



1 Kings 19!

I re-read the emails from our friend, Tony, in Bangladesh, and feel his frustration as he tries to work within a third world culture to care for a small group of people. I also feel the frustration his friends and family express when he fears coming home and leaving them alone. For those who do not “live” with poverty, I believe it is near impossible to appreciate the complex issues of trying to “make a difference” even in the lives of one small group. Joe and I are seen as the “great white hope” by many on the south side of La Gonave, and give thanks we have each other for balance and support.

This morning I read, 1Kings 19 where God asks Elijah, “What are you doing here?” An appropriate question to ask myself. What are we doing here? A quick answer? Adding complications to an already complicated situation!

When nearly every person on the island is hungry, how do we offer food to a few poor and old, starving?

When the majority does not have money for tuition for their children how do we provide a few scholarships?

When there is only motorcycle transportation that none can afford how do we send anyone to the doctor?

When a small bag of rice costs more than a fisherman can sell his fish for, how does he feed his family?

When it does not rain and the melons rot; when charcoal is shipped to the mainland and must be sold for less than the shipping cost; when bright young adults use all their money to buy shoes or cloths required for church or school how do they go to school?

When a young women having seizures is unconscious and treatment is a sailboat ride away and the boat does not leave until tomorrow afternoon, and if we give them money but it isn't enough, why not take her home, and let her die in 5 days?

When the church holds a conference and we are asked to donate food, fuel and transportation, and 10 people stand at our door begging for money to feed the baby, or grandma or the wife, who do we tell, “no?”

When the schools do not pay teachers because tuitions are unpaid, and tuition for students in 9 schools (at less than 50.00 a year) is over \$81,000.00 US, why not just close all the schools and play dominoes?

When the national “ethic” is “I’m just asking for me, not everyone” how is food distributed to everyone? Or work? Or medicine? Or education? Or shelter? Or shoes?

When the history of a people has been repeated for centuries and the benevolent programs get sucked up and lost by poor or improper management AND there is only minimal communication and transportation, how does one couple; one conference; one task force offer anything without complicating life for those, “left out?”

When we go to bed with more questions than answers and ideas; how do we answer, “What are you doing here?”

With every move we make to help one or some, others are left out. I go to the stand in town to purchase a coke and feel I must hide it as I walk by the other retailers, because I can't buy from everyone.

So many are working in Haiti, Bangladesh, and Africa to help people get to the first rung of the economic ladder yet millions more are hungry, sick, uneducated, out of touch, out in the rain, out of water, and God says, “what are you doing here.”

My only answer is, “I haven't a clue, but, I'm here.”

Shirley, La Gonave, Aug 6, 2008