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through the filthy water and stepped onto the rickety plank bridge that led to drier ground, Ming Kuen followed behind me with a basin. Kneeling down, she filled it with water and washed my feet. My eyes filled with tears, and my Khmer - never that fluent - completely failed me.

Who is incarnating Jesus here on the edge of the Mekong river? Here, where it is a privilege to live, and where forbearance, forgiveness, faithfulness and joy swirl up and around, flooding compassion within, around and through me: tell me, who is incarnating Jesus?

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:17-19)

Broken Dreams: A Journey Into Suffering

Glenn Miles

(Phnom Penh, Cambodia)

Glenn Miles, a nurse from England, and his wife, Siobhan, a physician's assistant from the United States, led the Servants pioneer team into Cambodia in 1993 after spending three and a half years in the refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodia border.

Before leading the first Servants team into Cambodia, I spent several years working in the refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodia border, where wave upon wave of refugees from Pol Pot's gulag dragged themselves to the relative safety of Thailand, arriving malnourished and traumatized after crossing mountains and minefields to flee the advancing Vietnamese army and the retreating

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Khmer Rouge.

In the camp I worked with a gifted team and learnt so much, but I also experienced the dissonance of not being able to fully live with the people. We were driven into the camps with walkie-talkies strapped to our side, and at any hint of trouble we were whisked back out by U.N. security, leaving our Cambodian friends behind to face the danger alone – usually artillery shells from the Vietnamese or a shoot out between rival camp factions.

In 1992, after two years of waiting, Servants finally gained the Cambodian Government's permission to enter Cambodia with a health team from all corners of the world. Five trusted Cambodian co-workers from the Thai border camp also returned and joined us, forming the core of what would later become the local Christian NGO TASK.

In Phnom Penh, I moved with my new wife, Siobhan (whom I had met in the refugee camp), into the poor suburb of Chak'en Grey, into a settlement where many local health workers and traditional birth attendants lived. The matriarch of the area (affectionately called *Lok Yay*, or Grandmother) had graciously granted us permission to live there. She would personally come by and check whether Siobhan had cooked the rice properly and generally keep an eye on us.

Not everyone was impressed that we'd come. Some assumed that living in the slums was a form of asceticism, perhaps as a punishment for sins we'd committed in this or a previous life. Some other Christian groups were upset with our approach, accusing us of judging them for living differently. Another secular group accused us of using the incarnational approach as a way of doing sneaky proselytization, and forcing people to believe in Christ. From our incredulous neighbors, the most common response we got was, "If something bad happens you can always leave," which of course was true.

So why did we choose to live in a slum? It wasn't to be martyrs or to flagellate ourselves. We simply wanted to follow Christ by coming down from a high and privileged place to try and live among the poor so we could develop friendships and learn what

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life was really like for them. And in spite of the challenges, we were grateful to finally be in the place that we felt God had called us to, and with a committed team around us.

After eight months in Cambodia, Siobhan woke with acute abdominal pain, which at first we thought was diarrhea, but then realized was a miscarriage. The air in our room was thick and heavy, the darkness and heat almost suffocating. I pushed opened the doors and windows in an effort to get some air circulating, but this was interpreted as an opportunity for the neighbors to come and see what was happening, and of course they decided they simply had to help. Before long they had found paraffin lamps and candles and some of their midwifery instruments and started trying to "assist" the process. As I was "just a man" they began to push me out of the room, but I insisted on staying and tried hard to fend them off. Seeing Siobhan so vulnerable and bleeding made me feel more helpless than I had ever felt in my life, and I cried out to God to help us.

But in the intensity of the situation and the heat, as the blood pounded through my head and the sweat poured off my face, the room swam and swirled and my legs buckled. I teetered, then fell backwards against a concrete wall, triggering a convulsion that knocked me unconscious, fractured the base of my skull and severed a nerve to my right ear, causing immediate deafness.

Meanwhile, Siobhan was lying on her back, bleeding, having lost our longed for first baby in the middle of a slum, in the middle of the night, during curfew, in a country which at that time had a totally non-functional health system while I was unconscious and severely injured.

Yet when we look back, we continue to be amazed by the determination and care of our Cambodian neighbors and friends. In spite of the curfew they managed to get us across town to our team's retreat house. And even though we had only been with them for months, they wept with us when it was clear we would have to leave the country. We truly felt that we had entered their lives and become members of their community.

The team gathered around us and prayed with us and for us,

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as did the broader Christian community in Phnom Penh, who then mobilized a network of people around the world to help and pray. After two weeks in Bangkok, we were able to finally get a flight back to the U.K, where we were taken to one of the most prestigious private hospitals in London, usually reserved for Arab princes and movie stars! One day we were eating rice in a slum and shortly afterwards, we were eating gourmet food from a five-star menu.

Over that first year, as we tried to come to terms with so many losses—the baby, my disability, our future—and I tried to cope with the pounding head pain and severe bouts of nerve pain in my face, I became depressed. We didn't know what the future held for us – was it to return to Cambodia, or not? My hearing impairment remained, and I had lost a lot of capacity since the accident.

When Siobhan became pregnant again, we were a bit surprised, since we had hoped to get a little more stable first, and I was still not able to work. On the due date, Siobhan realized she was bleeding—we later learned that the placenta had come away from the womb—and after being rushed to the hospital in an ambulance, our daughter, Zoe, was born by emergency caesarian section. Two years later, we became pregnant again, and during the final stages of pregnancy, there were complications, and we nearly lost our precious Hannah.

When Tearfund, one of the largest Christian charities in Britain, offered me a job focusing on vulnerable children, I accepted it, but wondered why we were still in Britain. Had we misunderstood what we thought was God's call on us for Cambodia? Then, after several months, Tearfund invited us to apply for a position as the 'Children at Risk Facilitator' in Cambodia. After all that we'd been through, it seemed that our dream might die and we might never get back to Cambodia. But we never gave up, and neither does God.

Seven years after leaving, we returned to Cambodia, but with our two children and my new role, we did not feel we could live in a slum again. We understood that life had changed for us, and accepted that God had a new place for us. We prayed for and were

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happy to find a wooden house where both our Cambodian friends and expatriate colleagues could feel comfortable visiting us.

Much of our second year was spent in torturous negotiations with various ministries of the Cambodian Government as we tried to adopt our baby, Sarah Nayhouy. The “delivery” of each of our children has been very complicated, and this one was no different! There were months of going from one department to another to get endless forms signed and delivered. Then, the day after the ceremony, in which Sarah was handed over to us to be her parents, the adoption was revoked with the explanation that Siobhan was American. (An American moratorium on adoptions had begun and the Cambodian Government was angry with President Bush.) Eventually, after more anxious months of prayer and paperwork, we finally had full custody of Sarah, and a sense that our family was complete.

After five years back in Cambodia, we sensed that God was calling us to return to Britain to pursue further study and training. Towards the end of our time, we were thrilled to be present at the ceremony when Servants Cambodia handed over the baton of leadership to the locally formed TASK organization. So much of what I had once dreamed of seeing had now come to pass in the healing ministries of these amazing Cambodian men and women. Their work with the AIDS patients, orphans, malnourished and disabled kids in the Mein Chey district shine like a beacon in these slums. And though we were only able to play a small part in the process of

getting it all started, God cradled the seed and kept it growing. It was his dream, and he never allowed it to be extinguished.

We left Cambodia knowing that there were many able and inspired Cambodian co-workers, both in TASK and in Tearfund, who would carry on the dream God has for healing the people of this beautiful nation.