

What Everyday Jesus Love Looks Like

Hong Kong, the late 1980s. Having begun Iris Ministries in 1980 in the United States as a short-term missions organization reaching out to the Philippines, and later basing ourselves in Indonesia, Rolland and I eventually were denied permanent missionary visas and found ourselves on a plane to Hong Kong, where we would minister for the next few years.

Walking through the back streets one day, far from the bright lights and bustling thoroughfares of downtown, I saw a small girl huddled in an alleyway. She was lost, alone, dirty and abandoned. The thought struck me: If I don't pause to show this girl even the smallest, most basic act of kindness, then who will? She wasn't crying out, demanding my attention or making a fuss. It would have been so easy to just keep walking, look the other way, go about my business. ...

London, England, the early '90s. Rolland and I had moved to England to study for our at the University of London. In this vast, sprawling conurbation we found the same paradox: incredible wealth living shoulder-to-shoulder with utter poverty and desperation. In London this can somehow co-exist in areas barely one street apart—or even at opposite ends of the same street!

In no time at all we were confronted with the need we had encountered on the streets of Hong Kong. A homeless man was roaming the streets. He had lived another life in Eastern Europe as a celebrated concert pianist. He had left everything and moved to London to further his career. But the expected connections never made good, doors of opportunity shut in his face, and his finances dwindled. Before he knew it, he had nothing—no credentials in this city and no way of returning to his former life. I saw him sitting in a doorway, lost in his

thoughts, wondering how circumstances had conspired to bring him to this. He reminded me of the little girl in Hong Kong; he had that same faraway look of resigned hopelessness.

Someone had to do something. We began a church among the homeless, which we ran for the duration of our doctoral studies. We were determined that the homeless should not also be the hopeless.

Mozambique, the mid-'90s. We arrived in 1995, and it has been the focus of our ministry ever since. One day I came across a young girl by the roadside. She was a 10-year-old with one leg missing, which she had lost in a house fire. Being of "no use" to anyone as an amputee, her grandmother had ordered her brothers to stone her to death in a field. One less mouth to feed. They left her for dead, but she somehow survived. Now she was living on the street, selling her body for the price of a soda or a mouthful of bread. It broke my heart to see her, and I was faced with that question again: Who will stop for this one? Who will make a difference in her life? Who will be the hands of Jesus to her?

This little girl, Elaina, taught me that love looks like something. What is love if it does not look like something—a comforting word, an offer of help, something to eat, clothes to wear? This is the gospel.

I realize that reading this account of what God is doing in Mozambique can seem terrifying, overwhelming, and somewhat detached from the day-to-day reality of life for many.

Or is it?

If there is one thing I have learned it is this: Poverty and desperation do not always look the way we expect. There are countless thousands in our world who need someone to stop for them, someone to show them God's kindness and mercy. Never let the fact that they wear suits and drive nice cars fool you—nor the fact that they appear to have their lives together.

Simmering just below the surface is the same hopelessness and despair that lived in the eyes of that girl in the alleyway, the man in the doorway, the girl by the roadside; they have simply learned to disguise it. There are people in need where you are, just as there are people in need where I am.

Another thing I have learned: I am not qualified to do what I do! I am far from perfect. In and of myself, I can do nothing. It is only Christ in me that empowers me to stop for the one, and then do something practical for that person. But I have found that as I make the decision simply to stop and pay attention, Jesus unleashes miraculous power beyond my imagining.

This is how I know, without doubt, that He can do the same through you. If He can use me, He can use anyone. Jesus can use you to be an example of His love wherever you are and whatever you do. Whether you work in a store, for a bank, at a hospital, in an office ... as you learn to surrender your life to Him more and more, He will touch lives through you, and you will see miracles. You may not need a miracle of food multiplication in your situation. But you may need the miracle of hard hearts softened and relationships transformed. You may need the miracles of emotional brokenness healed and wholeness restored.

Wherever you find yourself on your journey with God today, please know that He can use you to do something amazing. All that is required is a simple act of obedience on your part. Do what only you can do—because you are there!—and God will do what only He can do.

Heidi Baker is co-founder of Iris Ministries with her husband, Rolland. She is the author or co-author of several books, including *Learning to Love*, from which this article is adapted. She and Rolland served as missionaries in Indonesia and Hong Kong before following God's call in 1995 to Mozambique. In the face of overwhelming need, the Bakers now

watch God provide miraculously for well over 10,000 children every day through their ministry, and many more through the Iris network of more than 15,000 churches, Bible schools, primary schools, and remote outreach programs.