

# Miracles and Church Growth

## Mark Mozambique Ministry

Through their Iris Ministries, Rolland and Heidi Baker have planted more than 5,000 churches

After nearly 10 years on the mission field in Mozambique, Americans Rolland and Heidi Baker say they've come to know of the love of God more keenly through the suffering orphans they minister to daily.

"The poor, the dying and the orphans we work with show us the face and heart of God every day. It's a face of incredible love," Heidi Baker said. "We're learning to be totally dependent on God, broken and humble."

Since starting Iris Ministries in 1995, she and her husband, Rolland, say they have seen the lame walk, the blind receive sight, the deaf gain hearing and even the dead raised to life. Explosive church growth of approximately 5,000 churches across Mozambique and into the neighboring nations of Malawi and South Africa, as well as 14 other countries around the globe has accompanied these miraculous signs and wonders.

"There's such desperation for Jesus in these countries," Heidi Baker told Charisma. "We go to where there aren't any other churches, into the darkness."

Currently the Bakers and their team care for 2,000 orphans living in two children's centers and in the "foster" homes of pastors and widows. Many of the children lost their parents to AIDS, the killer of an estimated 6,500 Africans a day.

Gitou was an AIDS orphan and a tough street kid when Heidi Baker met him. "He said he was 12, but he looked around 8. His heart was hardened, and he continued telling me off whenever I came near," she recalled. "But I just kept loving and loving Gitou until his heart melted. Now he preaches out on the street and leads many to the Lord."

Constancia was a scared little orphan girl of around 5 who was left on the steps of Iris Ministries' orphanage. "She didn't speak and couldn't communicate," Heidi Baker said. "The Lord just told me to chase her ... with His love. I'd chase her and hold her until she fell asleep in my arms."

"The same day Constancia was baptized, she began to speak and even asked to lead the choir. She told us then that she'd been mute since seeing her parents brutally murdered right in front of her."

Iris Ministries has three Bible schools operating in Mozambique, one in Malawi and another that is set to open soon in South Africa. They train local Christians who feel led to start churches—many of these churches are planted in remote areas of Mozambique where the gospel has never been heard.

The Bakers, who have two children of their own—Elisha, 21, and Crystalyn, 16—hope to see every pastor they train adopt between one and 10 orphans so they can demonstrate the fatherly love of God to the children. "We take such delight in training these pastors, in seeing their hearts set free from their life's disappointments and seeing them filled to overflowing with God's love," Rolland Baker said. "That love can't help but spill over to the children they adopt."

The Bakers say the key to all their fruitfulness lies in relinquishing complete control to God. They say it's a concept the Western church needs to learn in order to sow effective ministry throughout the earth.

Heidi Baker said that while visiting Toronto (Ontario) Airport Christian Fellowship God showed her "the paradigm of His upside-down kingdom. He had me stand upside-down on my head for 45 minutes while someone prophesied God was turning our ministry upside down to reflect His kingdom values."

The second key to fruitfulness, the couple says, is intimacy with God. "Revival breaks out when people are desperate for God. When they become intimate with Him and lose sight of themselves, then anything can happen," said Rolland Baker, whose late grandfather H.A. Baker was a missionary to orphaned children in China.

In the Bakers' book *Always Enough* (Chosen Books), they recount their adventures leading a ministry that has gained the attention of the president of Mozambique. He has personally met with Heidi Baker three times since 2002. "President Chissano and his government say the Christians are helping to reduce AIDS because a lot of people are getting married and staying faithful once they turn to Christ," Heidi Baker said.

Missiologist and researcher Justin Long said that the power of the Bakers' strategy is its potential to multiply the ministry's impact. "They are battling against injustice, poverty and fatherlessness, taking back ground from spiritual darkness," Long told *Charisma*. "They are proclaiming the gospel and being a blessing to the desperate.

“The test will be whether their spiritual children do the same thing. Success could be 2,000 little ‘Iris Ministries,’ each started by an orphan cared for by the Bakers, each in turn raising up a few thousand spiritual children of their would have a profound impact, indeed.”

**Josie Newman**