

# A broken heart

October 3, 2011

As soon I emerge from the rubble and trash, a maze of tiny houses begin. I stumble through the uneven and broken pavement trying to hold my balance. Kids run all around me.

“Hi, aunty!” one yells. As I look at him, a naked boy with a crusty nose and black-tainted cheeks, my heart slowly begins to break.

I wave and smile, trying to not to let him see how insecure I feel. Even after coming here many times, it still feels like it’s the first time.

I keep going, eyes on the ground, minding every uncertain step I take.

I briefly look inside the tiny one-room houses, and I see most of their space is filled with altars for their idols. Flowers and burning incense surround well-adorned mantles.

I see it as I pass the next shack, and the next one, and the next.  
My heart keeps breaking.

Kids, animals, women, they all spew into the alleyways outside their tiny compound. One woman washes dishes with dirty water, while her neighbor picks lice from her 2-year-old child’s hair.

I see dogs quenching their thirst from the same water everyone drinks.

Don’t they know it isn’t safe? Don’t they know it isn’t healthy?  
How can they? It’s the only source of water they have around.

I try to clear my mind praying for God’s voice to comfort me in the middle of such desolate view. Then, I remembered my past prayer: “Break my heart for what breaks yours.”

Prayer request granted.

I squeeze my way through a tiny alley filled with puddles of stagnant water. I block out the odors, but I have to breath sometime. So, every now and then, I take in the stench.

I can smell the hopelessness.

A couple of steps more and there I'll be, a tiny building cramped with 50-ish tiny souls waiting for me to shake their tiny little hands—to tell them more about a friend named "Jesus."

Barefooted, naked, dirty and stinky, they all surround me. Before, I would have cared. Now, everything blends in thanks to the love I've been given, thanks to the love I have to share.

It's nearing 5 p.m., and it'll be dark soon. So, I begin with a simple prayer that echoes over the slum.

"Thank you, Jesus, for my life. Thank you, Jesus, for my family. Thank you for loving us and for your sacrifice. Amen."

*S.M. is student at the University of Texas-Pan American, serving with Go Now Missions in South Asia. Her full name is withheld for security reasons.*