

Floods of Love in Mozambique

God gave Heidi Baker a vision to reach forgotten children in Mozambique. Today he and her husband, Rolland, care for more than 600 orphans.

For the resilient Heidi Baker, being in ministry is all about finding and restoring treasures buried beneath heaps of hardships. It is a quest that has led this American missionary and her husband, Rolland, to Mozambique, one of the most destitute countries on earth, and placed them square in the middle of a life-or-death struggle to rescue unwanted children.

"My life is very simple," Heidi Baker says. "I just pick up abandoned, dying children. I love the garbage dump. I hang out there and go to the alleys and back roads; and I see who's dying, abused and alone, and I say: 'Come, live with me.'"

Baker determinedly goes about her work amid the horrors of extreme poverty and the apathies of civil corruption that create an infrastructure of misery for undesired children in the southeast African country. But it's the perfect place of ministry for the petite blonde woman who is both a power-filled Pentecostal and a London-educated student of theology. She's been helping outcasts in society since her teens, when God called her to the mission field.

That doesn't mean life in Mozambique has been easy for the 40-year-old missionary. It has tested her natural tenacity to defend the poor like never before. It has more than once brought her close to death from disease and violence. And since 1995, when she and Rolland, 52, first arrived in Mozambique to take over a horribly dilapidated government orphanage, it has tested their calling.

Yet the result has been that their once-struggling ministry has become a virtual haven for children trapped in squalor or

fleeing from death. This has occurred in part because of a pair of powerful encounters with God at the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship (TACF) in the late 1990s.

In the midst of it all, Heidi's primary reason for doing what she does remains simple—and crystal clear with purpose.

"All I know is I've been in God's presence, and I've seen His face," she says. "And if you've seen His face—oh, oh, you're changed."

The Bakers' ministry—Iris Ministries—today operates 200 churches across Mozambique. Most astounding is the fact that 197 of those churches were born in just 1-1/2 years. The Bakers know that God has given them the growth—since their hardest efforts at ministry had produced only three churches in the previous 17 years. For Heidi, the exponential growth represents the fulfillment of a promise God made to her at the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship in 1997.

"[In Toronto] I was completely cooked, slammed and smushed—all of the things that look weird," Heidi told Charisma. "I felt powerful electricity all over my body. I could hardly stand the heat. I'm hearing God say, 'Hundreds of churches,' and I'm laughing hysterically. It's the funniest thing I ever heard. It took us 17 years to plant three churches, and two of them weren't doing that well."

Today the Bakers' children's center near the capital city of Maputo is responsible for the daily care of more than 600 children—and they take in more children almost every day. Iris Ministries also has started a Bible school for national pastors and older teen-agers now preparing for the ministry.

Says Heidi: "Pastor Rego, who recently finished our school of ministry, just raised a lady from the dead in Jesus' name. He prayed three days over her corpse without eating or drinking water. That's tenacity! The whole village got saved."

"The dead have been raised." Rolland told Charisma. "Blind eyes have seen, a paralyzed pastor healed, a dumb boy is speaking, epileptics and demoniacs have been restored."

One 7-year-old boy Heidi found had lived in a cardboard box for three years and had no mother or father. According to Heidi, the apprehensive child was taken up in a vision onto the shoulders of two angels and bounced from one to the other as they danced and sang an African Christian song.

Heidi says the child later reported that the angels took him to Jesus who told him: "Son, I want you to live a pure and holy life. Don't fill it up with drugs and alcohol. I want you to go back and tell everyone I'm coming soon."

Heidi has been motivated to minister to the poor and forgotten since age 16 when she was saved and called to the mission field while working on an American Indian reservation. Shortly after, she heard the Lord in a vision telling her to minister in Africa, Asia and England.

She returned to her home in California where she met Rolland Baker in a small charismatic church. Rolland is a third-generation missionary and grandson of the late H.A. Baker who authored *Visions Beyond the Veil*, an account of an orphanage revival in China.

After realizing they were united in their calling to see revival among the poor, Rolland and Heidi were married six months later, in 1980. By the mid-1990s Heidi had received a doctorate in systematic theology from King's College, University of London, and the couple had ministered in poverty-stricken situations in Asia and pioneered a church for street-sleepers in London.

The ministry the Bakers now enjoy in Mozambique hardly seems like the same one they started with when they first arrived in the country in 1995. At that time, their new leadership at the orphanage put an end to the corruption and thievery of the

center's former directors, an action that quickly brought accusations against them from corrupt officials and spawned governmental rules against prayer and worship. Within a year, Heidi and Rolland were ready to call it quits in Mozambique, despite the fact that they were 17-year veterans of the mission field.

But the couple's two visits to Toronto quickly changed all of that.

"We were ready to give up before we went to Toronto," Heidi says. "Then God blasted us, and He showed us His heart and His face and His burning eyes of love."

It was in 1996, during her first meeting at TACF, that Heidi says she saw the face of Jesus in a vision. The encounter immediately started to transform her life.

Heidi was drawn to the Toronto Blessing revival at TACF that year because of the change she saw in Rolland when he returned from several weeks of meetings there.

"We worked on the mission field for 18 years together, and we had our ups and downs," Heidi says, "but I never felt so loved by him as when he came home from Toronto."

Heidi had been undergoing treatment for pneumonia, and in August 1996 she checked herself out of the hospital and left with Rolland for Toronto. Her first experience at TACF began with the immediate healing of her pneumonia and quickly became what Heidi describes as a time of total self-death and surrender to Christ.

As she lay under the power of God, Heidi says that she saw Jesus' face and broken body and looked into His eyes, which she described as "fiery eyes of love." It was an experience that created an awareness in her of her own need for brokenness.

“For God to pick you up and run with you, you’ve got to totally lay down,” she says. “When you’re nothing, nothing’s impossible.”

Suddenly in her vision, Heidi was surrounded by thousands of children. Jesus handed her a piece of His own broken body, and it turned into bread in her hands.

“Give it to the children to eat,” He told her, and every child ate.

Then He gave her a cup filled with the blood and water from His side. She drank first, then gave it to all the children.

Then Jesus spoke to her the words that have defined her ministry since that time: “Because I died, there will always be enough.”

After the encounter in Toronto, Heidi and Rolland returned to Mozambique—which statistically sits at the bottom of the United Nations’ list of highly indebted nations. Heidi began seeking more and more children from the garbage dumps and streets of Maputo. Heidi was convinced that with Jesus there would always be enough to feed and care for them.

The Bakers met an immediate test of faith when the largest donor to their ministry suddenly stopped supporting them because of the couple’s involvement in the Toronto revival. It meant that they lost most of the money needed for food and housing for the children. The day the support ended, Heidi went out to the garbage dumps and found seven more children.

Circumstances quickly worsened for the Bakers.

Expecting signs and wonders when they returned to Mozambique, Heidi and Rolland were shocked when a faction in the city government suddenly evicted them and their 320 children from the orphanage. The former building directors had successfully conspired to regain control of the dilapidated center that

Rolland and Heidi had worked to rebuild. Government workers beat the children for worshiping God, and the Bakers soon found out that members of the faction had purchased—for \$20—an assassination contract on Heidi's life.

The orphaned children pleaded with the Bakers, telling them they would camp with them anywhere—in the woods, on the beach or any other place—rather than be denied the opportunity to worship Jesus. The troop of orphans followed Rolland and Heidi, walking barefoot for miles into town, where the Bakers rented a small office.

“I just clung to the vision of Jesus' loving eyes and remembered that He said there would always be enough,” Heidi says.

After being displaced from the orphanage, the Bakers experienced a year of nomadic-style wanderings in 1997 during which they continually were trying to feed and shelter hundreds of orphans. That year, the mayor of the nearby town of Matola gave the Bakers land, and they housed the children in army tents.

In January 1998 the Bakers made a second visit to Toronto for a conference at the TACF that featured Randy Clark, the catalyst of revival in the early days of the Toronto Blessing. Clark preached on dying to self and the holy fire of God. After the preaching, Heidi experienced the fire of God.

“I felt I was literally going to burn up and die,” Heidi says. “Then I heard the Lord say: ‘Good, I want you dead!’”

Clark prophesied that there would be an apostolic anointing over Heidi, declaring she would see the dead raised, the blind healed, miracles performed and many churches started in Mozambique. Clark then prophesied that God was going to give her the nation of Mozambique.

Heidi says she was on the floor under the power of God all day

for seven days during the conference, unable to move. The presence of God was so strong, she says, she had to be carried to her hotel room each night and even needed help getting drinks of water.

During her seven days at TACF, she says, the Lord showed her the importance of the body of Christ and told her, "You can do nothing without Me, and nothing without My body."

She then had a vision of Jesus walking with the children over the smoldering, stinking garbage heaps in Mozambique, where they scavenge for food. He handed out royal robes to each one and invited them to His marriage feast. Jesus even brought the children forward to sit with Him at the head table.

After all the holy fire, the visions and the prophecies in Toronto, the Bakers packed up and returned again to Mozambique, expecting that they would begin a new, perhaps even less difficult, work for God. Instead, they returned only to face even deeper trials and testings.

"After Toronto, it all fell apart," Heidi says. "We lost so much support. We lost all our buildings, beds, trucks and equipment. We lost our health! The trials kept getting hotter, but we didn't leave."

Upon their return to Mozambique, Heidi was hospitalized three times for near-fatal blood poisoning and almost was killed during a hijacking attempt. Rolland contracted severe malaria.

Then Heidi started collapsing without warning—falling unexpectedly, for no apparent reason. In August 1998 she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and told it was progressing rapidly. Doctors forewarned her that she may end up in a wheelchair.

Heidi cried out to God.

"God, You promised signs and wonders and hundreds of

churches," she said. "Now what? I don't understand what's going on, God, but I love You. I trust You."

After some deep soul-searching, Heidi decided that she would return to Mozambique and preach from a wheelchair if necessary, and that she would not let the devil thwart her. Back in Africa, she preached—and even baptized children who were being healed and set free in the baptismal tank while she was struggling to stay on her feet.

"Every time she fell, the children would gather around and pray ceaselessly," Rolland told Charisma. "They simply would not give up."

The children's prayers, combined with Heidi's determination to worship God in spite of her illness, brought healing.

"God told me to rejoice in tribulation, rejoice in suffering and worship Him," Heidi says. "He told me not to back down in any area but keep walking. Day by day I obeyed until today every symptom is gone—and I dance before my God!"

The Bakers faced a new set of challenges in February after massive flooding occurred in Mozambique. High winds and rain storms ripped their large church tent and destroyed their school building. Their trucks now are falling apart from extreme use, and new construction for churches and children's centers are needed.

Due to the flooding, parasites now afflict many of the children's feet, and the danger of cholera and malaria has increased. "Medical help is simply not available at all for most people," Rolland says—a fact that the Bakers hope to remedy somewhat by building their own clinic and attracting medical personnel to staff it.

Despite these adversities, Jesus is revealing Himself to the young treasures Heidi and her staff have been gathering. The children are fed, clothed and trained.

Besides attending evening meetings, the youngest children rise early in the morning to gather in makeshift shelters where the dirt flies as they dance and sing their African songs of praise to Jesus. Heidi adds with a laugh that in Mozambique people overcome by the Holy Spirit don't do "carpet time" but "dirt time" as the Holy Spirit evaporates for many of the kids the fear and trauma they have experienced.

One 7-year-old boy named Armando, whose mother is a prostitute and alcoholic, fell prostrate in the sand during a meeting in Mozambique. He cried and shook in intercession over the country's sins for two hours. Three hours after the meeting was over, Armando was carried to his bed weeping.

The next morning the boy's face was beaming when he told Heidi: "I saw Jesus! Jesus said, 'All who come to Me, I will forgive.'"

"It changed his life," Heidi says. "He was called to the ministry at his tender age."

Heidi says that everything God told her during her experiences in Toronto is coming to pass.

"There's nothing God cannot do," she says. "But I tell you, it has cost us everything. God's looking for perseverance—not one-night stands where He blesses and shakes you, and then you go out and commit adultery with the world."

It's that kind of perseverance that has kept Heidi and Rolland Baker in the thick of a life-or-death struggle to rescue as many of Africa's unwanted children as they can. C. Hope Flinchbaugh is a free-lance writer and a staff writer for Christian Freedom International, a human-rights organization that helps persecuted Christians. She and her husband, Scott, and their three children live in York, Pennsylvania.

PHOTOS BY ROLLAND BAKER/IRIS MINISTRIES

Persistent Love

Heidi Baker learned about compassion while ministering to the homeless in London.

In 1991, 32-year-old Heidi Baker went to King's College in London to study for her doctorate in systematic theology. After doing her research each day, Heidi chose to spend her evenings ministering to the homeless on the streets of London.

Two street people named Philip and Glenda taught Heidi more Bible theology than her doctoral program ever could.

Burdened for the poor and destitute, Heidi carried food to the homeless and prayed for them during her stay in London. Although Philip occasionally accepted the donations of food, he usually told Heidi to "go to hell" and threw the food on the street.

Heidi persistently returned with her food and prayer offerings, only to have Philip respond each time in anger. Most of the time he got in Heidi's face and screamed, "Go to hell!" and sometimes spit on her.

"Jesus said: 'Keep loving him, keep loving him. Whatever you do to the least of these you do to Me,'" Heidi says. "So I kept on trying every day I saw him, about five days a week."

One night Heidi ministered to a lesbian named Glenda, again to find that the gospel was not welcomed. Glenda began to beat Heidi. Waving a bottle in Heidi's face, she threatened, "I'm going to slash your face from ear to ear with this."

Philip watched while Glenda banged Heidi's head against a wall. After about 20 minutes, Philip suddenly jumped up and said: "I'm going to call the police! She can't keep beating you up."

Heidi answered: "No, Philip, don't call the police! Jesus loves her and He wants to save her."

Philip watched the beating go on for almost 20 more minutes before he finally pulled Glenda off. He held on to Heidi, protecting her. Glenda relinquished and walked away, still uttering threats to Heidi.

Philip was incredulous.

"You've told me about the love of Jesus for two years," he told Heidi, "but now I've seen His love, and I want to know Him."

Philip fell on his knees on the sidewalk, weeping in repentance, and gave his heart to the Lord. One week later, Glenda came to Heidi's house with roses and asked Heidi to forgive her for the beating. Glenda then gave her life to the Lord.

Philip and Glenda today live in their own apartments in London. Philip sells newspapers, and Glenda works at shelters for the homeless. Both are in love with Jesus.

"Jesus just said pour out grace and mercy to the unlovely and see His face in them. God wants us to show His unlimited grace and mercy for the poor, the outcast, the lonely, the broken. If we'll live in that grace and mercy, God's love will meet us every time."

Loving the Helpless Caring for children nobody wants is a privilege for Heidi Baker. **Loving the Helpless**
Caring for children nobody wants is a privledge for Heidi Baker

Mozambique missionary Heidi Baker and her friend Rachel found Beatrice wandering on a dirt road near the capital city of Maputo. Flies were matted to the little girl's blood-shot eyes and deformed face. Her bloated stomach was a sign that it had filled with worms, and more worms twisted through her toes.

Beatrice looked to be about 10, but she didn't know how old

she was. Her mother was dead, and her father was a penniless alcoholic who lived in a dilapidated hut. The little girl had been raped and beaten many times and was wandering through the countryside, trying to survive.

"When I saw Beatrice I felt this overwhelming love for her," Heidi says. "I just saw Jesus when I looked in her eyes. I remembered [that He said]: 'Whatsoever you do to the least of these you do it unto Me.'"

Heidi did the unthinkable. She opened her arms and held the infested little body and told Beatrice that she loved her and that Jesus loved her. Heidi contracted scabies and lice from holding Beatrice, but she has no regrets.

"She needed to be touched and loved and hugged," Heidi says. "She met the Lord the first day. She cried and was so thrilled to know that Jesus loved her, we loved her, and she wouldn't have to be on the streets or raped anymore."

Back in Maputo, where Heidi and Rolland Baker run an orphanage, none of the kids would touch Beatrice. Heidi's little girl, Christy, told her mom that Jesus wanted Christy to give Beatrice her best dress.

Heidi washed Beatrice, clothed her with Christy's dress, and Rachel took her to the hospital. Doctors predicted that she wouldn't live, but Beatrice defied the odds and left the hospital healed several weeks later.

Back at the orphanage, Beatrice met another abandoned and severely malnourished child, Constancia, who had been left on the stairs of the orphanage bakery. Doctors guessed Constancia was about 5.

"Constancia was in a terrible state," Heidi says. "She didn't speak and couldn't communicate.

"The Lord told me to just chase her. I'd chase her, and she'd

let me catch her. I saw the Lord's heart, that He wanted to chase her with His love and hold her in His arms. I'd chase her and hold her until she fell asleep in my arms."

Beatrice understood what it meant to be untouchable and immediately took to Constancia, loving and nurturing her. Still, Constancia would never speak or smile.

One day Heidi was surprised to see Constancia standing in line with 120 other people waiting to be baptized. Heidi hesitated to baptize a girl who couldn't speak and might not understand what baptism meant.

She asked Constancia: "Do you really know what you are doing? Is God speaking to your heart?" Constancia nodded.

"I just picked up this frail, broken, beaten little girl, and I baptized her," Heidi says. "When she came up from the water, she smiled for the first time in her life."

Constancia received many deliverances when she was baptized. The same day, she spoke whole sentences and even asked to lead the choir. Heidi later found out that Constancia had been mute since she saw her parents brutally murdered.

Says Heidi: "You know what? Both girls say they want to be missionaries!"

Rescuing Orphans from Mozambique's Floods

In the wake of devastating national floods, Iris Ministries is helping pick up the of broken lives.

Citizens of Mozambique experienced devastating floods in February, when three-fourths of the country's normal annual rainfall came in three days. News broadcasts worldwide showed sometimes crowds of people awaiting rescue from rooftops or clinging desperately to trees to escape the rush of deadly waters below them. Many of those rescued were left homeless and were transitioned into temporary quarters in schools,

tents and abandoned factories.

In the capital city of Maputo, rushing currents threatened the work of Rolland and Heidi Baker's Iris Ministries, which consists of 30 village pastors, 600 orphans and 100 staff members. The floods carved and eroded the ministry land; destroyed its school, roads and power lines; rose dangerously close to the windows of its church building; and surged onto the orphanage property.

Facing shortages and crowding, the Bakers provided bread and relief aid for 12,000 people in various refugee camps. Despite the disease, insects, hunger and raw sewage floating in the surrounding flood waters, hundreds of people gave their lives to the Lord daily.

"We are able to bring spiritual and physical bread to the camps each day," Heidi says. "Several of our Mozambican pastors come with us, and we are blessed to be able to preach, sing and pray for the sick. Thousands of loaves of fresh bread fill our trucks and are eagerly received by the refugees. They are most eager for prayer."

After the flooding in February, disaster struck again in March in Chokwe and villages near the Gaza region, where residents had less than 10 minutes of warning before the Limpopo River cascaded over the town.

In an effort to look for flood orphans and bring them back to the ministry center, Heidi and Dr. John Colby flew by helicopter to Chibuto, the airfield nearest the worst flooding of the Limpopo River. Another cyclone slammed the area after their arrival, grounding all aircraft and stranding Baker and Colby with everyone else in the camp.

"Heidi began to minister to the weak, sick, starving people huddling under tarps and other bits of shelter," Rolland says. "She began speaking in their local tribal dialect, Changaan, and they immediately perked up with smiles."

About 2,000 people came to Jesus. Soon the camp was singing and dancing, and many sobbed on their faces for their sins and the sins of the nation.

“The people in the camps know as never before that Jesus is their only hope—not communism, democracy, business, foreign aid, modernity or their own hard work,” Rolland says. “The Lord wants that rarest of human emotions—love for Him—to sweep over a land bereft of all else. Starving, cold, sick, miserable refugees ignore the bread we bring and surge toward us for Bibles, to hear preaching and to receive prayer.”

Children who just lost their parents in the flood have been taken in by the Bakers, joining other orphans gathered previously from the garbage dumps and the streets of Maputo. The sound of singing and shouting from hundreds of children in a crowded dining room carry far through the night air just outside of Maputo.

Water and mud are tracked everywhere, insects crawl in the kids’ hair, and staff and children alike are soaked with perspiration in the damp humidity. The power goes off and, against the roar of a generator, the children continue to dance to the Lord.

As the Bakers continue to take in more children almost every day, these worship services are the highlight of their lives, giving everyone courage, comfort and much needed hope.

Says Rolland: “Never have we seen or heard of such an opportunity to be ‘fishers of men.’ Our aim is the Lord—and for revival without measure.”

Rescuing Orphans from Mozambique’s Floods In the wake of devastating national floods, Iris Ministries is helping pick up the pieces of broken lives.

The Bakers’ ministry provides relief aid for 12,000 Mozambican flood victims confined to refugee camps.

Iris Ministries needs nonperishable bulk-food, clothing, first-aid supplies, household goods, seeds and farming tools to help in the long process of caring for the sick and starving while Mozambique rebuilds. Packages sent to the following address will reach the Bakers in Mozambique: Iris Ministries Inc., P.O. Box 20017, West Acres 1211, Nelspruit, South Africa.

Shortly after Heidi and Dr. John Colby arrived near the flooded Limpopo River to help victims, a second cyclone slammed the area.

Monetary support for Heidi and Rolland Baker's work in Mozambique may be sent to Iris Ministries Inc., 1900 Via Sage, San Clemente, CA 92673; or call (213) 330-0293.