

The Bravest Woman I've Ever Met

Pentecostals get a bad rap these days from all sides. Secularists don't like us because we are morally conservative. Some mainline Christians classify us as holy rollers. And fundamentalists like John MacArthur question our very faith, claiming that all our experiences with the Holy Spirit are fake.

But there is nothing fake about Althea Meyer. And there is no way this woman could get her impressive boldness from any other source than the **Holy Spirit**.

A dedicated missionary to the African country of **Malawi**, Althea has given her life to save as many starving children as possible. (Malawi has the highest death rate for children under 6 in the entire world.) After seeing her efforts on the field this week, I consider her one of the bravest Christians I've ever met anywhere.

I arrived in Malawi's capital, **Lilongwe**, earlier this week to speak at a couple of conferences for women and pastors. I had already met Althea during one of her U.S. visits, but watching her fearlessness in this challenging environment has given me renewed respect for all other career **missionaries** who work tirelessly month after month on foreign fields.

Originally from South Africa and ordained in the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, Althea has stared danger in the face many times—and then laughed at it. In 2010, eight men broke into her house in the city of **Blantyre**. They beat her with sticks, cut her with knives and took all her important papers. But she kept telling them, "In the name of Jesus, get out!"

"I told them they would be cursed for taking those things!"

she told me. She managed to push an alarm button and then continued to tell the thugs about Jesus as they pillaged her home. Later the men were caught and were sent to prison.

This feisty woman has brushed with death many times. She was in a serious car accident in 2003 that required six months of recovery. Once her daughter contracted cerebral malaria, and she got medical attention at the last second. Her son was attacked by thieves who tried to break in to their home. Following his mother's example, he tied the men up!

Aside from all this danger, Althea has faced the daily challenges of living by faith in a country where most people make about \$1 a day. She raises her own support from donors abroad because ministries in Malawi can't afford to help her work with children. To make matters worse, Malawi is now in the midst of a corruption scandal—creating even more political instability and economic inflation.

But Althea just plods on with her characteristic determination—whether she is mentoring orphans who lead families of 10 kids, teaching in her denomination's small Bible college in Malawi, training pastors and their families how to start gardens so they can grow their own food, or attacking the cruel traditions that make life hard for Malawi's women.

I know men who would have thrown in the towel after one year of this hardship. In fact, after being in Malawi this week and experiencing the daily difficulties myself, I don't know if I have the **courage**.

But I am convinced that anybody with as much boldness as Althea Meyer is not doing this kind of work because she enjoys the punishment. She does it because the Holy Spirit gives **supernatural** courage to those who are sent on divine assignment.

The book of Acts says that when the early disciples were

filled with the Spirit a second time, they “began to speak the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31, NASB) and then displayed amazing courage to confront religious opposition and take dangerous missionary journeys. That same kind of courage is still being displayed all over the world today by nameless and faceless people who probably never fill stadiums or appear on magazine covers or on talk shows.

Rev. MacArthur wrote in his recent book *Strange Fire* that he thinks all the miraculous **gifts of the Holy Spirit** ceased after the early apostles died. Does he think **supernatural** boldness passed off the scene too?

No, the work of the **Holy Spirit** is alive and well—and His power is most obviously displayed by ordinary Christians like Althea Meyer. They have given up careers, comfort and financial gain in order to serve Jesus in the most dangerous and difficult places on earth, and it’s insulting to suggest that their **courage** is in vain.

J. Lee Grady *is the former editor of Charisma and the director of the Mordecai Project (). You can follow him on Twitter at @leeegrady. For more information about Althea Meyer’s ministry, Winning All Kids for Christ in Malawi, log on at .*