

HANGING BY A THREAD

THE SAVING MOSES JOURNEY

Sarah's story about how God birthed the vision for Saving Moses in her heart, and then led her to establish this life-saving ministry, will powerfully impact your life! She is an amazing woman of faith, and her journey will inspire you to pursue your God-given passion to help others.

Joyce Meyer, Bible Teacher and Best-selling Author

It is refreshing whenever you get the chance to be around someone who is totally doing what God has called them to do; and when that passion and calling is about rescuing and giving hope to those who cannot rescue themselves, it is particularly inspiring and even life-changing. That is Sarah Bowling and the Saving Moses story. Let this book grip you. Let it inspire you. And let God change your life through it.

Dino Rizzo, Executive Director, Association of Related Churches (ARC), and Outreach and Missions Pastor, Church of the Highlands



Sarah Bowling is on a mission to deliver insightful and authentic messages to empower her audiences to connect with the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. She is a discerning Bible teacher, an international speaker, and a global humanitarian. Sarah has authored numerous books including *Jesus Chicks*, *Heavenly Help* and *In Step with the Spirit*.



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FOREWORD BY SHEILA WALSH

SAMPLE CHAPTER

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Published by:

Saving Moses

P.O. Box 472338

Tulsa, OK 74147-9919

www.SavingMoses.org

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Distributed by: Thomas Nelson

ISBN: 978-1-7327904-8-3

Printed in the United States of America

CHAPTER 10 - DIVINE DISCONTENT

“No mother in her right mind would bring her son to this place! Get me outta here!” This is what my ten-year-old son said to me one night, as we snaked our way down an increasingly dark and cramped alley in a slum somewhere in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The further down the narrow alleyway we stumbled in the darkness the less we could see, thereby heightening our other senses. The blackness seemed tangible and engrossing, and my son was squeezing my hand so hard that I offered to give him a piggyback ride. This was a no-go, although I could feel him weigh his fear against trying to be big and strong.

Suddenly, in the almost tangible darkness, it felt like we came into an open space because I couldn't feel anything nearby, a contrast from the claustrophobic alleyway we'd just traversed. But the darkness was so thick that we were swallowed into virtual oblivion, only able to hear people distantly mumbling in the dark, inky blackness. It was super creepy and, like my son, I wasn't keen on staying there long, even though our guides fished out a few babies from somewhere in the darkness, demonstrating the need for NightCare in this virtual nightmare.

We quickly backtracked and our guide explained that we were in the back yard of the main strip, where there were heaps more babies. Attempting to find more babies, in better lighting and probably a safer area, my son and I meandered our way down what seemed to be an abandoned railroad track in a densely populated and desperately poor neighborhood. And as we walked along the unlit railroad tracks I spotted a little girl, maybe two years old, with cute curly hair and a coy smile. She was warm and engaging, sitting on a stoop outside of what looked to be a house. She waved to us to follow her into the house.

I told my son to stay outside with my friend and that I would come and get him if I thought it was safe for him. He was more than happy to stay in the light with our friend whom we love and trust.

Here is something for your consideration: in order to do magnificent things, sometimes we have to take some risks and even explore what is unknown and possibly scary. Unfortunately, I think far too many people let fear restrict their exploration and what is unknown can become an obstacle rather than a hurdle.

There's no doubt that you and I have had some moments that have been less than pleasant, but let's allow those hardships to be instructional instead of constricting as we explore, learn and grow. If we don't learn and grow, it's likely that our world won't change because of the lack of our contribution. Of course, we should be safe and wise, but let's also branch out and take adventures that could be transformational!

Returning to the slum in Cambodia: I followed the little girl into the house, which turned out to be a large open room with lots of curtains and beds and a table at the front. In the wide open and well-lit room, a lady was putting on some of the ample supply of makeup that had been strewn across the table. A newborn was swinging in a hammock under a TV running some show in the Khmer language, and in the back corner another lady had just come out of a shower with a towel wrapped around her body.

My new two-year-old friend was giving me a tour of the house, which I quickly understood to be a miniature brothel. I could see under the

curtains the legs to several beds and our translator exclaimed, "They're having sex behind these curtains! Should I open the curtains to show you?!"

I quickly declined as I didn't need to see a real-time display of the baby-making process. I was still quite shell-shocked from the brief tour and struggled to process my thoughts and feelings as I walked out the front door and back to my son at the train tracks.

Later, I learned that there was a very small room under that miniature brothel where the women would leave their young children, usually unattended, while they worked throughout the night. It was not uncommon for toddlers to meander out of the room unsupervised and walk in the dark, barefoot and barely dressed, wherever they fancied on any given night.

The little girl who was sitting on the stoop likely meandered out of that room under the brothel. That little girl, Chan Nu, has become very meaningful to me. Over the course of several years, starting with that first introduction, I've been around Chan Nu innumerable times and I've come to deeply care about her. Subsequent to meeting her that night, I learned that the baby in the house who was swinging in the hammock under the TV was Chan Nu's brother and his name is Pagna.

I also learned that her mom, Val, was a drug addict, a sex worker and had been diagnosed with AIDS. Little did I know when I met Chan Nu that first time, that she would become a part of my heart. Chan Nu was a street kid with base survival instincts and a seeming inability to bond or connect relationally.

Touring the miniature brothel was a new experience that marinated in my heart and soul for many days. It ignited in me a relentless passion to open NightCare in that very neighborhood. As I thought about this, I couldn't help but wonder how many more slums there were in Phnom Penh where NightCare would be urgently needed. Searching out new neighborhoods to expand our NightCare work is wildly exciting for me but many folk would be more scared than excited. In touring this new neighborhood for NightCare in Phnom Penh, where I met Chan Nu, I rapidly concluded that

it was a living nightmare for the babies and toddlers - a perfect location for NightCare.

Even though we had one center up and running smoothly and the average attendance had grown to over twenty babies and toddlers every night, I wanted more. I had been in correspondence with our ground team in Cambodia about finding some possible new neighborhoods where NightCare could meet the most urgent needs of babies and toddlers of sex workers, and where any care for them was limited, deplorable or nonexistent.

“More” seems to be an essential word throughout the human experience. We want more time, money, conveniences, achievements, equity, etc. And I want more NightCare centers! In 2012, when I interviewed Ann to be the National Director for NightCare in Cambodia, I shared my vision to have multiple well-run centers throughout the nation, rather than just one center providing protection and care for a few dozen babies and toddlers.

When I explained this to Ann, she was entirely on board with the idea of having multiple centers. So it was no surprise to her that I was more than thrilled about our progress with our first center and eager to open our second. But sometimes, life can frustrate our desires for more.

What would you like more of in your life that would be meaningful and lasting? I have often found that the way to acquire more of what is meaningful is by doing what is uncommon, while maintaining a mindset of generosity. I have learned that if I give away what I want, this is often how my desires become fulfilled.

For example, it is strangely wonderful to walk through these slums and red-light areas, giving away smiles, hugs and love to anyone who will make eye contact with me. And when I get to express genuine love in these environments, I often leave these neighborhoods overflowing with love and compassion rather than fear and intolerance. It is important to pursue what is relevant and substantial instead of that which is frothy and superfluous.

At the same time NightCare was developing a larger footprint in Cambodia, my team in Denver, Colorado was facing a new challenge. Susan, who had

been so instrumental in opening NightCare, needed to resign from her role with Saving Moses to look after an urgent family concern. I felt a heavy weight in my soul from my determination to expand NightCare, but this conflicted with the administrative deficiency created by Susan's departure.

With Susan leaving, it became clear to me that I'm not gifted with administrative abilities, regardless of how hard I try. Having me do the organization, administrative oversight and operational systems is like asking an amoeba to change into a giraffe! It really bothered me to lose Susan and I realized that I need people gifted in administration, operations, finance and more, to come alongside me. So I prayed.

At that time, a wonderful woman who had been an assistant to my mom many years earlier, expressed an interest in helping with Saving Moses. I eagerly welcomed PJ on my team, which now had two members: PJ and me. PJ has been an invaluable team member for many years with me. She has been faithful and dedicated, wholeheartedly embracing the vision for Saving Moses. And while I was incredibly grateful for PJ, I also recognized that we both needed additional skills and talents for Saving Moses, that neither of us possessed.

It's important to recognize the value of teamwork, and the role we can play on a team, because the truth is that we can do more together than we can by ourselves. For me, this lesson is often recycled in my life because I tend to be a maverick and try to do things on my own. But I've grown in this area, recognizing that it's entirely impossible to do anything magnificent without a team.

In relation to the need for more administrative support, when I prayed, God answered in the least expected way. One Saturday afternoon in my hometown of Denver, I found myself sitting across the table from a stranger, sharing a plate of grasshopper appetizers. We were at a luncheon for a mutual friend who was visiting from out of town. As we ate our grasshoppers, we introduced ourselves and made the customary small talk. Over the course of the conversation, I asked about her background, education and hobbies.

I learned that “Heidi” had just graduated with her master’s degree in international business and was interested in doing humanitarian work for children overseas. “What a coincidence!” I said. “I have a wonderful teammate, PJ, who has been extremely helpful. But my administrative person for my new organization just resigned because of a family crisis. Why don’t you come and work with us?”

Maybe this isn’t exactly verbatim, but it’s pretty close to how the conversation unfolded as I introduced myself, and Saving Moses, and explained what we were doing at that time. Additionally, I explained my desire to grow, along with my frustrations at my inabilities and deficiencies with operational support and administrative leadership.

Heidi was very interested in what I was describing but she explained that she had just signed a year-long contract to do operational support for a private school nearby. I asked if she’d consider doing some volunteer work for us. We needed some extensive research about NightCare and which countries around the world would be most suited for the vision of Saving Moses: most urgent and least available. She said she’d be open to helping PJ and me with some volunteer work once she settled into her new job, so we exchanged phone numbers and I said I’d be in contact with her.

Over the next several months, Heidi did heaps of essential research for us and we met several times to review her findings. In the early part of 2014, she asked if I was still interested in having her work full-time for Saving Moses since her contract at the school was up for renewal. I eagerly replied, “YES!” She began working for Saving Moses in July of 2014.

After only a few days in the office, she joined our team trip to Cambodia for ten days and that was a great introduction to the urgency and importance of NightCare. In my opinion, oftentimes the best way to learn new things is to jump in the deep end and that is exactly what Heidi did!

Here are Heidi’s words from her first trip with NightCare as she describes talking with one of the moms:

“I remember sitting in a one-bedroom home, on a bed next to a mother who

brings her baby (less than a year) to NightCare. As she talked to us, she rocked her baby in a hammock as he struggled to fall asleep. She was so proud of her son; she insisted I take pictures of him with my phone. When I showed her the picture I took, she smiled widely with pride.

We sat with her as she told us her story. She was emotional as she recounted her recent past. She explained to us that she had been married twice but both of her husbands had left her. She is the sole provider for her family and works as a sex worker to make ends meet. In this industry, she makes very little money. Because of the industry, she is HIV positive. In sadness she said, ‘I used to be beautiful, but I have lost so much weight and am so weak.’

She tenderly cared for her baby as she spoke to us. As a mom, I connected with her. You are trying to give your children more than what you were given. You want nothing but the best for them, but sometimes you can’t give them the best. You pray that they don’t have to live through the pain you have lived through.

She brings her child to NightCare. It gives her hope because she can put her child in a safe and nurturing environment when she works. It enables her to give her child the care and protection she wants him to have - the care that she, in and of herself, cannot provide him.

As we parted, I looked her in the eyes and told her through a translator that she is a good mother. She looked at me with a smile. In that moment, we had a connection that surpassed our cultural and language barriers. We were both mothers who loved our children and wanted to do whatever we could for them. I will always remember her and her precious baby.”

I totally love that Heidi was so deeply impacted by her first trip with Saving Moses!

Both PJ and Heidi have been with Saving Moses for more than five years now and their contributions have been nothing less than totally astounding! Over the course of these years we’ve added four countries to our work, run multiple campaigns to save thousands of babies, added five

NightCare centers and more than fifty employees, and have tremendously expanded our work.

Teamwork is an essential ingredient to doing great things and I'm absolutely privileged to join such incredible people who are devoted to this mission of preserving life from its most fragile beginning!

When I think back to 2013, I know it was a challenging year for me in my soul because I felt a powerful drive to expand and do more, but I didn't have the finances, people resources, administrative structure or operational wisdom to expand. I had an overabundance of zeal, but an undersupply of provision. So, when Susan resigned, it added more fuel to my frustration fire. Thankfully, God often comes through to help us in unexpected ways. Meeting Heidi at a random lunch was one of God's amazing provisions!

At the same time Saving Moses was experiencing growing pains in our home office, I was also supremely discontented with the size and quantity of our NightCare work in Cambodia. Not only did I visit a very shady neighborhood with my ten-year-old son, but I also kept hearing about other red-light areas throughout Phnom Penh. Furthermore, from the research that Heidi did in her volunteer work for us, I learned of other large red-light districts around the world. My eyes were opened to the monstrous size of the sex industry, though I stayed laser-focused on the babies and toddlers who are the innocent ones.

I continued to press hard to expand our NightCare work, specifically in Cambodia because of the urgency and need I saw when I walked through the mini brothel described at the beginning of this chapter. And our team in Cambodia stepped up to the plate, worked hard and opened our second NightCare in Phnom Penh, less than eighteen months after the opening of the first center.

LESSONS LEARNED

TEAMWORK

Losing Susan drove home the poignant lesson that if there is to be any accomplishment that exceeds my passion and abilities, I must appreciate that I am merely one member of a team. To be sure, there have always been very helpful people along the journey with Saving Moses. Various people have contributed with marketing help, financial assistance, administrative wisdom, photography and video support, operational collaboration and loads more!

All of this has been extremely helpful to me at the fundamental level of recognizing the value and impact of teamwork. While the importance of teamwork may seem obvious to some, it's been a tremendous revelation for me because at my core I'm fiercely independent, which can be a weakness of crippling proportion. I've come to realize that even with my best effort, I'm entirely inadequate to accomplish anything significant or lasting on my own. I need people who are not like me, who are gifted in diverse ways, and who see things from different perspectives. As we work together, respecting each other's talents and contributions, we can accomplish astounding achievements that far exceed our individual abilities!

TRUST

Even though the word "trust" is short, easy to say and commonly verbalized, it can be a challenging verb and lesson. At the beginning of this chapter, I described a situation in which my son had to trust me even though he was super scared. And with Saving Moses, as we were beginning to get more established with NightCare and expand past our first center, I had to grow in my ability to trust not only God, but also other people.

Because I'm so independent, it's sometimes very difficult for me to trust. I have to be purposeful in choosing to trust both God and others. Now I recognize that each mom who allows us to look after her baby is trusting

us with her most important treasure. Trust is an essential ingredient for accomplishing very significant goals!

It can be challenging to trust because of disappointments we've had in our past where we've been burned, betrayed or deeply hurt by people we've trusted. And sometimes it's even tricky to trust God because He is invisible, and because of disappointments, unanswered prayers and times when God may have seemed absent or disinterested. But the decision to trust is necessary for the journey with teamwork.

It's true that both God and people will disappoint us, but regardless of how we feel or the circumstances in which we find ourselves, it's nonetheless essential that we choose to trust.

