



...where
and when
He calls

By **MARIE GIEZENDANNER**

What a blessing God has given me by allowing me to live in an extended community of those who are obviously dedicated to serving Christ!

Sometimes I credit my experiences to living overseas, as if that were some merit of my own rather than a gift from God. The trouble begins when I complacently take the work of God as my own with pride, or I become addicted to powerful results and no longer feel a desire to work with a cause. At those times life begins to seem dull, and I long to go somewhere more exciting where God's doing "real work." I end up moping through life, living out each day without ever giving much thought as to why.

When the tsunami hit in December 2004, I automatically felt a desire to go and help. *After all, I reminded myself with pride, I'm so much closer to it than so many other people around the world are. They don't truly understand the devastation these poor people have to face.*

Then stories poured in from friends and acquaintances who had

gone to help, and I began to realize that I didn't understand this devastation, either. The people in Indonesia, Thailand and other areas were flooded with a grief that I could not understand and probably never will.

I started praying for knowledge, insight and compassion so I could touch the victims' lives in a powerful way. At the same time, anger and resentment began to build up against God because no doors opened for me to go and help. I sulked and stormed, gluing my eyes to other countries and other people's problems.

Working for God

Finally, during chapel one day, the wall shutting in my disappointment broke. I sat and internally screamed at God, *Why won't You let me go? Don't You see how important it is to me? Don't You see how much I want to do something of worth, something with purpose?*

I fell exhausted at His feet, waiting for Him to scold me for my selfishness and impure motives. After all, as a storm of pain ravaged people's lives, all I would do was sit dreaming about how nice it would look if I could "walk on water" by doing some miraculous work of faith.

God surprised me, though, by answering my question with more grace than I expected or deserved. *I have a purpose for you, I sensed God saying. Your worth is not determined by what you do but simply by being My workmanship. If you realize that, you'll also realize that I have created you for good works that are waiting for you now.*

At that moment the chapel worship team began to praise God with words I quickly determined to take as my own: "One way, Jesus, You're the only One that I could live for . . ." I came out of the chapel with my heart set on somehow living for God and God alone.

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Where I had seen only complacent, average kids before, I now saw a community of God's people and many hurt and hungry hearts waiting for His touch. Before long, the overwhelming list of needs in people directly connected with me left me again sitting before God—only this time I had wide eyes and unclenched, open hands.

Where do I start? What do I do? I wondered. I saw a variety of high school and middle school groups, little kids and teachers who needed prayer and so much more. But I was still focused on the dream of being one high school girl who changes the world. Again, God had a lesson in store for me.

New Focus

One day I was reviewing notes from a recent sermon and reading in the Old Testament about Joseph. As I mulled over these thoughts, I could almost relate to Joseph. He, too, had begun to set his mind on lofty goals and become slightly cocky about them. "Look what God's going to do for me," he reminded his family whenever a positive dream came along. Needless to say, it didn't take long for them to get sick of that, and his pride was quickly shattered when he found himself in a foreign country working as a slave.

Because of that, however, he lived his life focused on God and with

integrity, diligence and devotion. When he served God at every point in his daily life, God could use him in every way He wanted to.

I don't expect a door to miraculously open for me to go to Indonesia or Thailand to do relief work, but that's alright. I know that God has a reason for planting me where I am. God has given us as Christians the task of loving others and, above all, loving Him.

Perhaps as I walk to school, my smile and a cheerful "good morning" will brighten someone's day. It certainly wouldn't take much time for me to look up at God and ask Him to work in that person's life in a special way, too. Having a good attitude toward someone who overlooks my feelings instead of becoming bitter might just be the first step in building a relationship with that person. This would certainly be a step in becoming Christlike myself.

Sometimes this constant character change might seem even more difficult than making a one-time impact on a life. But after all, with Christ's light inside us, we know it's well worth it to trust Him and open our lives to shine "ever brighter till the full light of day" (Prov. 4:18). ☺

Editor's note: After Marie wrote this article, she had an opportunity to do relief work among tsunami victims in Aceh, Indonesia, for several days.



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