



Why Doesn't Somebody Do Something?

by Gene Easley

From our second story apartment, we had a clear view of everything that happened below. Three streets intersected at the corner where our apartment building stood. A family dwelling was on the first floor, occupied by the landlord, while three small apartments on the second floor and a small unattached house behind the main structure provided added rental income for this fatherless household. For Guatemala it was a nice place to live. The neighborhood was composed mainly of upper class citizens, with only a few shacks of the less fortunate found here and there.

It was our home for that year on the mission field. Although its furnishings were very modest, we were happy for a fairly comfortable little refuge from the hustle and bustle of Guatemalan life. It had plenty of windows to let in the beautiful Guatemalan sun and allow us to watch the local people as they passed by going to and fro. It was from those windows that we witnessed the events of the following story about a girl named Rosemary and her aged grandmother.

The signs of poverty are visible almost everywhere in Guatemala. Even in the wealthier neighborhoods one can see small shacks where the very poor are living. Those who live a day to day existence can be seen throughout the country. Americans, especially, are constantly aware of the horrible plight of poverty's grip on the villages, cities and all of the nation. Not far from our nice, upstairs apartment was a community built on the side of a steep mountain, where some of the poorest people of Guatemala lived. In one of those clapboard shacks in that community lived Rosemary and her grandmother.

One day as I looked out the living room window, I noticed a young girl followed by an elderly woman. They walked down one street in front of our apartment, turned the corner, and went down another street and out of sight. A while later, out of the same window, I saw the pair returning. This time the girl had a bundle of sticks on her head. It was firewood. They had evidently gone to a nearby hillside and spent considerable time gathering enough wood to make it through another day or so.

The young girl particularly caught my eye because of her physical condition. She looked malnourished, very weak in her body, and, in reality, at the very point of collapsing. My wife, Jean, noticed them also and made mention of how sad their situation appeared.

As time passed, we often saw those two passing by our corner, and their appearance was always the same. Though the elderly woman was thin and frail, too, the little girl seemed to be struggling for life. One day as I glanced out the window, there she was again.

Rosemary (we learned her name later) was returning with the elderly woman (we later knew her as the grandmother). Though Rosemary had the usual bundle of sticks on her head, she seemed even weaker than before! She was almost stumbling as she walked. She looked ill, and I seriously wondered if she would survive or not. Her little arms and legs were so thin that no one had to ask if she was eating right. It was apparent that the girl was suffering from a serious case of malnutrition.

Looking out that window, I felt my heart gripped with compassion and maybe a little anger at the same time. I thought to myself, "Why doesn't somebody do something? Surely, somebody can see what I am seeing? Doesn't she have any relatives or close friends who can see that the little girl has great health problems and needs help?"

But as I stood there asking myself that question, "Why doesn't somebody do something?", I seemed to receive a very quick reply from the Lord. He presented me with another question, one that would bring a change to the situation. His question was simple and direct. The Spirit of God spoke so clearly to me, "Why don't you do something?"

This is the condition of much of the church world. We are sitting, looking out the windows of our nice churches, seeing the pitiful sights of a world in turmoil; and we are asking the question, "Why doesn't somebody do something?" And God is trying to speak to us and motivate us. He wants us to be active in the harvest fields. No child of God was meant to be just an on-looker. When God shows us the need, then we become responsible for that part of the harvest.

A Scripture came to my heart as I stood looking out that window with the Spirit of God speaking strongly to me: "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17). The words, "How

dwelleth the love of God in him?", rang through my heart. Can a missionary be void of the love of God? Can he close up his bowels of compassion as if he never saw the need? The thought would not leave me alone.

The church again needs to be moved with the compassion that Christ had. Without the love and compassion of Christ in our hearts, our mission becomes meaningless and fruitless. May the church again be moved for souls and moved for the desperate. May God wake us up!

I was so moved by that experience at the window that the next afternoon I knew I could no longer ignore it. Action was demanded. I put other things aside and spent the afternoon in prayer, praying for just one thing: for God to help me know how to help little Rosemary and her grandmother in their great need. The Spirit of God literally kept me on my knees that afternoon, interceding for that need and for God's direction and wisdom and blessing as we would obey Him.

Jean had been on an errand that afternoon, and I had been left alone to pray. She did not know how I was spending my afternoon. When she returned, I was amazed by the first words she uttered as she entered the apartment: "Gene, what are we going to do about that woman and little girl that we see passing here, who look so needy?"

I knew then without doubt that God was speaking to both of our hearts, and He wanted us to act. We dropped everything. We knew the first step would be to buy food. Their desperate need was nourishment for their bodies. We drove directly to the supermarket and purchased several bags of groceries. We were already being blessed as we were trying to decide what would be the best things to buy for them in their desperate situation. We bought the basic beans, rice, sugar, salt, and other common items. Then we added a few special things such as strawberry preserves, Tang and some candies. These were things that they could never afford for themselves. We put it all in the car and started back to our apartment.

On the way home, we realized we did not know where they lived. We saw them pass our place and go down the road and out of sight, but we didn't know for sure where their home was. So we prayed together, "Lord, help us now to find where these people live, that we may give this food to them and be able to help in their lives."

A few minutes later we pulled up in front of our apartment. As we stepped out of our car, who should walk around the corner but Rosemary and her grandmother! It was almost unbelievable as we saw how God had put it all together! God cares about the needs of the desperate and the outcast! He cares about the hopeless and the helpless! He just needs somebody that His compassions can flow through!

We waved them over to our car and showed them the groceries. When they learned that these provisions were for them, they were surprised but so very grateful. At first they refused our offer to give them a ride home. The grocery bags were too heavy for them to carry a long distance, but they really did not want us to see where they lived. At our insistence, they finally got in the car for the ride home.

They lived only about a mile or two from our apartment, down the hillside with all of the make-shift buildings. We found out that Rosemary and her grandmother shared their one room house with six others for a total of three adults and five children. Rosemary's mother had three children and no father around. Her aunt also lived there with two little ones of her own. Their house was about eight feet by twenty feet. Their furnishings consisted of two small cots and several cardboard boxes around the room in which to store their belongings. They cooked outside in another very small shack on an open fire. Living was primitive. The conditions were unsanitary. What little income the women made from their work would barely supply enough beans and tortillas to make it through another day.

After that first visit, we made many trips to ten-year-old Rosemary's house. We took more food, blankets, and Bibles and other Gospel literature. Rosemary's mother allowed us to take Rosemary to town with us one day where we bought her a wardrobe of clothing.

One cannot express the joy it brought to us to be able to help those very unfortunate people in their time of great desperation. They had nothing to offer us but their love, and it was so pure and sincere that no price could be put upon it. When we would leave their small home, it was always difficult to hold back the tears. They were not tears of sadness, but rather just an emotional experience that could not be put in words. We felt blessed from heaven for having been able to be a part of giving. The words of Christ were not just spoken to sound pious when He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Later that year we were to return to the United States. We went to visit these friends again to say good-bye. Then the night before we were ready to depart to America, Rosemary and her aunt came by our apartment to say one last good-bye. It was a very emotional time. Little Rosemary could not help but cry, and neither could Jean and I. Then Rosemary's aunt said something that we have cherished all these years since. It was one of those statements that makes missionary life worthwhile. She said, "We thank you for everything you have given us. We thank you for the food, the clothing, and all the other things. But we thank you most of all for bringing us the Word of God." Then the tears flowed freely once again. We thanked God that His Word had made a lasting impact on their lives.

What would have happened if we had done nothing? We could have allowed the opportunity to pass. We could have ignored what the Spirit was saying to our hearts concerning two needy strangers who crossed our paths. But they would have missed the blessings God had for them, and we would have missed the greater blessing of giving.

God has not called the church to sit and gaze out the window and wonder why situations are so needy. He has called the church to go out and become the one who does something.

That little family has been lost to us by the passage of time and the transient lifestyles of Guatemala's poor, but we believe that they have found the Lord, and somewhere among the throngs of people in a faraway land, a family remembers the day God heard their cry and sent someone to help. I will be forever grateful that we did something. I am glad we did not turn our heads and take the attitude that it wasn't our responsibility. Our hearts have been broken many times as we have shared our missionary stories and told of the great needs and opportunities in a foreign land, just to watch an affluent congregation look the other way and not want to do anything.

May our response become not, "Why doesn't someone do something?", but rather, "Lord, how can I do something to change the situation?"