

Something Smells

Pride stinks because it is the sulfuric stench of Lucifer himself.

British missionary Jackie Pullinger has endured lots of bad odors. When she moved to the slums of Hong Kong in 1966 to help prostitutes and drug addicts, I'm sure she held her nose a few times because of the rats, the human waste and the stench of death all around her. Yet Jackie exuded a fragrant aroma in that place—the same sweet smell of Jesus that follows every person whose heart has been broken for suffering humanity.

When I first suggested that we feature Jackie on our cover, I got some puzzled looks. “Who’s she?” people asked.

After all, Jackie is not a Christian celebrity, and she doesn't have her own public relations office. She avoids the spotlight. Like Mother Teresa, she has been content to work in a hellhole of lost humanity for 41 years, expecting no recognition.

As you'll read in our story, she was invited to receive commendation from Queen Elizabeth 20 years ago, but Jackie almost turned down the opportunity for fear that the honor would cause her to forfeit her heavenly reward. I wonder how some of our American ministry celebrities would handle a visit to the queen. Would they downplay it, or would they air the fanfare over and over on Christian TV—sort of like when Juanita Bynum's \$1 million wedding was broadcast repeatedly on TBN in 2003?

Don't get me started.

Jackie is so uninterested in publicity that she almost refused to pose for photographs for this magazine. I had to beg her to set aside a few hours so that we could take pictures of her work among the poor. She later admitted to me that she is “media shy.”

I believe Jackie represents a model for ministry in this new season. God is requiring us to scrap the American-made superstar syndrome so we can embrace New Testament servanthood. In order to make this painful shift we must crucify our inflated egos and break our addiction to approval. As we redefine what ministry is all about, we must throw some idols into the fire:

»**Get rid of entitlement.** The Oral Roberts University scandal taught us that leaders must never view their positions as a means to get rich. If a leader succumbs to greed, God just might expose to the world what he has hoarded in his oversized closet. If he has misused money for personal advantage, his larceny may be exposed on national television.

»**No more entourages.** A pastor doesn’t need five people to follow him into the church carrying his Bible, water bottle, handkerchief, microphone and sermon notes. That pompous display is nauseating. The day of the “armor bearer” is over. Today’s leaders should be happy to carry their own suitcases—and help other people carry theirs.

»**Eliminate special seating.** The Bible tells us plainly that rich people are not to be treated with favoritism when they come to church (see James 2:1-7). Yet in many ministries today the poor are ignored while the rich “partners” get a private audience with the pastor—even if the wealthy donor is living in adultery. We are crazy if we think God is going to ignore

such carnality.

Do you smell what I smell? There is a disgusting odor permeating many of our American ministries today. It is the putrid smell of haughty flesh. Pride stinks because it is the sulfuric stench of Lucifer himself. No wonder God resists it. We must repent of this arrogance. The work of God's kingdom is being accomplished today by the Jackie Pullingers of the world—the "little people" who learned long ago that they must decrease so that Jesus can increase.

While the celebrities steal most of the thunder from everyone else, at least temporarily, the Lord's unsung heroes are feeding the poor, fighting injustice, healing the addicted and quietly salting the earth with the gospel of grace. They should be our role models.

I hope Jackie will challenge all of us to ask some tough questions. Will we clothe ourselves in fragrant humility, or continue to wear the stinking garments of pride? Do we really need the praises of men in this life? Or will we be content to hear our Father's ultimate affirmation when we stand before His throne?

J. Lee Grady is the editor of Charisma. To see additional photos of Jackie Pullinger's work among drug addicts in Hong Kong, go to