

*Do not be afraid  
or discouraged ... for the  
battle is not yours but God's.  
2 Chronicles 20:15*

## IN FOCUS

—Rosemary Sabatino

As you ponder the enormity of the work yet to be done for children in crisis do you ever get discouraged? I do. Faced day by day with just the sheer numbers of children who are abused, exploited, in bondage, hungry and hurting it is easy to see why some might say: *"the problem is so vast, so awful, so complex, so overwhelming I just don't know what to do!"*

In 2 Chronicles 20 Jehoshaphat expressed these same sentiments when he said to the Lord, *We do not know what to do!* (2 Chronicles 20:12 NIV) A great multitude of fierce enemies had come against Judah, and the peoples' hearts were overwhelmed. As they came together to seek the Lord with Jehoshaphat, imagine their dismay as their king admitted, with great alarm, that he did *"not know what to do ... but ..."* he said as he continued in prayer, *"...our eyes are on you Lord."* God responded to their plea and said through the prophet, *"Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army, for the battle is not yours, but God's ... Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you."* As they obeyed the strategy God gave them, He brought them great victory (2 Chronicles 20:1-30 NIV).

The Lord's words ring true today, for He does not change; the battle is still His to win. If He presents us with a challenge, He will order our steps as we trust in Him. He knows that our hearts will break as our eyes are opened to the devastation with which the enemy confronts today's children in crisis. But we know all too well that broken hearts are a necessity if we are to render a compassionate response. CCTI Director Phyllis Kilbourn puts it this way: *"The heart cannot respond to that which we refuse to let into it."* We must force ourselves to look so that we can see as Jesus saw, and then, as our hearts break with His, we must look back to Jesus, for only He can guide us to a proper individual response that will make a difference.

As we focus this quarter on child soldiers, we thank the Lord for those who have chosen to let their hearts break

over the condition of these children, and then go out in the strength of the Lord to make a difference for Him. We are so appreciative of our contributing authors who share with us their experiences with children of war. Marcus Young, founder of Divine Inheritance, a ministry dedicated to rescuing child soldiers, offers us a double challenge in his article, *David and Jonathan*. He first asks us to take

a look at David from a different perspective, and then he calls on us to take on the roll of a Jonathan to come alongside those children inducted

into this evil enterprise. In *Small Soldiers of Sierra Leone*, Heleen van den Brink shares with us the practical but penetrating strategies she and her team used to bring healing and hope to war-torn little ones. Our



*Caregivers Time-out*, written by Tom Harvey with Rainbows of Hope, offers us insight on one of the Lord's *powerful gifts* that brings freedom and encouragement, both to us and the children, if we are willing, in obedience, to *"unwrap it."* Lastly, please peruse the News and Events section. It is packed with excellent resources designed to inform, enrich, and equip us on the subject of children of war.

This quarter's focus, like every aspect of children in crisis, is a daunting challenge if we face it alone; but we can take heart in the Lord. He presents the challenge knowing that we may say as Jehoshaphat did, *"We don't know what to do ... but ... our eyes are on you Lord."* Then, as God gives us instruction, we will be filled with encouragement as we hear Him say; *"Take up your positions; stand firm ... Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged ... go out... and I will be with you."*

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# David and Jonathan:

## Child Soldier and Caregiver

—Marcus Young



**E**pic stories in the Old Testament are full of characters that had their beginnings as children at risk. To name a few: Moses arrived on the scene as an abandoned baby, Esther was an orphan in the king's harem and Daniel was a child of war. Young David also comes to mind. He was probably somewhere between 12—15 years old when he went to battle Goliath, and therefore David could be considered a child soldier. God's intention has always been to redeem the history of children this way and to create amazing stories of grace. He takes great pleasure in doing so by involving his people, the church. One of God's people that sacrificially invested in the life of a child was Jonathan. His life and covenants with this young child soldier left a profound impact on history and offer a model for the church to follow.

*As Jonathan laid down his own agenda, a mystery occurred; a weaving of souls that few people experience.*

David didn't have it easy and, in some ways, he could be considered a marginalized kid. His older brothers dismissed him, and his father intentionally excluded him when Samuel was looking for a king to anoint. Clearly, no one considered David to have "the right stuff." So, naturally, David's brothers scoffed at him when he brought them food at the army camp where Goliath mocked the God of Israel.

What a sight that must have been: tents with ragged banners fluttering like broken wings in a sprawling web across the valley and men in haphazard battle rank. Prince Jonathan was there. He was around 20 years old, several years David's senior. My personal guess, from stories of Jonathan's courage and conflicts with his father, is that King Saul was restraining his son from confronting Goliath. All other men in the army were shaking in their sandals, so the mighty king Saul made the decision to send a child out to this giant as a token sacrifice of war. He probably didn't believe David really could make a difference but thought it might buy the Israeli army some time for a real "miracle." David was put in an unfair and extremely dangerous position because of a poor decision by an adult.

Satan meant to destroy David, the child king, and rout the Israeli army that day, but God (as He always does) destined it for good.

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### First Covenant:

We are all familiar with what happened next, so let's fast forward to the scene in 1 Samuel 18:1-3 where David stood before Saul, grasping Goliath's severed head by the hair. At this particular juncture Jonathan looked at David, a lowly, marginalized child soldier, and crossed the great divide by entering into a covenant with him that still impacts us to this day. Jonathan's possessions were extremely valuable—his cloak represented his royal position, and his sword reflected his identity as a warrior—but he freely gave them to David. As Jonathan laid down his own agenda, a mystery occurred; a weaving of souls that resulted in an intimate communion that few people ever experience. Jonathan's first covenant with David led to several more.

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### Second Covenant:

In 1 Samuel 19-20 we encounter royal court drama as Jonathan looked out for David while he served his father, King Saul. This culminated in a second covenant when Jonathan gave David a vow of personal truth and safety. David was feeling pressured and under attack by Saul. In denial at first, Jonathan passionately rebutted, "If there is such ill feeling in our house, may God deal with us severely!" (paraphrased), but he promised to ascertain his father's intentions toward David and keep him safe, even at his own peril. Saul replied by attempting to kill Jonathan with his spear. At their parting, before David escaped, Jonathan made David reaffirm his vow of friendship to him and his family because he loved David as he loved his own soul.

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### Third Covenant:

The third covenant occurs in 1 Samuel 23:16-18, as David was hiding in the wilderness of the hills of Horesh because Saul was pursuing him "like a flea on a dog." Jonathan found David on a wooded hill and pledged, "You will be king and I will be next to you."

In this statement, Jonathan made a most costly and weighty covenant: he laid down that for which he was born, and by right could claim as his calling in the Lord, and offered it instead to David.

### **Application:**

God has intentionally given us multiple Biblical examples of such covenantal acts of service to raise others to a higher place. David did this for Solomon in the building of the temple even though it was his personal dream. Barnabas set aside the accolades of traveling with the apostle Paul in order to train up young John Mark who had failed in ministry. So, we would do well to learn from the covenants Jonathan made with David.

In Jonathan's first covenant, we find the act of caring for immediate physical and material needs, which is the practical first step in acting out compassion. In Jonathan's case, this required sacrificially giving material resources that were not merely costly, but were also part of his identity. In the West, we often allow our possessions to become a part of us, making it all the harder to give them away. But if we adopt Jonathan's approach to generosity, we don't just get the feel-good sentiment of knowing we helped someone: we actually give them the wherewithal to begin walking out their unique destiny.

***God has given us examples of covenantal acts of service that raise others to a higher place***

In the second covenant, we see that Jonathan became vulnerable and created a safe place for David to confide in him. However, he offered David not only emotional safety but physical safety as well. Jonathan acted at the risk of his own wellbeing and even his life. We as well, when we seek to create a safe place for orphans and child soldiers to find healing, will find that many times our intervention incites the wrath of local governments and other groups with vested interests. The church, especially in a local context, may alienate us as well, since they are afraid to risk association with radical political groups. But if we do not stand for these children, who will?

In the third covenant, Jonathan poured out his own rights and even his own "destiny" on David's behalf so that David might bring to fulfillment his calling as king of Israel. There are certain aspects of our calling we can and should walk out personally, but there are others that, unless we invest them in someone else, will cause our calling and destiny to lack true breadth and depth. Jonathan did this for David, paving the way for him to become the greatest king of Israel. Jesus modeled this in the highest extreme on the cross by laying down his kingly rights to rule the earth to redeem a beautiful bride.

***God's Kingdom will always prosper when we lay down our lives for marginalized children.***

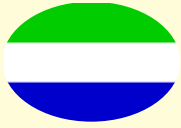
I am humbly writing this today as the recipient of such sacrificial investment. For four generations (the last 120 years), my family has been sowing their lives in frontier mission work among the people of Asia. This heritage has given me not only unique perspective but also has paved the way for the work that we at Divine Inheritance have been doing to rescue child soldiers since 1997. This work is extremely challenging, but at the heart of our mission is a core belief that God's Kingdom will always prosper when we lay down our lives for marginalized children; they are the tiny mustard seeds that will bring a great harvest! And it is true.

The child soldier situation is dire and seems overwhelming. And the problem is not unique to Africa. As many as 1/3 of the world's 350,000 child soldiers are in Asia, yet can you name one ministry addressing this issue in Asia? Where is the church? While the enemy of our souls is raising up armies of children as brutal, hardened killers, God's design is to raise them up as an army of His love. However, this is not going to happen without the involvement of God's people (i.e., you and me).

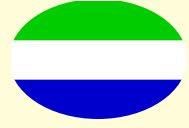
At the end of David's days, the testimony of scripture says, "*David served the purpose of God for his generation*" (Acts 13:33). It took a Jonathan to come alongside David to make this happen. With whom is the Lord calling you to covenant today? Given Father God's inclination toward the orphan, the outcast and children at risk, He may be calling you to a child soldier. May we all respond to God's grace as Jonathan did, by investing in the "least of these" that they might become the future leaders of their troubled nations.

**Selah.**

*As a 4th generation missionary whose family was at the forefront of two historical church movements in Southeast Asia, Marcus Young began mission work as a young man. For the past 15 years, Marcus and his wife Alyxius have found creative ways to bless politically unsettled regions in Asia. They have successfully worked in many expressions of mission but their passion has been children at risk. In their pioneering work with child soldiers, they have rescued many children from soldiering and are now giving them care and hope. Marcus is a perceptive and penetrating voice to the church in our day on social justice issues.*



# THE SMALL SOLDIERS OF SIERRA LEONE



— Heleen van den Brink

*“During the war, I was only a small boy. One time we were running. Then we met rebels. They captured us. They made us stand in lines. Then they shaved our heads and started giving us cocaine. They cut us above our eyes and put the cocaine in the wound. My brain was mixed up when I was drugged. I would see people double. I could easily shoot them. We killed many people— I can’t remember how many. Their bodies were put in a lorry.”*

—Anonymous child soldier from Sierra Leone

From 1991 to 2002 the West African country of Sierra Leone was ravaged by a brutal war. One of the horrible characteristics of this war was the fact that many children were forced to fight most of them with the rebel army.

In 2003 Rainbows of Hope began a work with children in the capital city of Freetown which, at that time, was crowded with tens of thousands of refugees from all over the country. From 2003–2006 our team ministered to many children and young people in refugee camps, brothels, juvenile prisons, and in many communities in and around Freetown. In 2006 it was decided that the project would be shut down. However, I decided to stay on to see if the Lord still had a work for me to do in this country. Soon I was invited to help out in a Catholic school for the deaf in a rural area. The school was reopened after the war and, at that time, it was discovered that some of the boy students had been captured by the rebels and used as child soldiers. Most of them had survived deeply traumatic circumstances, and the Sister in charge of the school asked me to spend some time with them.



This article is a short description of some of the activities the boys and I engaged in as I visited about once per month. Since I didn’t know sign language, and to ensure continuity during my absence, I asked the children to identify a teacher whom they trusted and whom they wanted to be part of our meetings. They chose a male teacher who proved to be a valuable friend and mentor to the boys.

The main objective of our meetings was to help the boys establish a new identity. In addition, we wanted to bring healing to their memories so that they could start dreaming of a brighter future. The methods we used towards our objectives can easily be adjusted for any group of children who have experienced deep trauma.

Over a period of four months I met about five times with the boys. However, after my departure they continued to work with their teacher. During the meetings the following issues were addressed.

## 1. Who am I?

This was the self identity phase. During the first session we brought paint and large sheets of wall paper. Every boy painted his name on the paper and decorated it as he desired. One boy drew a vivid picture of an extremely traumatic experience he had in the war. Most of the others decorated the paper with colorful dots and lines.

In the next session we offered each boy a simple workbook entitled “The Book About Me,” in which we wanted them to answer the following questions: What is your name?; Do you know the meaning of your name?; Why did your parents give you that name? What are some of the things you enjoy doing? What are the things you like about yourself? What do others like about you? Each boy placed his own picture on the front of the book, and then could fill the pages with stories and drawings, etc. They could also invite others to write in their book as well, especially under the section, “What do others like about you?”

## 2. What does God say about me?

This was the spiritual identity phase. As the healing process was just beginning, we felt it was important for the boys to know some of God’s thoughts about them. To this end we discussed four basic truths and backed them up with scriptures.

- *I am made in the image of God* (Genesis 1:27).
- *God knows all about me* (Psalm 139:1-5).
- *God loves me and wants to forgive all my sins* (John 3:16; 1 John 1:8,9).
- *God has good plans for me* (Jeremiah 29:11).

Often our first response to child soldiers is to see them as victims who need healing. However, many of them have legitimate guilty feelings that must be addressed. Some of these feelings may be justified and some self-imposed. As we worked with the boys we wanted to help them see that, on the one hand, they had no choice and were forced to commit some of the atrocities they felt guilty about.

On the other hand, we recognized that there may have been situations in which they did have a choice but still chose to do the wrong thing. In either case, we wouldn't be helping the children by denying or covering up their feelings of guilt. Rather, we offered the amazing gift of Christ's forgiveness in His name, which brought a new and wonderful sense of freedom to the children.

### 3. Emotions

During this phase we identified five basic emotions: happy, sad, afraid, anger and ashamed. Then we asked the boys to write stories, make drawings or tell about situations that induced these emotions. We left it up to them as to whether or not the events they wanted to talk about were related to the war.

We did a similar activity with a group of sexually abused girls at the same school. In their case, we placed two baskets on a table with an image of the cross. We first invited them to bring the "happy pictures" and to put them in the basket marked "Thank You Lord." Then we asked them to come forward with the drawings depicting situations of fear, sadness, anger and shame. As they put them in a basket marked "Help me, Lord", we discussed God's response to each of these feelings: Sad (Psalm 34:18; Psalm 62:8), Angry (Romans 12:19; Nahum 1:3), Afraid (Isaiah 43:1,5), Shame (Isaiah 43:4). Months later some of them testified how these Scriptures still encouraged them.

### 4. Family / Home

Reconnecting with family was important for the boys, but it was often times painful. We asked the boys to share about their immediate and extended family and to draw pictures of their family members and their homes as they remembered them. Many times this brought them face to face with their losses, but we knew that grieving was part of their healing process.

### 5. Stories of War

Throughout the sessions the boys would share some of their experiences with us. However, we set aside time to meet with each boy individually to give them a chance to tell their own story about the war. We made sure that none of them left the session while they were still upset. One of the boys shared how he would always have nightmares after talking about war experiences. We prayed for him and he told us later that there had been no bad dreams the following night.

### 6. New Beginnings

We wanted the boys to know that God had plans to give them a hope and a future. Printed in large letters on the page following the stories of war in the boys' books was 2 Corinthians 5:17: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* We explained how God wants us to give each of us a new beginning; a new identity. We don't have to live in the shadow of our past, but

in Christ we can be a new person. We then asked the boys to share their dreams for the future and they made drawings of their future lives as carpenters, family men, etc.

### 7. Closure

At the end of our last meeting the Sister who is in charge of the school (and who had a very good relationship with the boys) came in and affirmed her love and acceptance of the boys. The boys decided that the books they made would stay with her in a safe place, but that they would have access to them at any time. The Sister then prayed for them and gave each of them a blessing.

### Reflections

The above described intervention was very basic and in many ways imperfect, especially as some of the boys were very limited in their communication. However, months later, it was reported that most of the boys were doing reasonably well (and some very well). I believe there were several reasons for any such success.

- The presence of a trusted teacher who was able to take off his teacher's hat and put on his counselor's hat to provide continued care.
- The presence of the Sister, a prayerful woman who was both strict and loving towards the boys.
- The fact that most of the boys stayed in the safety of the boarding home while in school. Their sometimes disruptive behavior was met by the staff with more understanding than their parents (often traumatized themselves) probably would have been able to give.
- Last but not least, we believe that God's healing presence made it possible for the boys to face the realities of their past, and also to begin to believe that a brighter future was possible for them.

*The film "Blood Diamond" and the book "A Long Way Gone, Memoirs of a Boy Soldier," by Ishmael Bah (New York: Sara Crichton Books, 200 ) give a vivid and accurate picture of what child soldiers went through in Sierra Leone. Heleen van den Brink*

*Heleen van den Brink was trained in child & youth psychology and counseling. After working in a mental health care setting in the Netherlands for some years, she joined the WEC/Rainbows of Hope team in Sierra Leone in 2003. When this ministry closed down in 2006, she stayed on in the country and is currently working with "City of Rest," a Christian rehabilitation centre for drug addicts and the mentally ill.*

# A Girl Soldier's Story

— Divine Inheritance.org\*

*I watched others beaten  
till they bled and died  
in front of my eyes.*

A counselor from our Australia team was able to interview a few girls in Southeast Asia who had escaped from the army. Here is one of the stories she recorded.

*“Please excuse my tears, they must fall because there are many things I cannot say. My tears must speak for me.*

*My parents were drug traffickers, but they were addicts too. I think some of you have seen what drugs can do. They make you a slave to their hunger, and eventually a thief and a beggar. That is what happened to my father. The last I knew, he was begging on the streets. I have been a thief, too, but I am not begging yet.*

*Having no good place to go as a teenager, I was recruited into the army when I was 15 years old. There were about 200 of us. We lived on a tall hill with gray walls that stretched high over our heads. The barracks were very close to the capital city and a long way from home. There were soldiers that stood guard along those walls. The guards were not there to protect us—they were there to keep us in.*

*Every day we built guns. At 5:00 AM every day we did our morning run and by 8:00 AM we were constructing guns. My job was to clean them. We worked at a munitions factory, but*

*we were also soldiers.*

***Now I can't go back to my people;  
I can speak no words  
that shield me  
from the pain***

*Some of us were very young; some were very small, even only 3 years old. Others had lived there so long that they were over 30 years old. Many of us were girls. “Obey” our bosses said, and we had many bosses. Obedience: that was the motto. If we tried to escape, well, the guards would shoot.*

*Everybody rotated through guard duty at different intervals through the night. Every night the drill signal sounded and we had to hustle out of bed, rush into our uniform and be in parade formation within 30 seconds. How easy is that? Those who were late were beaten. We hit them too, because if they got there in time, we didn't have to drill that next day. But that happened about as often as a chicken goes a day without pecking the dust for food. Almost every night we were drilled, so we slept light. Sometimes we had to run to a village in the dark of night with guns or crawl through trenches in the mud and rain—everybody 13 and older that is. The littlest kids were our “gophers.” They ran errands for everybody during the day.*

*One day I ran away. I was scared, but I did not die. Now I can't go back to my people. I am so troubled because of the things I have seen and done. I can speak no words that shield me from the pain, so I will not speak. My many tears will speak for me.”*

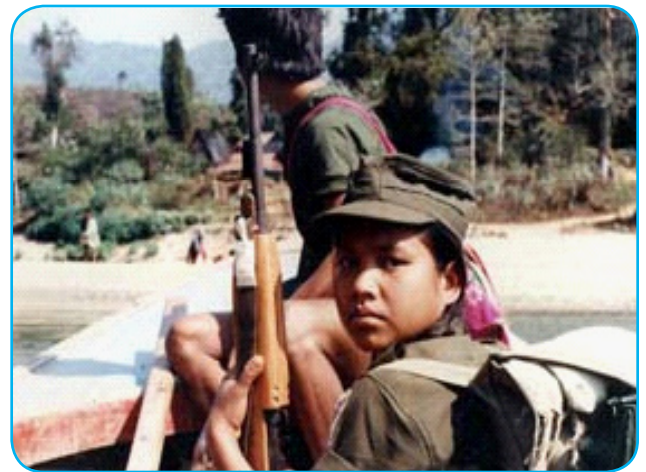


Photo: Peter Mantelo

**A WAR ZONE IS NO PLACE FOR A CHILD.**

## Divine Inheritance

has a historical presence in Southeast Asia spanning over 120 years of work with children and families. They exist to save both girls and boys from the army. In the past two years alone, they have rescued over 100 child soldiers.

**Rescuing Soldiers One Child At A Time**  
[www.divineinheritance.com](http://www.divineinheritance.com)

# NEWS • EVENTS • RESOURCES

This Month Focusing on Child Soldiers



## Books

### **Healing the Children of War**

By: Phyllis Kilbourn

Marc – World Vision / 1995

Available through [crisicaretraining.org](http://crisicaretraining.org)

As a handbook for ministry to children who have suffered deep trauma, this book is designed to give practical guidance to Christians who desire to be of service to little ones whose lives have been shattered by conflict.

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### **Girl Soldier: A Story of Hope for Northern Uganda's Children**

By: Faith J. H. McDonnell, Grace Akallo  
*Chosen/2007* - ISBN 0800794214

The story of child soldier Grace Akallo is a tale of savagery and abuse on the one hand, and the redeeming grace of Christ on the other.

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### **One Day the Soldiers Came: Voices of Children in War**

By: Charles London

Harpercollins Publishing / 2007

ISBN 0061240478

In this book Charles London takes us into the world of refugee children. Their remarkable stories and drawings touch the heart, offering a firsthand portrait of the war that rages beyond the headlines.

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### **No Place To Be A Child**

By: James Garbarino, Kathleen Kostelny, Nancy Dubrow

Lexington Books / 1991

ISBN 0669244414

This book takes readers on a journey inside the lives of children forced into servitude during wartime in many countries. Interviews with children in war zones around the world provide new insight into how the young cope and how an amazing number triumph against all odds.

### **Children Not Soldiers**

By: Isobel McConnan, Sarah Uppard

*Save the children / 2001*

ISBN 184870498

This book provides guidance for those working with children directly involved in armed conflict. Drawing on lessons of experience from different countries, it highlights issues of special concern and areas where further research is needed.

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### **Helping Children Cope with the Stresses of War: A Manual for Parents & Teachers**

By: Mona Macksoud

*Unicef / 2000* ISBN 9280620878

A tool for parents and teachers in helping children cope with the stresses of war and other forms of systematic violence.

## Web Sites

[www.savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org)

**SAVE THE CHILDREN**

Downloadable resources:

### **Child Soldiers: Care and Protection of Children in Emergencies**

by: Mark Lorey

*Save the Children / 2001*

Description: Field Guide: Protection of Children in War

### **Prevention of Under-Age Military Recruitment**

By: Multiple Authors

*Save the Children / 2006*

Description: Save the Children Report on Prevention of Underage Military Recruitment.

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[www.child-soldiers.org](http://www.child-soldiers.org)

**COALITION TO STOP THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS**

This organization works to prevent the recruitment and use of children as soldiers. Check out the Library section for resource material.

### **Child Soldiers Global Report 2008**

available by download

This report, published every three to four years, contains entries by 197 countries documenting military recruitment legislation and practice, and child soldier use by governments and armed groups across the globe. It also provides information on the treatment of child soldiers captured by government forces and on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs for child soldiers where these have been put in place.

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[www.unicef.org/publications](http://www.unicef.org/publications)

**UNICEF**

### **Will you listen? Young voices from conflict zones**

Languages: English French Spanish  
This report compiles the views and recommendations of some 1,700 children and young people in 92 countries.

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[www.emmanueljal.org/projects](http://www.emmanueljal.org/projects)

**War Child**

Both a book and a movie, "War Child" documents the story of Emmanuel Jal, a child soldier in both the Sudan and Ethiopia. He now uses his music to bring awareness to the world of the plight of African child soldiers. His music was also used in the movie Blood Diamond.

## Look For Crisis Care Training 2009

### **Street Children Module**

Dakar, Senegal - January  
California, USA - May

### **Crisis Care Core Module**

Charlotte, N.C., USA - May

### **Orphan Care Module**

Colorado, USA - September

*Check web site for dates and venues*  
[crisicaretraining.org](http://crisicaretraining.org)

# Caregiver's Time-out

## "A Powerful Gift"

—Tom Harvey



*"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."*

Mark 11:25

**T**he ability to forgive is a powerful gift. Forgiveness ends the onslaught of darkness; disarms our enemies; allows us to channel all our energy reserves into things profitable and brings to life what was just prior dead. Those receiving forgiveness from God are commanded to use this power—freeing them to do powerful things in His name.

Young Christians reluctant to extend forgiveness are soon brought to their knees until they do. God has not given His children a choice in this matter (Matthew 6:15). What precious time is wasted, holding grudges, waiting to feel better about things before bestowing forgiveness on others! Once they finally forgive, they only wonder why they'd waited.

Did you ever wonder if you had truly forgiven someone, due to anger or hurt when the offense is recalled? You thought you forgave, but recalling the incident has brought up old feelings—like reopening an old wound. If you check your heart, I think you'll see that you probably have truly forgiven. What you are most likely feeling is called trauma, and God wants to heal that as well. The enemy wants you to be uncertain as to whether you really forgave in order to discourage you; he wants you to doubt the mighty power that forgiveness holds. Remember: "whoever you have forgiven is forgiven (John 20:20)."

The problem, of course, is our feelings. Most of the time, emotion was involved in the offense. Applying worldly wisdom to upset feelings will suggest to us that forgiveness requires apologies and perhaps tears from those who have sinned against us.

However, this is not true. Biblical forgiveness is a legal term. One is either pardoned or they are not pardoned. Courtroom judges pardon as they see right to do so. They don't revisit the crime scene day after day, hoping that the pardoned criminal has a change of heart, decides to make things right, or feels remorse where once was callousness. They have work at hand that needs to be done! They either pardon or convict, and then move on.

That's fine for a judge. But for you and I feelings, such as sadness, hurt, or anger, accompany personal attack. We think, "If I really forgave them, why do I feel this way?" However, forgiveness doesn't require feelings. It requires declaring honestly, that the one who offended you, no longer owes you anything; no explanation, no apologies, nothing! Forgiveness is a matter of fact not feelings.

**O**ne day, while overseas, a Muslim man came up and punched me on the back. I could do nothing about it, because I was carrying a baby at the time. I had no idea why he would do that since I didn't know him at all. I brought the baby to a safe place and then became very angry. As I went back to the place of attack, I found he was gone. Gone also were those who had pulled the man back and shoved him on his way, asking if I were okay. For days I looked for him, not knowing what my reaction would be when I saw him next. He had almost hit the baby, and I was rightly armed with anger and intentions. Thank God I didn't see him at that time.

I lost sleep for a few days, thinking about what I'd say. I envisioned numerous scenes: either punching him out, or forgiving him for all to see. In all scenarios of course, I came out looking either mighty or pious. (Hey, I said I was lacking sleep!)

Four months later, while with friends in the marketplace at another city, some students

from our school saw and greeted us. Among them was a man I recognized right away. The scar over his right eye, called to mind the day he had hit me—he had a bandage over that eyebrow. He stood back not making eye contact. Suddenly, to my surprise, I said "How is your eye doing?" I actually wanted to know; I felt no anger.

If you had asked me a week before if I had forgiven the man, I wouldn't have been sure. Until then, whenever I remembered the incident, I would feel anger, and then determinedly declare to the heavens, "In Jesus' name, this man is forgiven. He owes me nothing. Please bless Him, Lord!" Now he was here, and it was obvious to me that I had forgiven him.

I never did get a reason for the punch; I didn't need it. Two months later, back at school, I visited this man. We talked for a long time, but never about that incident. When I explained Jesus to him, he accepted from my hand, a gospel of Mark in his own language. So much better than him getting just a piece of my mind—God is so awesome!

Forgiveness is power. If you are in Christ, He's given this power to you! Is there anyone in your life, who, due to your feelings, you are not sure that you have forgiven? If you are in Christ, and in your heart they owe you nothing, then you probably have forgiven them and you are good to go on. We take salvation by faith, the indwelling of the Spirit by faith, and the value of obedience to God by faith. We must appropriate the assurance of forgiveness the same way.

**F**orgiveness is not something we always can see or feel, but we do have the authority to forgive. And through forgiveness, we end strongholds of darkness, disarm our enemies, and bring life to what was just prior dead. And then in freedom, we advance the work God has given us to do.



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