



# A Beautiful Show of Hands

For years the old man  
had longed.  
Had prayed.  
Had believed that  
I would one day come  
and stand my ground.

BY IVEY HARRINGTON BECKMAN

Just before he changed my life, the old man wrapped my small hands in his large weathered ones. Concrete-like callouses chiseled by decades of doing stuff I could not even imagine plowed into my tender skin. The dirt stains under his nails popped against my clean neat ones. And even though I was dressed in Goodwill garb, I still looked a bit princess while his clothes screamed poor. But the old man's face? Well, it was a study in priceless — wrinkles glowing brightly with something money cannot begin to buy: Joy. *Real joy.*

"The ground you are standing on is protected just for you," he told me excitedly, vise-gripping my hands as if they were his lifeline, big smile on his face, tears in his eyes, stirring up dust as he practically danced a jig in his dusty worn-out shoes. "I've known for years that a woman would one day come to our village to tell us about Jesus. *Years!* You are that woman. Welcome! Welcome!"

The hairs on the back of my neck stood straight up and then vibrated left and right even as that verse from the Book of Esther flitted through my mind — "*for such a time as this...*"

I felt the air whoosh out of my lungs.

**It was my first day in Africa**, my first missions trip — 8 hours ahead of my U.S. time zone and as far out of my comfort zone as I had ever been in my entire life. I was standing in a small village on a dirt street strewn with all kinds of trash, surrounded by mud-walled buildings glued together with what I would later learn was cow dung. The thrown-together village made any U.S. ghetto I had ever seen look upper class.

From the moment I learned of the missions trip to Kericho, Kenya, I had known without a doubt that I was to go — even though I was terrified. Shy by nature and nervous about this, that, and who knows what, I think I had unknowingly held my breath until the moment the old man said, "*You are that woman.*" Until God used me to lead 39 people to Christ that first day. Until I saw an

old man dance with joy and a young woman cry with relief because I gave them hope for a better tomorrow. Until I heard a group of bare-footed children wearing rags sing "Jesus Loves Me" at the top of their lungs.

Then, awe, gratitude, and confidence booted fear. I knew without a doubt that my steps on Kenyan soil were firmly guided by the Holy Spirit. I was exactly where I was supposed to be, standing on ground reserved long ago by God for me. Why me? I don't know. But standing on a dirt road in Kenya that day, I knew it was my time, my calling, and my ground to cover for the cause of Christ. For reasons far beyond my comprehension, God let me be the living answer to a prayer lifted up by an old man for many years.

But, truth is, it really wasn't about me at all. It was about less of me and more of Christ. It was about understanding the true value of getting less and giving more. It was about less hesitation and more celebration of Christlike love that transcends time, place, and people.

**I celebrated my birthday in Kenya**, surrounded not by my family of origin but by 39 people born in Africa — and reborn there into the family of God on a dirty, trash-strewn street that I had walked by the power of the Holy Spirit. My hands had been held by those of a tough old man who believed in his tender heart that the Good News would one day come. He waited years for me to bring him that Good News and had prayed protection all around me long before I needed it. He had longed. He had waited. He had prayed again and again *for such a time as this*. And by God's grace I came.

It still makes the air whoosh out of my lungs when I think about it.

*Ivey Harrington Beckman is the Lead Editor of More Living. Last year, she and 15 other team members had the privilege of welcoming more than 3,800 Kenyans into the family of God.*



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