

I tend to be that person that finds a good thing and then runs with it. And never let's go.

I've had oatmeal for breakfast nearly every day for the past eight years. I've declared Harry Potter as my favorite books for equally as long. When I hear a new song and like it, I play it into oblivion, driving everyone in my house a little crazy until I too cannot remember why I originally liked it. The point is routine, more than variety, is my thing. So when, many years ago, there was some kind of event going on in Starr Hall, and I spotted a pair of hand crafted red heart hearings at the What in the World booth, a little voice sounded in my brain "Score! These are great, get these and we're set for life." I asked my mom if I could get them, she obliged and I've had them ever since. Over the years they have more and more become my favorite. In fact, like oatmeal and Harry Potter, they've almost become a part of me. A visual extension of my heart, if you will. I felt that just by wearing them I was proclaiming the Gospel of Love. This year I wore them every day from Thanksgiving through the time I left for Haiti. I had been warned to not wear any valuable jewelry on the trip, anything I'd be upset if I lost. I debated whether or not to wear them, especially after the back fell off one night on my way to Creole lessons. But, they were part of me, and I wanted to be able to communicate my love for all whom I encountered without any language barriers, so I wore them.

So, why am I telling you this seemingly trivial bit of information? Because I think the story that follows these earrings is a beautiful metaphor for my time in Haiti. I'm sure you know the old adage that goes "home is where the heart is." Well, on Wednesday evening during devotions, I went to go tuck a few stray hairs behind my ear, when I realized I was missing one of my hearts. And the "I couldn't have planned this better myself" part is that I don't precisely know when or where I lost it. Retracing my day, I've realized that there are more times than I can count in which it could've slipped off. You see, just like it's rather difficult to pinpoint the moment you fall in love, I find it

rather difficult to pinpoint the moment my heart—earring and otherwise---found itself at home in Haiti. Because that's what it felt like, a homecoming, a week filled with “as it should be” moments. The greatest moment of my week---the one that most likely both literally and figuratively took my heart---was the reception the kids offered us day after day after day.

We landed in Port Au Prince on Saturday afternoon, loaded onto the bus and made our way to My Father’s House (Orphanage.) As we entered the compound and approached the house, I saw we were greeted by all fifty-four orphans standing on the porch steps singing “Na-na-na-na-hey-hey-welcome-back” and carrying signs saying “Welcome Mr. Fronk” “Jesus Loves You” and things of the like. Then we got off the bus and all fifty-four of them rushed up to each of us for a hug and kiss. Being a big fan of the hug myself, I loved it, thinking to myself that this was a reception like none I had previously encountered. So imagine my surprise when we come back from Grace Children’s Hospital Monday afternoon and a bunch of the kids run up to the car—while we’re not even parked mind you---and are clamoring for a hug. Like multiple little children each wanting our attention. As Jordan Perrine aptly put it “I’m not an octopus you know.” I was *blown away*. They hardly knew us---we’d been there two days and it’d been almost twenty-four hours since we’d last seen them. Usually in that amount of time kids forget you. But they hadn’t. So buckle up now, cuz this is where it gets a little crazy. Tuesday evening, after a looooong day out and about at Wings of Hope, the Baptist Mission Complex, and more, we returned later than expected, about eight o’clock. I was a little bummed because I figured the kids had already eaten dinner and I’d missed my chance for the day to play with them. And here comes the crazy part; we’ve just past through the last gate, it’s dark out and I’m beginning to make out the orphanage’s silhouette, when suddenly I see a bunch of children *bounding* towards our still moving great yellow school bus. This time our friends didn’t wait for us to get off. Seriously. We had trouble getting off the bus because a crush of children was pushing themselves down the aisle to hug us. At this point I was like “blow me away with a feather”.

They didn't begrudge us for being late and keeping them from their dinner—they'd had to wait for us to eat first. They didn't care that we were sweaty and stunk to high heaven. They didn't care that we were rumpled and not too pretty. They didn't even care that we'd only been there five days and would be leaving in the next two. What I later referred to as our "Prodigal Son Welcome" occurred *every single time we returned*. The kids never treated us like old news. Their enthusiasm never waned. Through Manon, Rouben, Peterson, Jessica, Stevie, Jesula, James, and many others, through their capacity to love, I was literally experiencing God's love incarnate ---they showered me in loved like I have never experienced, which is saying something, because you'd be hard pressed to find a family more affectionate than my own. Because of them—through them—I experienced God's unconditional love. And can I just say, that it is completely out of this world and completely transformative and I am really struggling to put into words that which cannot be put into words? I mean, really. Just as my friends looked past appearance and late arrival God does not let our imperfections—our habits of becoming dejected, of losing faith, of hurting others, of making bad decisions—he doesn't let any of that get in the way of loving our socks off. Which is completely mind boggling and awesome. So I want to thank you all for your support of our trip to Haiti, and by extension, blessing me with the countless God-moments of that week. It is my prayer that you, too, may come to know and share the pure joy of God's love. Thank you.