

You're Never Too Old to Answer God's Call

God spoke to Lillian Klepp about starting an orphanage in war-torn Sudan when she was in her 50s. Her husband, Dennis, had chronic health issues. Yet Lillian and Dennis answered the call. She recently chronicled her story in a newly-released book, *Adventures Under the Mango Tree*, a fast-paced read about the dangers of starting a ministry in a war zone. SpiritLed Woman's editor Leilani Haywood recently interviewed Lillian about the transition into a ministry that grew into a hospital in another location despite the war.

SpiritLed Woman: Most people in their 50s plan to retire. Yet God put in your hands a seemingly impossible mission. How did you God speak to you? What did your husband and family think of this mission?

Lillian Klepp: I was at a International Women's convention and heard Carolyn Cox sharing on all the atrocities in Sudan, and that there were thousands of orphans in that nation. I was burdened by this and went forward for an altar call and said God what can I do, what can I do? Never thinking He would answer the way He did: "Sell everything you have and give it to the poor." I told my husband a week after returning home, he was not in favor at first. I said, "God, if this is just my emotions take it out of my heart, if it is YOU, let it burn." It is still burning 14 years later! I said, "God, if you're calling me, you're calling Dennis; we are one." He agreed months later!

SpiritLed Woman: Did you ever have a burden for Africa?

Lillian Klepp: I had a burden for Sudan.

SpiritLed Woman: What's your advice to Christians in their 50s who think they are too old or too sick for God to send them on

an adventure?

Lillian Klepp: We are NEVER too old for God's business! There is no greater joy than serving God and doing HIS perfect will for your life!

SpiritLed Woman: If you could change one thing, what would you change?

Lillian Klepp: I really cannot think of anything I would or could have changed.

SpiritLed Woman: What's your advice to Christians that want to go on the mission field?

Lillian Klepp: I encourage people to seek God, and GO! His Word says to go to the nations. If we would just ask what can I do or [where I can] go, He will call and answer. The field is ripe, but the labors few! We are better [off] stepping out and doing something than [doing] nothing for God!

SpiritLed Woman: Were you ever scared while war raged around you. How did you deal with that fear?

Lillian Klepp: Yes, I was afraid at times, but my help came from the Lord! I would cry out to Him and He would comfort me, I learned to trust and lean on Him like never before.

SpiritLed Woman: What are some of the first orphans that you took in doing today?

Lillian Klepp: Our very first orphan, Caleb, was 2 weeks [old] when he was brought to the orphanage. We were building and lived in a hut [in] Tukul when he arrived. His mother died in childbirth, and Caleb lived off sugar water from a spoon. It took us 7 years to adopt him. He is now a U.S. citizen and is 13 years old.

One other orphan I think of is Santino; he was around 12 when he came to the orphanage. After completing school he went to

vocational training in Uganda and took up construction. He now has his own construction company, and we now contract him to do our building as we grow. He married one of our orphans and she is a teacher and they have one child.

Others are in the community with their own business, one is working for us as a driver, another is in school for nursing, also one is in school as a doctor, and they plan to return and work for us in the hospital.

SpiritLed Woman: Did you ever think that there's no way you can do this? If so, how did you deal with that feeling of inadequacy in light of a gigantic task?

Lillian Klepp: I knew in my flesh I could not do this, but I knew God called us and I can do ALL things through Him!

SpiritLed Woman: What's your advice to women who want to lead in the ministry?

Lillian Klepp: I don't understand why God spoke to me first versus my husband, but I know it was real and we can see it by the fruit now. I say if God is calling women to lead be obedient to His call, He used a donkey. I believe He will use any willing obedient heart.

SpiritLed Woman: Do you ever want to quit? How do you deal with that feeling?

Lillian Klepp: There was a time when I felt betrayed and just wanted to quit, but once I got my emotions under control and would seek His word, I would ask His forgiveness, quote scriptures and continue with a steadfast spirit.

Leilani Haywood is the editor of the *SpiritLed Woman* e-magazine.