

# Squirming in Cincinnati

**Missionary Heidi Baker knows that ministry is not about her.**

American missionary Heidi Baker is not a normal preacher. When she spoke at a conference I attended in Ohio in early August, she delivered half of her sermon while lying on the floor. She was clutching the microphone in her hand and her forehead was resting on the carpet.

“I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,” she said, quoting Philippians 3:8. She interrupted her message several times with the high-pitched giggle that has become her trademark.

This was not your average, seeker-sensitive sermon.

A petite, 46-year-old blonde, Baker told the crowd at the Encounters Network conference in Cincinnati that those of us who want to be used by God in powerful ways must learn to relinquish our arrogance and self-sufficiency. She said: “God told me once, ‘I want you to come up to the lowest place.’ ”

Baker easily could have positioned herself as a Christian superstar. Fluent in several languages, she is a gifted communicator with advanced educational degrees. She also has seen astounding miracles during her 30 years of ministry, especially in Mozambique, where she and her husband, Rolland, have planted more than 7,000 “bush churches,” five Bible schools and four children’s feeding centers since 1990.

Just days before she arrived in Cincinnati, Baker prayed for two blind beggars who wandered into her tent meeting at her base in Pemba, Mozambique. Both men instantly received their

sight after Baker wet her fingers with saliva and touched their eyes.

Such astounding miracles are common to Heidi and Rolland. They have seen God supernaturally multiply rice and chili to feed hungry orphans. Heidi has watched paralytics walk for the first time after they received prayer. And indigenous African pastors the Bakers trained have raised 53 people from the dead so far.

But Baker does not carry herself like a celebrity evangelist. She does not wear designer clothes or arrive at conferences in limousines. She does not wave her hand over swooning audiences or publish glossy brochures with photographs of herself standing in front of crowds of Africans.

When it is time to minister to the sick, she often calls her trained team to do most of the praying. Sometimes she asks children to pray for the crippled and dying.

She knows that ministry is not about her.

At the Cincinnati conference, which was sponsored by charismatic ministers James and Michael Ann Goll, Baker rebuked the American church in her sweet and disarming way. Because she lives “in the dirt” among the poorest people in Africa, she said, God has taught her principles from the Bible that sophisticated Western Christians struggle to understand.

“God wants to tweak some things” in the Western church, she said, noting that we place too much importance on position, intellect and human ability.

She then demonstrated the solution to our dilemma by kneeling on the floor again. "God wants laid-down love," Baker said. Hundreds of people—myself included—put our faces in the carpet and asked Jesus to wreck our pride.

Being with Baker helped me reorder my priorities. I was reminded that ministry is not about visibility; it is about serving in secret, where the praises of men are irrelevant. Ministry is not about giving people a slick, culturally-relevant presentation; it is about offending the mind to reach the heart. Ministry is not about making rich Christians feel good about themselves; it is about seeing the face of Jesus in the face of an AIDS-infected child.

Baker's message made me uncomfortable, but all the squirming was worth it. I've decided I want to go lower—into a place of humility where the presence and power of God displaces all my smug self-satisfaction. A place where He increases and I decrease.

All of us should take that plunge. I hope to see you at the bottom.

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J. Lee Grady is editor of Charisma and author of *10 Lies the Church Tells Women* (Charisma House), which was rereleased last month with additional material. To order go to [www.charismamag.com](#). For more information about Heidi and Rolland Baker's work in Mozambique, Iris Ministries, go to [www.irisministries.org](#).