

The Call to Die

by Jackie Pullinger

The sermon emphasizes the importance of ministering with the poor and understanding the cross in order to experience the riches of God in our lives.

Duration: 1:19:03

Scripture: Judges 7:20, Matthew 25:35, Galatians 2:10

Topics: "Surrender"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares their experience of working with the poor and how traditional methods and strategies do not work with them. They emphasize the importance of recognizing the heart of Christ in ministry rather than focusing on numbers. The speaker also mentions their involvement with the triads, a mafia-like group, and how it affected their visa application. They highlight the privilege of ministering with the poor and share stories of families struggling with poverty and difficult circumstances.

Transcript

Well, Ada and Karen's there, they're all members of our different churches, and they help to lead and minister in our house groups, who also worked with before. And the three guys that have brought with me, they'll share some of their stories tomorrow, but the fact that we're even here at all is, really is a miracle, because we got the visas half an hour before the plane was to, they were to get on the plane, and that was about an hour before the international flight left, so it was the closest we've been so far. The states didn't want them, because we all have long records.

I know they look like pussycats, but the brothers who've come, they're typical and yet not typical of our people. None of them have been to school beyond elementary school, and came from very poor, awful backgrounds, but as you'll hear in a minute of that, we are most pleased and grateful to God for our poor start in life. This is their first trip to the States, they don't speak English, so I will translate for them, and I'll introduce the names to you.

I've been trying to think some simple ones for you to say, but I'll say the real ones first. This is Gong Yun, and Zhao Kan Leung, and Hua San, and some of them have got some words they'd like to share with you before I start. Where is your heart? And why are you here? Are you here to be satisfied yourself, or to make me satisfied? Do you know my heart? My heart is for the poor, and for those that weep, and those who are depressed.

I need you to go out to bring my healing, and my mercy, and my deliverance to them. Are you willing to go? I saw a picture. I saw a grape harvest.

They were ready to drop or be picked. Then I saw another picture. And it was a cake which was already divided into portions.

And it was as if this was ready to be taken out, to be divided. And I believe that the Lord has heard the cries of those in Kansas City. And I think that God was speaking about this to Judges 7:20.

As if somebody is sounding a trumpet, and they are calling out words to the Lord. The Lord wants to make this place, Kansas City, like Canaan. And she explained to me earlier that like Canaan meant it was a place with a great harvest in, and that the pictures illustrated that there should be a great harvest here, and it's a harvest to feed many.

The Lord says He has chosen you, each one. And He tells you not to look on things like how much it would cost you. Because He said that He will provide for you.

And everything that you sow, He will also harvest. And He wants you to go out. And use everything you have to give to the poor.

And you need to go to places where nobody has been before. Because there are still many people that need your help. And preach my Gospel.

Go and tell them that those who are in prison should be set free. Those who are bound up should be delivered. So the hungry will be full.

I've chosen you. Prepare yourself, and I will provide for you. I want you to go.

To go out. Go out. I am our lamb.

And before I was a heroin addict. I took heroin for 13 years. I really came to know Jesus seven years ago.

He attracted me, and He enabled me to quit heroin. I tried to take my life back again, and to live my own life, and to leave the Lord. Because I was young, I thought I should prepare for my own life.

But because of that, I fell again into my old way of life, and weakness. The people in the church, the brothers and sisters, were very careful for me, and good to me. They received me again.

So I was set free again, but then I left again. I always thought, well, it should be all right if I rely on myself. But the Lord was very wonderful to me, for He let me fall again.

And then I could have a look at myself to see I was wrong. I saw how I had hurt my family people. I thought I had so much, and then I realized I was so poor.

So again, I came back and found the Lord. And the brothers and sisters received me again. So the last time I saw God's love reflected through people who helped me, the last time was four years ago.

He's going to tell you the rest of his story tomorrow. These brothers work with us. We don't make any difference between full-time workers and others.

I don't believe in such a thing as full-time service, except for everyone. They are currently helping us with those who, they go out to those people who are still on the streets, and they share with them about Jesus. And they pray with people.

And we see every week the addicts who receive Jesus are usually, right now, between about 10 to 20 come to the Lord every week. But what I'm going to share in a minute, hopefully you will clap for nothing. Because what I want to share with you today has nothing at all to do with counting numbers.

And it has everything to do with the heart of Christ. I'm going to attempt in the next couple of days to go through the notes, but I'm not too good at this. So anyway, I'm going to start with the first text on page one, and that might be as far as we get.

If you were starting a new church, or if you were sending someone out to start a new church, apart from the whole Bible, what extra piece of advice would you give? Well, I know some of us would say prayer is the most important. Keep praying. Others would say you should break bread regularly.

Others would say worship should undergird your life. This is what the apostles said to Paul and Barnabas when they were to set out to preach to the Gentiles, Galatians 2.10. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor. The very thing I was eager to do.

Why? Why would that be the only piece of extra advice that you would give to people who are starting a mission? Why? I want to suggest several reasons, but the first one is because it's in our interest. Because when we minister with the poor, then very, very, very quickly, we will realize our own poverty. I remember at one time I'd been looking up to some of the brothers who'd come to know Jesus, and they'd come off heroin.

And you've already heard that it's not that simple, or it's very simple. Sometimes people think, well, Jackie, you just pray in tongues and they come off drugs. Well, that's sort of true, but only half.

For one man, we now have 60 Christians helping in the first 10 days. In the first day, we have six watches of four hours each. And sometimes we have two people on one man, and they sit with him and they pray with him nonstop, and they go into the bathroom with him and into the shower, and they massage him, and they pray with him, and they're making noodles.

And the six in one day, that means 60 in 10 days. And if we take 10 men in a week, that will be 600 Christians. But at the beginning, I didn't have any to help.

And so I did most of the night duties. Obviously, I was sleeping on a sofa in the sitting room. And apart from doing all the night duties, I also had to answer the phone when the police came, which was quite often.

So I grew to not wearing bed clothes. I used to shower at night and put on tomorrow's clothes. And this lasted for a couple of years.

So you see, I was very poor in night clothes. And you think it's your right, don't you, to wear night clothes? Me, one of the happiest things was after years of doing this, when I went to England once and I wore a night dress. And I thought, nobody, nobody knows what fun this is.

You see, when you minister with the poor, you're very soon and very quickly run out of your own resources. You have to die to your rights, where it's not at all fun, struggling all the time. And then you have no rights.

And when you have no rights, everything becomes the present. Instead of a right. And I believe that when we minister with the poor, we soon realize our own poverty.

There was at one time, a lady in the wall city who introduced me to family after family. There was a family where there were 11 children, they were all girls. And because they were girls, the parents were going to have some more, because they wanted a son.

You see, if you have sons, your future is secure. If you have daughters, you have nothing to live on when you're old. So they were going to have some more, but they couldn't feed any of the ones they had.

They had just one bed, which was behind a curtain. It's called a bed space. And she sent me to see them.

And then she sent me to see another family where the father had to give up his job, because his wife was in the mental hospital and there were five children. And then she sent me to see a family called the Chung family. And they live in the wall city on the top of a building.

The wall city buildings are not that high for Hong Kong, they only would go up about eight stories. And because it was an illegal city, the wall city, it was outside Hong Kong's government. And so people just built houses on top of houses because we're very short of space.

And there's no water or electricity. There were about, at that time, there were about nearly 100,000 people in about five acres. And this family lived on the roof, and they had a plastic kind of tablecloth, which they rigged up to catch the rain.

And they lived on a double bed on the roof. There was Mrs. Chung and her five children. Mr. Chung was never there because he was a drug addict.

And Mrs. Chung used to carry water from a pump outside wall city and into buckets. And she used to walk upstairs to people's houses and she got, it would be the 35th of a 10 cents she would get that much for one bucket. And so she did this for some time until she got rheumatism in her knees and she couldn't walk up the steps anymore.

So then that was the end of her few cents. And then they had nothing to live on. And they used to eat just white juk, which is sort of porridge.

It's just rice with water. And they never had anything to put on it. And I said to the lady who sent me to see her, why do you send me? I mean, Hong Kong is missionary land.

We've got every church group you could name there. And they've all got a plaque in an office. We've got aid groups.

We've got groups who do teeth. And groups who do clothes and groups who do noodles. And groups who only do salvation, whatever that is.

And I said, why do you send me? And she said, I send you because you care. But you see, I had nothing to give. I mean, just me.

And I didn't have any income myself. I got to Hong Kong with the equivalent of 15 of your dollars. And I was living on that.

And I had nothing to give them. Except what I had. And occasionally, I used to take a sausage.

Just one, a dry sausage, so they could chop it up. And put it in their white rice. And when I went to visit them, all the children would face the wall.

Because they were shy. And you know, if you're shy and you only live in one room, there's nowhere to go and have a temperament. So they used to face the wall and pretend they weren't there.

And they learned to walk on the bed. They ate on the bed. They cooked on the bed.

They did their homework on the bed. That was it. And I told Mrs. Cheung about Jesus.

And we used to pray together. And then after I prayed with her, I said, Oh dear Mrs. Cheung, I'm so sorry. I have nothing more to give you.

I need to go now. And she would turn to me and she'd say, That's all right. Because you see, when you go, Jesus comes and sits on my bed.

And I was so jealous of her. I knew then who was poor. I knew which way round.

It's why, it's why, he says, the poor, the poor in spirit, they will inherit the earth. Most of us have got it the wrong way round. If you came to this conference thinking that God is asking those of us who are fortunate or blessed enough to have possessions to go and help other people wrong way round.

This ministry is the highest privilege in meeting him where he is to be found. For has he not chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world? And of course, if we live and if we work with the poor, we'll very soon run out of our own money, of course. You see, there isn't a choice when they're hungry and you have money.

Of course, there isn't a choice. There cannot be a choice. How can you, how can you decide between hungry people and poor people? You can't.

Jesus always says, feed them. This is not even anything to pray about. He says, feed them.

So, we run out of time, run out of night clothes, run out of money. And my house is full of people. And the telephone is always going.

And in the end, I ended up in my bedroom with girls. Well, before I was married, I had to have girls in my bedroom. Thank God, no more.

But I'd never liked sharing a bedroom with girls. I was very bored. Because, you know, they want to talk at night.

And I wasn't interested in what they wanted to talk about. I wanted to read my book or go to sleep or pray. I didn't want to talk to them.

Well, that was night, but I'll tell you the morning was worse. I'm not happy any morning. But, you know, when I would turn over and there were girls in my bedroom.

Well, I had very small bedrooms, you know, in Hong Kong. But we always were full of people because they didn't have any homes. And I can't see how you can say Jesus loves you to somebody when you've got a home and they haven't.

It doesn't mean anything. So I had some girls who didn't have parents in my home. And later on, we had people who came to help those who had no home.

And of course, the people who come to help the homeless need somewhere to sleep, too. So they were in there. My office was on the bed.

And we also had a pregnant girl drug addict. She was seven months pregnant and three weeks constipated, which is a pretty awful combination. And she is lying on the floor coming off heroin.

And I've got my room full of all these girls. And I wake up and say, oh, God, I hate this. Please give me grace.

And of course, he did. You see, I think that's the main reason why we should minister with the poor. Number one reason is God in his mercy forces us, if you like, to understand the cross.

When we understand the cross, then we're rich in grace. So the story I have to tell you is not a poor story at all. And I hope you'll be utterly confused at the end of this as to who is rich and who is poor.

For it's not as you thought. And I've known more about the grace of God and the riches of God to having nothing. I always remember going to South Africa.

And South Africa is a bit like a country Mike and I were talking about earlier this evening. And it's one of those places where they get you to speak 10 times a day, plus addressing the minister's pre-breakfast prayer meetings, you know. And I arrived at one city really exhausted and was about to speak.

Then all the elders came and said, could they pray for me? Actually, I didn't really want it to be prayed for. I wanted a cup of tea. But anyway, you know, they all laid hands on me and nearly drove me through the floor.

And I very much wanted to sit down. But anyway, I thought I should be a good spot. And so it was a loud and a rocking prayer, you know.

And I looked a bit battered after this. Excuse me, but if you work with the poor, you'll get practical. And tired people need to sit down as well as have prayer.

And so anyway, I got up on the stage and the man introduced me as the speaker. He said, now I've seen Jackie and her team. I know God works through cracked pots.

So that's what 2 Corinthians 4 says. God is but a treasure in jars of clay. And when we work with the poor, you see the methods that we've used.

But the others don't work. They can't read our booklet. They don't know it's Tuesday.

All our strategies and plans for reaching people and follow-up are useless with the poor. They will not fit into our plan. And the means and the methods, all the theories that we've had, don't work.

We end up with nothing except a broken heart. And all our weaknesses show. But God still chooses to work through this treasure.

I can't count the number of times, a great number of times, that people have visited me in Hong Kong. And they were usually men, incidentally. And they used to come and they used to say, Jackie, do you think you ought to be doing this? And I'd say, well, would you like to? And they would say things like, look after yourself and all kinds of unbiblical things like that.

You know, or take time off for yourself and all kinds of verses that aren't in Scripture. And you must take more rest. And they usually would take me out to dinner to give me this lecture.

This was not helpful. Because you're away from the people that need you while you're having dinner with those people. And when you're tired and exhausted, it's very tiring to be told to take a rest.

It makes you feel much worse than before. It would have been much better if they said, I'll love your people and I'll die for them. That would have helped.

Being told to take a rest doesn't. And all the people that have said, you'll burn out. You'll burn out if you go on at this rate.

They've all gone. And I'm still there. I'm full of joy.

I'm very weak or very strong. I don't know which. You see, it's a paradox.

It's all the other way around. It's all the other way around. The reason we minister with the poor is because it is the cross.

And my favorite subject is the cross. And my favorite topic is dying. Well, I've got a friend.

She says, Jackie, you should put that on a positive premise. You know, people get scared if you give talks on dying. But you see, the reason that we should give up our lives daily is because that's how you find life.

And the reason that Christ enjoins us to do this is because He wants us to be full of Him. So believe me or believe Him. It is in losing our lives that we find life.

It is in giving up our rights or our food or our money or our bedrooms or our free time. It is in that way that we find the riches that others have not tasted of. And we can go on and we can go on and we can go on.

Because you see, we don't live by circumstances. We've nothing left except Him. And when you have Him, you have everything.

That's why you can keep going. 1 Corinthians 1, well, look at it. 23.

I beg your pardon. I'll start in verse 22. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom.

But we priests Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. But to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom.

And the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. This is a choice. Jesus in John 10 said that the reason His Father loved Him was that He laid down His life.

And He said, nobody takes this from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.

Jesus had a choice to die or not. And it was a choice that He made throughout His life for to be ready for the big one. The cross.

He'd been practicing since He was a boy. That's what Hebrews says. Likewise for us.

Luke 9, 29 says, if anybody would follow anyone, I beg your pardon, verse 23, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me. When Jesus started His ministry, He was tempted by the enemy. The first temptation was to command stones to become bread.

That is to take power for Himself rather than His Father's purpose. The second temptation, throw yourself down from the tower. The temptation to take power for the effect.

The third temptation, if you will bow down before Satan, the temptation to take power for instant ministry results. And I believe that this is one of the struggles that the church today, which is us, has to cope with. The Jews demand miraculous signs.

I cannot tell you how many times, I can't tell you how many times I've heard people talk about the Lord miraculously pouring out His Spirit and reaching the ends of the earth. People, it does not happen like this. I've talked with David Reuss and I've told him, I hate that song that you have to sing.

Let your glory fall. I hate that song because we keep singing it in church. How is God's glory going to fall? Like an electric bolt and somehow the ends of the earth will hear about His love? You think that's impressive to the hungry man at the gate? No.

If God, from the beginning of time, covenanted to work His purpose through man, He will stick to His covenant. God will not reach the world without us. And He has given us His Spirit to reach the world, not to sing in church so that it somehow gets there.

Now understand the glory. Understand the glory. The glorious Christ on the cross and the picture of a lamb in heaven who somehow, while we are perfected, always bears wounds.

I don't understand that, but apparently so. He is in heaven, a slain lamb, and we are perfected. The glory comes, you see, through the kindness.

The kindness and the mercy of God in loving us as we are and in dying for us, in not condemning us, in forgiving us, in the sweetness of His faith and the kindness of His forgiveness as He died and said, forgive them. What glory! And you know, it talks about the aroma that we are supposed to have, the smell, the aroma of Christ, which is very sweet to those who are being saved. Well, you know how aroma comes, of course, from a crushed flower.

That's how it gets to smell so sweet. And that's the invitation for us. Of course, when the lady bathed Jesus, it was so sweet.

Filled the house. The night before He died in Matthew 26, He said, My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. And it was so hard for Him, even after all those years of practice.

The practice was doing the Father's will, not His. By the way, that's what dying means. Even after all those years of practice, it was so hard for Him that night that He sweated like drops of blood.

It is a genuine agony. It is easy to talk about dying, but it is a genuine agony. Three times.

And each time He got to the point of saying, Father, not my will, but Yours. And then He had to come back and do it all again. It was a struggle.

And I always remember the first time I went back to England. I'd been in Hong Kong for years, and I'd spent most of that time in Wall City. And I just was getting to know all these triads.

That's why we had trouble with getting the visas, by the way, because our guys have triad records, which means it's kind of mafia. And I was getting to know the triads and get involved with their lives and their families. And I went to visit a church in London, and somebody got up and said some uh, unnecessary words about, you know, how wonderful to give your life up for four years and work in that awful place or something.

And I stopped them and I said, No, no, no, that's not true. That's not true. It's, uh, I've had a great time.

I've had a wonderful time. This is, this is not hard. This is, you know, you really mustn't talk about me like this.

It's been my privilege. You know, it's my gift. And then I went back to Hong Kong and I was walking around the streets.

And in the Wall City, they're just a few feet wide, just in places just two feet wide. And the sewers were open. So you'd have to be careful how you walk in case you fall down.

And they're completely dark and people would pour things out of their windows and rats running around all the place. And, uh, in my first few years, I kept having meetings that nobody came to. And I was wandering around the streets one day and saying, Oh God, Oh God, why did I tell them? Why did I tell them that in London that it costs nothing? I must have been mad.

This is awful. I've had yet one more meeting that nobody's come to. I haven't been to a dinner party for four years.

And it's all wet and there are there are spiders and rats. And I, I don't, I, why did I tell them it was easy? I tried to work it out because I really meant it was easy in London. And yet back there, it wasn't.

And then I, then I got it. You see, this is how it is with dying. It's a decision.

And while you make the decision, it is a genuine struggle. And it's real. And you know, you have to give everything.

And when you've made it, you know, it costs nothing. It's how it works. So both are true.

Both are true. I'm telling you now, I've had the most great time. This costs nothing.

I've received everything. And yet I know I will go back again and I have to do it again. It doesn't get easier.

Because he warms you up, you see, you know, you practice on the little ones. You know, we've got a real biggie coming up. This is what I long for more than anything else.

Amongst ministers, which I suppose you are. I long for more than anything. You see, the Jews demand miraculous signs.

See, I think the most miraculous sign of all would be if Christians gave up their lives for other people. And it hasn't happened. There are people singing that it might happen through God when he asks it to happen through us.

Allowing him to work with his power. But it's voluntary. So nobody, nobody can behave as if we are done by for it's not true.

The reason my father loves me is that I laid down my life only to take it up again. I have authority to lay it down, to take it up again. We also like him, we can choose and making the choice again and again you find life.

And then we are so rich. When Jesus' disciples met him, they kept telling him, you don't have to die, you don't have to die. And in Luke 13, they told him, don't go to Jerusalem because Herod is going to kill you.

And Jesus said, go and tell that fox, I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow. And on the third day, I will reach my goal. For no prophet can die outside Jerusalem.

Jesus' goal was to die. Now you come from a fellowship that believes in God revealing things to his people, seeing. And talking about vision is a popular thing.

Well, in Hong Kong, we have many people who come and they all come with visions. And they all say, I've got a vision for this district, or I've got a vision for these people. And they've usually gone within a year.

You want to know how visions come true. The vision comes about if you don't head for the vision, but you head for the goal. And there's a difference.

You see, Jesus' goal was to die. His vision was to be married to us in heaven. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross and scorned its shame.

If you've got a vision for a people, a city, a nation, well, okay, you can have the vision, but don't head for it. Head for the goal, which is the will of your Father. And the giving up of yours.

And if you think it'll cost, you'll know it costs nothing once you've decided to pay the cost. And in this way, you can't be disappointed. You may be exhausted, but you won't give up.

You will receive all things. Paul says, we are known yet regarded as unknown. We are dying and yet we live on.

We are beaten and yet not killed. We are sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Poor yet making many rich.

Having nothing and yet possessing everything. In the past couple of days, this good description of us, for mostly, I'm exceedingly hopeful about our future. Every now and again, I have real sweats.

After all, you know, moving one family is bad enough, but moving 150 people is terrible. We've, and we're all distressed people. You know, we're all delinquent.

We've, we got an old man of 86. And there's my Chinese mother who's 83 and she's had a stroke and she has to be in a wheelchair. And we've got beaten wives and orphaned children.

And it's not simple to move 150 people to nowhere. You know, so every now and again, I get these real sweats. And I think, oh God.

And the, the many officials have been really not very polite to us. So when people ask me, how do you feel? I have to say in the natural, very sorrowful. I've had some very sorrowful discussions with some officials.

But in my heart, I'm so hopeful. I'm so hopeful. We are sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.

I feel like crying all the time. We are, we only live in tin hats. I mean, you might not think they're very beautiful, but we love them.

And it's been a great home with, with hope, peace. You know, thousands of people have come to know Jesus in these hats and have lived together and now we have to go. So it's a very sad time for us naturally.

But we are rejoicing because God's never let us down before. I've only ever had to worry about moving 12 or 20 people at a time, you know. So he, I guess he's warming us up and we'll let you know.

Uh, I understand the Israelites a bit better now, except at least they had a desert to camp in. But anyway, uh, there are hard times, but it's God's mercy for us, you see. Do you understand? Suffering is not a punishment.

It's a privilege because the more he allows you to go through when you've allowed him to, you understand more of his heart, you see. So you get more. This is not that some poor Christians have to go off and serve the poor and live a harder life than other people, wrong way round.

I believe this is his will for every single Christian. Every single Christian. This is not an optional ministry.

This is his heart for every single Christian. Why? So that we know his heart. And that's where you'll find it.

It is God's way of winning the world. Death and weakness. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.

But he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man. He humbled himself and he became obedient to death, even death on a cross. When you minister with the poor, they may not say thank you.

When you minister with the poor, often it looks as if your ministry is going backwards. I knew a man once who was sold to a drug addict when he was a little boy. And his name was Assaw.

And the drug addict might buy a son, because when you're old, you need, you have to live off somebody, you see. And so he bought this boy. And of course, this boy became a drug addict himself.

And I was very concerned for him. And one day I felt that the Holy Spirit was telling me to go to Wall City, and that he was in danger. And when I got there, I found there was a pool of blood just outside the little room I rented in there.

And I thought it was his. And I asked the people who it was. And they said it belonged to his gang leader, whose name was Aton.

So I said, well, where is he now? And they said, well, his gang brother, which is my friend Assaw, was going to be attacked by two men with a knife. And so this gang leader put himself in the way, and he nearly had his arm severed. And we wrapped him up in a blanket and taken him to the hospital.

So I went in a taxi to the hospital. And I went with another guy who had come to believe in Jesus. And we sat outside the room, and we prayed for him.

And eventually they let us go in, and they said he'd probably die. And at least he would lose his arm. And we said, can we go in and pray with him? And they said we could go in, and we prayed with him.

That Jesus would heal him. And then we came out, and his family were waiting outside. And they said, why would you bother with our son? He is no use.

And I said, it doesn't matter if he's any use or not. Jesus still loves him. And I love him, and he's done a great thing today.

And we prayed for him in Jesus' name. Well, a miracle happened. His arm was saved, and his life was saved.

But I didn't see him again for years. And they used to send me messages from him. The messages were, uh, Aton says, thank you very much.

He knows that your prayers saved his life. But he won't see you. And finally, after about four or five years, I trapped him.

Now, he wasn't a very nice character. I have to tell you, he sold women. That's not nice.

And it was for that reason that he, he didn't want to see me. You see, he said, I know that your prayers and your Jesus saved my life. But I've done so many bad things.

You know, he would just have girlfriends. And then he would ask them to prostitute him. This is a normal way they would make money.

And I said to him, Aton, I think you're just like Jesus. Because you were willing to, to die for someone. Oh, but, um, would you die for another, an opposite gangster? Would you die for somebody in another gang? And he said, Jesus, you're cracked.

You, I mean, dying for your friends, one thing, but who would die for an enemy? And I said, Jesus did. And he loves you like that. And if, if you'd like a new life, he can come and live with us.

And we'll pray you off heroin. And he couldn't understand. He couldn't understand a Jesus like this.

And so he was a bit dazed. And he crossed the harbor where, and came to a little apartment that we were renting. And when he got in there, he found it was full of people he used to fight with or fight against.

And they'd look different. They looked shiny and fat and, and he said, how did this happen? They said, it's Jesus and he can do it for you. And they prayed with him that night.

That was one man's life. As soon as they prayed with him, the Holy Spirit came upon him. He spoke in tongues and just like the others, we prayed and he prayed and he got off heroin painlessly.

And it was the beginning of his new life. It was a miracle, but it took years. You see, when you minister with the poor, you won't be able to pray.

As quickly as everyone else. And if you, if you minister with the poor in order only to save their soul or in order only to put in your ministry or missionary bulletin, I tell you, the poor can smell you. They are not interested in those who simply come to save souls.

They want to know if you care about them and caring about them. It might take 10 years before they respond, but it's worth it even if they don't. You see, with nearly every other ministry, you can count quickly.

If you, if you do your little Bible study group, you can multiply your group and you can, you can count your successes. In ministry with the poor, you lay your life down for one poor man and he cheats you of your money or you take somebody into your house and they walk off with your camera. Or you get somebody off drugs through Jesus and they relapse.

Everyone else's ministries are fine. And your man who stood up to give his testimony today is in prison next week. Yeah, that's how it is.

You see, the results don't come. And the reason I'm talking about the Jews wanting miraculous signs in this way is that we are living, sadly, in an age where somehow success in ministry has something to do with counting numbers and it's not right. If you counted up Jesus' success at the end of his ministry, nothing.

One dead one and 11 failed. After he's, I mean, he's spent three years on that bunch and nothing. Yeah, okay.

He's had some high spots, lots of healings and stuff, but there's no group. They're in disarray. And the sad thing about people who come to Hong Kong or anywhere in the world is they all somehow think success is something to do with counting numbers.

And that's why you clapped. Well, no, maybe it wasn't why you clapped. I hope you were glad those people found life.

But you see, when you minister with the poor, you've got to do it, whether they come to Christ or not. Of course, if you will minister with this heart, they'll come to Christ because that's irresistible. But you do it anyway.

Every other ministry you can count. You can count the tithes. You can count the offerings.

You can count the numbers. You can count the cars in the lot. This one.

Your Tuesday meeting doesn't work because they've overslept. Your Wednesday meeting doesn't work because they haven't got the bus fare. Your Thursday meeting doesn't work because they're sick or drunk.

Yeah, so it is. And so we go on. Isn't that what he did for us? And you know, if you will love them with a heart like this.

If you'll go on anyway, you can't resist him. You can't resist him. He gets terribly famous like this.

There was a street sleeper that we used to meet and you could smell him yards and yards away because he used to drink neat spirit. And he was very angry and his language was very awful. And he used to swear at us and swear at Jesus.

And all his friends had come to Jesus one by one. By the way, most of the street sleepers in Hong Kong know Jesus. And we take them rice and we take them blankets and we sit with them and make friends with them over the years.

But he never let us get near. And this foul, angry language would come out. And anyway, we always used to leave a box for him and say, OK, OK.

We didn't provoke him too much, you know, just bless you anyway, and walked off this. We did this for years and years and years. And finally, he couldn't stand it anymore.

And he came up and he said, oh, my friends have got houses. Can you get me one? And he came to know Jesus and he got baptized. And after that, he only drank a bit.

But we do it anyway. The problem is that most of us would like a story to justify our ministry or numbers to justify. And I was speaking in Taiwan once with some pastors there.

And, you know, they will go to any conferences these days on church growth or revival or anything which involves counting up how big your ministry is getting. And in Taiwan, as in many countries, they don't even know that there are poor people. When I come to the States, people tell me there are no poor people here.

This is one of the poorest countries I've ever been in. It's probably more incest or sex crimes in families, wife beating, child beating, perhaps than in any other nation. This is a poor, poor country.

This is a desperate country. In Taiwan, I was telling them about the people in the streets that they they had not noticed and how to help those people who are in prison know the love of God and his mercy and his sweetness and and the girls that are sold from the mountains into prostitution. And I was telling them how to how to reach them and to love them with Christ's love, whether they come to Christ or not, because that's how you have to love them.

Anyway, and this Taiwanese pastor came up to me and he said, Jackie, where did you get this stuff from before? I've never heard this before. This is the gospel. I'm talking about the gospel.

I'm talking about the gospel. I'm not talking about your church growth. I'm talking about the fame of his heart.

This is how it spreads. If we will give ourselves up for the littlest, the least, the slimiest, the ugliest, if we will love him, whether he comes to church or whether we get him on our tally of conversions or not, then the fame of Jesus, that smell, that fragrance will go so far. The Jews demand miraculous signs.

And when they came to Jesus and they said, do us some miracles. Jesus said, you're a very wicked generation. Now, what's wrong with miracles? Do we not think that healing the sick and raising the dead and this will confirm our gospel? The problem is that those people who asked him to do the miracles could have seen them because there was some in the verses before they came to him.

And he said, you're very wicked. He said, I'm going to give you no sign except the sign of the prophet Jonah, who's in the belly of the whale three days and three nights. So will the son of man be in the earth three days and three nights.

And then Jesus went on to do a whole lot of miracles. Healed the sick and fed 4,000 and then 5,000. And then they came back to him and said, show us some signs.

They'd missed them. And he said, again, you're a very wicked generation. Because if you only look for the signs and you've missed his heart is very wicked.

And he pointed to his cross by saying, this is the sign. I will give you one, my death on the cross and my resurrection. For in the death that I've spoken about, there's resurrection, of course.

So it's not an awful story. So don't choose miraculous signs. Unless you understand that they're expressions of his heart.

He never did signs merely to convince. So he said, if we looked at them, we should be. The signs he did were always an expression of his heart.

For a poor man or a hip man or a thirsty man or a blind man. It's the people he cares about. That's why he did the miracles.

The signs alone will not convince unless people have seen his heart. The Greeks look for wisdom. That's the other bit of the church, trying to find through wisdom.

And the Greeks came to Jesus and they said, I beg your pardon, they came to Philip. And they said, so we would see Jesus. And Jesus replied, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it cannot bear fruit.

So both times when Jesus was questioned about signs and about wisdom, he talked about dying the cross. That's the one Corinthians message. Verse 23, we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

But to those whom God has called both Jews and Greek, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. It's foolishness. And that's what over these few sessions, I'm going to invite you into.

This is not the quick ministry route. But I tell you, it is the fastest way of reaching the world. You may never be able to count your results up, or you may.

But neither would make any difference. And neither is an indication of your success. For the success of our ministries, have you loved one poor man with his heart? Love God with all your heart and strength and mind and love your neighbor.

That's all. It's very simple. We don't have to grow huge churches, though we may.

We don't have to count up our results, though there may be a lot. And probably, probably the results are nothing to do with us anyway. We often get other people's fruit.

I've got lots of other people's fruit. It's not mine. But my challenge is, will you go the foolish way? Are there any in this country who will go foolish way? I believe the world's waiting for a few foolish people.

Because it's through this foolishness and this weakness that the power of God is going to be made manifest. And the fame of his name a long way. And you will be very blessed and very rich.

And your heart often crying, constantly broken. And every time it happens, it gets bigger. Please stand.

And it's a strange thing to boast about. But we would like to learn of Jesus. We'd like to trust you, Father, so much.

That we know that whatever your will is for us, it's good. Whether it looks as if we're going to die or not. Father, we don't want to take the obviously quick or successful way.

We want to take your way. Please teach us. Please teach us.

And for the sake of the poor in this country, in this city, Lord, please let there be some here in this room that will love them with his heart. Amen. For information about Metro Vineyard Fellowship or for a resource catalog, please write Abounding Grace Bookstore, Post Office Box 229, Grandview, Missouri 64030.

Or call us at 1-800-552-2449. Thank you.

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