

Deaf Leading the Deaf to Jesus

In China, nearly 72 million people are denied access to  work, education and community, not because of race or gender but because of a disability. Many deaf Chinese turn to deaf-led gangs to find love and acceptance. But Hearts and Hands, a ministry based in Kunming, Yunnan, in southwest China, is working to be advocates for the deaf. Through the ministry the hearing-impaired learn Chinese sign language, as well as how to read, write and learn a trade. They also learn about Christ.

“The deaf Chinese are very open to the gospel because any disability is considered a curse,” says Jane Ramsey, a deaf American who taught English in China for 25 years and joined the ministry in 2004.

Hearts and Hands holds a training workshop in which embroidered items such as Bible covers, collectable dolls, pillows and quilts, and woodwork items are produced. The group also employs the Chinese deaf to operate a store and sell the items.

Ramsey, special-projects coordinator of Hearts and Hands, says the group gives those who are disabled hope for a better future and shows them their lives can still make an impact. She says she had to learn this lesson herself when she became partly deaf after the birth of her son in the 1970s, then legally deaf by the 1990s.

“God can use anybody who’s willing. I went through a real difficult time when I went totally deaf,” she says. “Now God has opened a door in deaf work where I’m accepted as one of them because I’m hearing-impaired.”

"My deafness was something I would have never thought could glorify God—and it has—and so I praise Him for it."

YOUR TURN

7 tips for ministering to disabled individuals:

1. Look into the person's eyes and smile. Don't stare at the impairment.
2. Reach out and touch the person. Refrain from patting him on the head as you would a child.
3. Speak to a blind person. Don't shout. He hears you.
4. Use a pen and paper to speak with a deaf person.
5. Communicate with a disabled person as you would with anyone else.
6. Invite the person to church and ask how you and your congregation might make his visit a positive experience.
7. Visit the person in his home; this will show you the needs of his family.

—Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization