



Working with Bhutanese Refugees

By Margie Randall and Susan
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God uses small acts of kindness to make a big difference in people's lives – in those who give as well as those who receive. Looking back, I see the seed of benevolence my mother planted in me when I was in my 30s. That year we were blessed with two turkeys and she said we were going to find a family that needed one of them. I wanted to argue that we had been poor while I was growing up and now, as a single parent, I could not see any good reason to give away a perfectly good turkey. But she found a family in need, and I will never forget the adventure and pleasure it brought, even to me. Though I was in rebellion against God at the time, it touched my heart to give.

In my late 40s, after surrendering to Jesus and making Him Lord of my life, I held a Bible study in my home and one of the members had been homeless. She was such a beautiful new believer in Christ Jesus, and gave so much to help the homeless, that I invited the group to go downtown and minister to the men living under the bridge. We had a wonderful time while giving them peanut butter sandwiches and toiletries, and of course, the gospel.

God called me to Singapore in 1995, and it changed my perspective on missions. I began to see the great need for missionaries to go overseas to reach people who did not know Christ. It was while in Singapore that I grew to love the Chinese people, and it was there, in 1996, that I wrote down a prayer request that I wished to go to Bangkok, Thailand. Little did I know that God would not only send me to Bangkok, but over a five-year period beginning in 2001, God would use me in Thailand to give thousands of Bibles away to Chinese people.

One morning while I was in Thailand, I asked God what He wanted me to pray about and I clearly heard the word "Bhutan." After looking up information on Bhutan, I began sporadically praying for the country and its King. Over time, God put such a love for that country and its people on my heart that I tried to arrange to go there with a mission organization, but the opportunity never materialized. Something always seemed to prevent me from going.

A call came in September 2008 that turned out to be God's answer to my prayers for Bhutan, but not in the way I had expected. A friend phoned to say that Bhutanese people were living in Houston. I felt such excitement! I was never allowed to go to the Bhutanese, but that was because God saw fit to bring them to me. And I had no idea *why* they were here; I was just glad they were. God had begun preparing my heart, and filling it with love for the Bhutanese people that morning I prayed in Thailand.

God gave me a desire to help refugees from other countries as well. While taking pictures for a Baptist General Convention prayer walk, I met people of all nationalities at an apartment complex and saw needs that deeply touched my heart. As early as 10 a.m. police officers were already on patrol. They explained to me that many residents became involved in selling drugs to help their families survive. I also met a young girl who was being prostituted to help her family. My heart ached as I saw the deplorable condition of the playground and burglar bars on a building where children used to meet to learn about Jesus.

One day, I invited some friends to meet Jim Morisey, the missionary to the apartment complex. My friends had worked with Hispanics in Houston and Jim was searching for help. As we sat in my car and they chatted about ministry, I watched in horror as a young African girl, probably four or five years old and wearing a dress twice her size, climbed into the dumpster. At first, I thought she was playing a game. Then I realized she was trying to help feed her family. She had found some bottles and cans aWrrnd began throwing them out, calling out to

other children to help her. My mind flashed back to days in Thailand and how people in the slums worked to make money by finding “treasures” in the trash bins. Their only other alternatives were selling drugs or selling their bodies.

Later the same day, I saw an older woman digging through the dumpster for food. She came several times, but did not find much. Someone had given me groceries, and they were in the back of my car, so I offered them to her. She was delighted and quickly ran to her apartment. These experiences softened my heart toward refugees of all nationalities. When I discovered that the Bhutanese people had needs, I could not bear the thought of them becoming desperate enough to dig in dumpsters. I vowed not to let that happen.

Friends began giving me clothing, which I gave directly to the Bhutanese people from the back of my car each week when I visited their apartments. Eventually, I felt God directing me to do something that was very scary: quit my job and work with them full time. I had *some* savings, but not enough for “indefinitely.” I felt as though I was being asked to get out of my comfortable boat and walk on water.

The first confirmation of God’s leading to quit my job came from the missions pastor at my church. I will never forget the day that the phone rang and he said, “Margie, we heard what you are going to do and we want to support your work financially.” I felt shock, relief, joy, gratitude and love all at once. It was just the first of many affirmations God gave that I could trust Him to provide – for all of us.

What I did not know, and what God *did* know, was the size of the work He had planned. It turned out that the expenses were even greater than I initially expected. But God again came to my rescue through friends who came to me and promised their financial assistance. I wept at God’s faithfulness because I had not filed to become a non-profit organization, which meant I could not give my friends a tax receipt for their gifts. I met with the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) and learned that they would help as well, and as the size of the work continued to grow they responded with additional monthly support. It was obvious that God was touching hearts to give so that His work and His will could be accomplished. There is no question that God knows our future, and He provides for it.

Hundreds of people have been helped with donations of food, blankets, clothing for every season, emergency food, medicine, transportation – to and from – the many hospital and doctor visits, and more. My greatest pleasure has been to help children, giving them school shoes, backpacks and school supplies. Another huge blessing has been to work with a great group of volunteers, and to see how God is touching their hearts.

We are touched through the smile on the face of a young boy when a soccer ball is put into his hands, or through the light in a little girl’s eyes when she hugs a new stuffed animal. And God affirms our willingness to serve Him through the look of appreciation from parents when their entire family receives much needed clothing. The delight I see in their faces is more than enough reward for me. But I get a bonus: experiencing the blessing of God’s provision as one who gives and one who receives; it is an adventure I would not trade for anything else in the world.