

I Am Not a Missionary! What Do I Do?

by Esther Thomas

The question I'm asked most often by people here in the states is, "What do you do on these trips?" Well, I know they expect me to tell them I do something profound, exciting. My answer is always, "Nothing." It's true, I don't do anything.

I don't have any of the talents that you would expect someone to have who is involved in a missionary organization like we have. But, that answer became embarrassing to me. I could see disapproval on the face of the person who asked me and disappointment, too. So I thought about that question for awhile, determined to come up with some kind of answer that would satisfy people. It's really hard because I really feel like I don't do anything.

I thought to myself, "Why do I keep on going on these trips?" I really don't like to go and it's not what I wanted to do. It's not what I had in mind for myself to be doing at this time in my life. What I really want to do is be a Super Mom, a Super Wife, Super Homemaker, and a Super Grandma. I don't get to do those things very much.

I have no training to be a missionary and when someone refers to me as a missionary, I just nearly faint. I always think, "I wish they wouldn't call me that, because I'm not a missionary; I'm an ordinary person; I'm a believer; a church member, but I could

never be so great as a missionary." I wouldn't last ten minutes on a mission field if I thought I was there to stay forever. There's no way.

As I thought about this, the Holy Spirit reminded me of the time I spent sitting under a tree in the village of Mapou, just observing. I saw the 32 young children that Mama and Papa Delicat had living in their home. I saw how Marie, the cook, was cooking rice and beans, to feed the children, in a small hut; just a tiny, little hut. She did that to protect the food from the hungry, village people. She cooked the food on the floor, on the ground, on the dirt floor, over a charcoal fire. She did this every day and when she would come out of that hut, her eyes would be blood red; they were burnt from the charcoal smoke. I saw how the children ate their food from a gourd with their fingers. I saw how the children used the bathroom on the ground in the same place they sat to eat their meals. I saw there was no water at all in the village. The nearest water was a river about two miles up the road. I saw how the children, 32 of them, slept on the dirt floor in one room.

I saw a young woman very near giving birth in which she would die. I don't know what was wrong with her, but Mama Delicat told me that when her baby was born, she would die. She did. That baby was a little boy. His name is Moise and he is now 12 years old, and he has lived at the Mapou Christian Orphanage all of his life.

I was there in a village helping a group of nurses when a mother came carrying her child in her arms. The child's head was covered with a fungus like none of us had ever seen before. We just stood there helpless. We didn't know what to do. Several of us cried, one of the ladies got sick and vomited. We just stared at the baby. Without speaking a word, we slowly moved together until we could hold each other's hands. We prayed until God cleared the minds of the nurses and they were able to treat the baby the best they could.

I was there in a public meeting when a native preacher was talking and creating a confusion, while Reggie was preaching. I got

up and went over to that preacher and I made him leave the meeting. I found out later that in his own language and his own way, he was trying to quiet the loud and unruly crowd. I was also there in that same preacher's church several years later when his congregation was quietly, and very orderly, worshipping God. I was allowed, that same morning, to put medicine and a bandage on a huge sore on the foot of that same preacher I had insulted and humiliated.

I was there where people live in huts made of mud and manure and straw. They build their huts round because they believe evil spirits live in corners. Where the people eat rats and have no clothes to wear. Where it is so dark at night we could not even see our hand in front of our face. It is so quiet we could hear our heart beating and the snakes sliding over the ground outside.

Where a little boy came with a rope tied around his waist and at the other end of the rope was tied a very old man who was blind. His clothing was a robe made out of patches that were just rags. It was worn out clothes put together to make him a robe. It was pathetic. They had walked for miles to hear about Jesus.

I was there staying in a home of a black family, where just a few years ago the law would not have permitted that family to even own a house nor would they have allowed us to enter the home of a black family.

I was there where people worshipped idols made by man, created from their own imagination.

I was there where a woman was sick and was being carried on a bed. She appeared to be 50-55 years old. I was told she had just given birth and was hemorrhaging and they were trying to get her to a clinic. She was 28 years old!

I was there where women work from daybreak to sundown in a stooped position planting a field of rice and wading in mud to their ankles and carrying their baby on their backs the whole time.

I was there walking down a busy street and the people kept staring at me and bumping me as they passed by. Suddenly, I realized that in their eyes I was not Black or White, I was Colored.

That's the lowest form of humanity in that country. It didn't matter that my ancestors were American Indians and even though I have never experienced prejudice like that before, I knew exactly what those bumps on my arms meant; they didn't want me walking down their street.

I was there in the prisons, the blind schools, in the orphanages of Korea. I was there in a leper hospital, where the people were twisted and gnarled and unsightly. The smell of rotting flesh is sickening.

I was there where an armed, drunken, guerrilla troop stopped our vehicle at night in the pouring rain and demanded that we open up our luggage and hand over our passports.

I was there in a jungle where it is so dense you can hardly even breathe.

I was there where the military stretched people on tables in the street and beat them for charging too much money for their goods or hoarding enough supply for their store for maybe two days. If they had enough in their store for that amount of time they were hoarding and were beaten for it.

I was there where demons were so thick we feel like we have to keep swatting at them like mosquitoes to keep them from robbing us of our compassion, understanding, sympathy, and of the love we carry in our hearts.

I was there where we were stopped at police checkpoints and they demanded money before they would let us pass.

I was there to see the smiles on faces of ignorant people when they came to the understanding of who Jesus is.

I was there sewing for 16 hours a day for two weeks, helping to make clothing for the orphan children at Mapou.

I was there walking house to house in the boiling sun, inviting people to come to the tent and hear about Jesus, when an old woman told me I was fat and we were wasting our time. She came to the tent that very night to hear the Gospel and was baptized into Christ.

I was there helping my own sons and daughters build the

buildings that have become the Mapou Christian Orphanage. I was there helping to plant fruit and shade trees. I was there watching as my daughter, Lori, not knowing how to speak in the Creole language and the orphans not understanding English, broke the communication barrier and she taught them how to play softball with just a shovel handle and a tennis ball. I was there sitting patiently as some of the orphan girls braided my hair in an effort to make me look more like them. I was there to see hundreds of people baptized into Christ.

What do I do? Nothing profound, nothing I had planned for myself. But I obey what Jesus told us to do, "Therefore go and make disciples in all the nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit and then teach these new disciples to obey all of the commands I have given you; be sure of this, I am with you always even to the ends of the world."

I have mixed concrete, painted buildings, played with children, cried with brokenhearted, abandoned young women, bandaged the injured, and loved people the world has seem to have forgotten. I've been angry with the world and with God. I've been thirsty, hungry, frightened. I've been so tired I ached, and so happy I've cried. I've had mosquito bites, bedbug bites, diarrhea, rashes, Dengue Fever, and I've been so homesick I could die. I've carried trunks full of clothing, shoes, medicine, books, Christmas candy, and soap to what seemed like the end of the earth. I have been rejected, criticized, hated, accepted, and loved.

I have tried to encourage women in the most remote villages on this earth, who have no hope of seeing even their country let alone the rest of the world, by telling them that women are very much alike all over the world. We all get married, have children, we all clean our house, go to the market, wash the laundry, cook a meal everyday for our family.

What I don't tell them is that we go to a clean, germ-free hospital where we have a whole crew of doctors and nurses to deliver our babies. They deliver their babies in a hut and, if they are lucky, they have a mid-wife. I don't tell them that we have an electric

MY FAVORITE MISSIONARY SERMONS

sweeper to clean our plush carpets, while they have a handful of weeds to sweep their dirt floors. Or that we have an air conditioned car to drive to our giant supermarket where we can buy any kind of food we have a desire for, while they walk several miles in the hot sun to an open market where they can buy a little bag of rice, or beans, or maybe a little piece of meat that is covered with flies and maggots. I don't tell them that we have a microwave oven that will cook our food in minutes, while they labor over a fire on the ground, taking several hours to cook one meal. I don't tell them we have an automatic washer and dryer to do our laundry, while they have to carry their laundry to the nearest river and wash it by hand and then spread it on the ground to be dried by the sun. I certainly don't tell them that we wouldn't even think about working in the fields all day, let alone with a baby on our back. I just tell them God made us different colors and different sizes, that we are all God's children and he loves each one of us the same.

You must be thinking that some of these emotions are due to cultural shock. No, cultural shock is when I have seen so much poverty, filth, disease, and ignorance I feel like I cannot stand to see anymore and I want to come home and shut myself up in our clean, comfortable house and not go out or see anyone for a time. Cultural shock is when I walk into the grocery store and see all the food available to us; all of it clean, packaged, kept at the right temperature to preserve it as long as possible. I actually feel a pain in my heart when the picture of an open market, where most of the rest of the world has to go to buy their food, passes through my mind. That first trip to the grocery store after we have been overseas is always devastating to me.

What can you do? You can go with us. There is always a place for you. There is always something for you to do.

You can let God use you in whatever way He can, even right here where you sit, even if it isn't what you want to do. I would rather be knitting than doing anything else on earth, but I have time to do that too. God provides long airplane trips for me to knit as long as I want to.

You can pray for us. Your prayers are the only support and strength we have when we are in danger physically, mentally, and spiritually. Let me tell you, sometimes we get so weak in all these areas, it's all we can do to pull ourselves up even to come home. Any time a thought of me enters your mind, it could be the Holy Spirit prompting you to pray for me. I may be in trouble, so please whisper a small little prayer. It doesn't have to be anything extravagant, just, "God, help Esther. She needs help right now, I know it." Praying is the most important thing you can do for me or anyone else. "So ever since we first heard of you, we have kept on praying and asking God to help you understand what He want you do to; asking Him to make you wise about spiritual things; and asking that the way you live will always please the Lord and honor Him, so that you will always be doing good, kind things for others, while all the time you are learning to know God better and better. We are praying, too, that you will be filled with His mighty, glorious strength, so that you can keep on going on no matter what happens, always full of joy in the Lord." That is the hardest part, to always be joyful.

I hope you will pray for White Fields. I hope you will pray that God will continue to use us to win souls, to educate, to support preachers and teachers, to start new churches, and to care for the poor, the widows, and the orphans. There are a lot of them in this world.

Am I My Brother's Keeper? No!

I want to preach to you on the question "Am I my brother's keeper?" The answer that I'm proposing is "No!" This question comes directly from scripture found in Genesis chapter 4; "Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother, Abel?' 'I don't know,' he replied, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'"

The story has been told of a little six year old boy who crawled up on his daddy's lap when his father came home from work late in the evening. The little boy said, "Daddy, I have a question to ask." But the father was reading the evening newspaper; he did not want to be bothered by questions. So, he pushed the little boy to one side and continued to look at the paper. But, you know how little children can be very insistent. The little boy pushed the paper away and he said, "Daddy, I have an important question to ask you." The father said, "Well, what is it? Hurry up and ask, so I can get back to reading my paper." The little boy said, "Daddy, what is a Christian?" Well, the father dropped the paper. He then realized this was an important question and he thought, "I cannot give a lightweight answer to this question. I've got to give the correct answer." So, he began to scratch his chin and he said, "Well, son, that is really a big question. What is a Christian? Well, it's like this son, a Christian is someone who believes in God with all their