially for weak and malnourished children such as Darline. Darline has struggled all her life with poor health, but now we can feed her, her entire village, and children just like her, with your help. The "meals" are in Minnesota, **but we need them brought to Haiti, released from Customs, and transported to our Love A Child warehouse.**

In the early days, we used to have to go downtown and spend days buying tons of beans, rice, cooking oil, spaghetti, etc. Today, **this is now the fastest way that we can feed thousands** of children like Darline, her family and the children living in her village, who are also sadly suffering from hunger. But, **we need you to be the "lifeline" between the food and these children.** The Lord is speaking to you, right now, through this letter that you are holding in your hands.

Here's how you can help us move this food from Minnesota to Miami, then across the ocean by boat to Haiti, out of Customs, and finally to us here at Love A Child. **The easy part is "giving." We are going to give you several gift amounts. Then, tell you several ways to get your "Thanksgiving Gift" to us quickly.**

Thanksgiving in Haiti...

Please pray about giving one of these food amounts:

Your gift of **any amount, large or small** is desperately needed to help feed the children that we tell you about in our stories each month. If you have it in your heart to tithe to the poor, you can provide **648 hot meals** for children for just \$24, or **1,296 meals** for \$48. If you could sacrifice **\$120**, it would provide **3,240 meals** for children. If the Lord has blessed you in some way, a gift of **\$500** would provide **13,500 meals**. **The widow's mite is important and every penny counts to a hungry child.** Your precious gift will not only help us feed hungry children but also help keep all other outreaches of Love A Child going.

Nothing touches the heart of God as much as giving to the poor. (**Psalm 41:1-3**) The Lord told Cornelius that his prayers and **"alms giving"** to the poor had come up before the Lord as a "memorial." Cornelius had the Lord's attention because he gave to the poor.

Darline, and so many children just like her, **will have nothing to eat this Thanksgiving Day**, unless someone like you "listens with their heart" to the still, small voice of the Lord. **Please listen, pray, and give today.** Children are depending on you. Please don't "pass by them on the other side," because **if we do nothing, they will die.** This Thanksgiving Day, please bow your head and ask the Lord to continue to send food to those like Darline and her family.

Bobby and Sherry Burnette

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P.S. Thank you for helping us feed the hungry children. When you give, we are going to send you a special picture that is sure to touch your heart. God bless you from Haiti, and God bless your Thanksgiving unto the Lord!

You can give your gift online today at: www.LoveAChild.com



Love A Child is a 501(c)(3) non-profit Christian Humanitarian organization serving the needs of children in Haiti. In addition to being a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), Love A Child has earned the Independent Charities of America "Best in America" Seal of Approval and eleven consecutive Four-Star ratings from Charity Navigator.

2013 Financial Statement:

- Haiti Outreaches
- Fundraising
- Administrative

