

THE LEAST



OF THESE

BY **JIM YOST**

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Jim, along with his wife Joan, left for Irian Jaya (now called Papua), Indonesia in February of 1977 to do church planting work among the northern Sawi and Asmat tribes. God has given him and his family great success in a variety of ministries over the years. Jim's growing burden is to catalyze disciple making movements in Papua, throughout Indonesia and beyond. Over the last ten years, 1400 churches have been planted. He is actively involved in training cross cultural workers as well as ones from newly emerging churches throughout Indonesia and South East Asia in principles of rapid multiplication. He has sent many Papuan "missionaries" out to be a blessing to the Nations!

IN MATTHEW 25 JESUS IS ASKED WHO WILL get into the kingdom of Heaven and He answers, “When you saw me hungry you gave me food, and when you saw me naked you gave me clothes, and when you saw me in prison you came and visited me, and when I was sick you came to be with me.” And they asked Him, “When did we see you hungry, or naked, or in prison, or sick?” In verse 40 Jesus answers, “When you did this for the least of these of my brothers you did this to me.”

We often interpret this verse as meaning we need to have compassion for poor and hurting people. And indeed that meaning is there. But the meaning is really much deeper than that. Jesus is comparing Himself with the “least of these.” He says “you see them, you see me.” He’s putting Himself on the same level with them. And we remember Jesus’ words to His disciples that “those who believe will do my works and even greater works.”

Who will continue Jesus’ works on this earth? The “least of these.” Normal everyday people! Movements around the world today are being led by “no name, no fame” people. They will never write a book, or appear on a television show, but they are doing the works of Jesus and He is showing up in their midst bringing many to Himself. Here are some stories of just these kinds of people with whom we live and serve. The names and some details are missing or changed on purpose but the stories are true.

Street Kids

One day Jesus had children coming to Him but His “bodyguard” disciples told the kids not to bother the Teacher. Jesus scolded them saying, “Don’t forbid them to come because they too have a place in my Kingdom.” Sometimes we think these were white-robed clean-cut Jewish children. No. They are street kids. They haven’t bathed for a week and their robes are dirty and torn. And they have a place in the Kingdom!

On average, we have 20 children living with us. No, it’s not an orphanage; it’s a family. Some are abandoned; some abused; some just looking for a safe place to live. They all come with emotional scars. When they come, they are not yet believers. But very soon they start on a journey of becoming followers of Christ. But how do they come?

It starts through relationship with the children already

living with us. When one of them has a friend who has reached “rock bottom” and they want to have them come live with us, they call a “house meeting” where this is discussed. They all have to agree, because they are the ones who will do the discipling of the new child. Then when that child arrives and comes through the door, one of the other children, who has only been a month with us, takes the new child’s hand and says, “Hey, you follow me, as I’m trying to follow Jesus.” A discipler has to only be one step ahead of the person being disciplined.

Prostitutes

One day Jesus was passing through Samaria with His disciples and He stopped for a drink of water. There He met a woman drawing water from the public well at a strange time because she couldn’t associate with the other village women – that’s because she was a prostitute. Jesus opened up her heart and she ran back to her village and brought them to meet Jesus and Jesus stayed two more days there. A prostitute brought a village to Jesus.

Sri got married at a young age and quickly had three children. Then her husband got sick and died. She didn’t know how she was going to feed and care for these children, until someone told her that she could get a job in a faraway city at a new “restaurant.” She received a “free” ticket on the ship. But when she arrived and entered the location, she soon realized it wasn’t a restaurant but rather a “brothel.” But now she was indebted by the price of the ticket.

She was forced to serve customers with her body, and every month would send money back to her village so her mother could care for her children. This continued week after week, month after month, year after year.

Then one day at the brothel, during the “off hours,” she met a kind lady who often visited the girls working there bringing them some extra food and some medicines. She even “prayed” with some of the girls. Sri started listening to their conversations which centered around “hope found in a new self image.” She’d lost all her self worth because now she was just a piece of merchandise for the enjoyment of others. Every time this lady came by, Sri spent as much time with her as she could.

Then one day Sri gave her life to Jesus and truly found a new image of herself. She saved up money and received some help from others until finally she was able to “buy

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out” her contract. She was free at last and went to live with others like herself who were finding a new life in God. She fell in love with a motorcycle taxi driver who also loved Jesus. It was so much fun doing their “pre-marital” counseling because she kept asking totally honest questions and saying “Why hasn’t anyone ever told me this before?”

Then their wedding day approached. We perform all weddings on Sundays in big gatherings with lots of Christ followers together to give support. Sri asked me before the “big day” if she could invite a few people from the brothel to come to her wedding. I answered, “Of course.” Little did I know she would invite the entire brothel! So on Sunday all the front rows of our “church service” were full of a hundred prostitutes and pimps! And not only did they get to see a marriage made in heaven, they also got to hear the gospel story!

Criminals

One day Jesus was visiting the town of Jericho. In that town there was a man who was despised by everyone.

His name was Zacchaeus. He was the Mafia Boss of that city. He stole money from the local people as well as corrupted government officials. He had no friends. So when Jesus came to town, he wondered if Jesus might be someone who could accept him just the way he was. He’d heard rumors that Jesus was the “friend of sinners.”

So he gave it a try. He went to the road where Jesus was passing by, but it was totally packed out with people. Being a short man, he climbed a tree in order to see Jesus. This Mafia Boss climbed a tree like a little child, because he was desperate! Jesus passed by He saw him and said, “I’m coming to your house to eat.” And later when they were eating together, this man repented of all his wrong doing and gave back all the money he’d cheated from people.

Agus grew up in a military family who lived in the military housing compound near our house. While growing up he would see his soldier father beat his mother regularly. She would go into the hospital,

recover, get beaten again and return to the hospital. Finally one night Agus couldn't take it anymore, and he grabbed a machete and went into the bedroom where his father was sleeping to slit his throat. But at the last moment, God held his hand and he didn't do it. Later that week, one afternoon when his father was returning from the military outpost, his father fell over in the front yard and died on the spot. They didn't know if it was a heart attack or a stroke – but he was dead.

Agus had a wounded spirit from all the abuse he saw his mother endure for years from his father. He went on a path of rebellion for the next several years – in and out of jail, drunk all the time. He was known as the “town criminal.” All of his brothers and sisters became Christians as did his mother. They all witnessed to Agus. But he wouldn't have any of it. They began to say, “He's too wicked—he's beyond grace.”

Then one night Agus was getting drunk with his friends and he felt pressure in his chest and fell to the ground. They rushed him to the hospital. During that journey, Agus cried out “God save me. If I don't die I'll turn my life over to You.”

And God gave Agus another chance. He turned 180 degrees around overnight. I placed a Bible in his hands the next day and showed him how to do a “discovery Bible study” through asking questions and hearing God speak through the Word. I told Agus, “Whatever God says to you through His Word, do it quickly.” Every day Agus heard God speak to him through his Word. Every day Agus obeyed. And he grew rapidly in his faith, becoming one of my top leaders.

One day he came to me and said, “If we hear God speak to us through his Word, we have 48 hours to obey. If we don't do what He asks within two days, we lose that Word.” I thought about it – and agreed it's true! And this has become our motto in our movement – the 48 Hour Rule! God speaks – you act within 48 hours!

The Poor

One day Jesus was visiting the temple in Jerusalem with His disciples. As they were exiting He saw an old widow put two coins into the offering box. He then pulled His disciples aside saying “she put in more than anyone else here.” His disciples were confused. They didn't get it. Other people had put in lots more she gave everything she had, so she gave more than anyone else.”

Where we live and work with broken people is located in the eastern most part of Indonesia called Papua. The people are often considered the poorest in the country. And indeed our groups are made up of poor people finding new lives in God. Some are now getting jobs and often they give back 100% of their paychecks to God. They are so thankful they have gotten a second chance at life. A few years ago two pastors from a large church in Singapore came on a mission visit to Indonesia starting in Jakarta and ending up in Papua. They happened to be in Papua on a Sunday so they attended a celebration that we do with all our groups. They sat in the middle of this exciting service with several hundred people giving heart-felt praise to God.

At the end of the service, our leader, who himself used to be drunk on the street, noticed two guests among us who had come from far away. He thought in his heart that they probably had to spend lots of money to buy a plane ticket to come to Papua, so we'd better help them. He had no idea they were from a very affluent church in a very wealthy part of the world. He just knew that we should help them. So at the end of the service he called out, “Hey before we close off let's take a special offering for our guests” and he called everyone forward to put money in a basket.

Then he called these two pastors forward to receive it. As he put the money in their hands, they began to cry. And they said to me, “We've gone around the world and everywhere we go people know we're from Singapore and they always put their hands out asking us for money. This is the *first* time anyone has ever given *us* an offering!” And I answered back, “That's because our people don't *know* they are poor.” Poor isn't in the pocketbook, it's a person's way of thinking. God uses the poor for the Kingdom.

The Jesus Perspective

In all these stories, we see that Jesus never considered someone the object of ministry. They were all *subjects* of ministry. Matthew 10:8 says, “Freely you've been given, freely give it away.” That's a principle of reproductive movements happening around the world today. Everyone is on a journey to God and as they take one step in the right direction, they take someone else's hand and bring them along too. God is using the *Least of These* to do the work of the Kingdom today. 