

A peek into the slum

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Tin roofs. Clothes hanging to dry. Stray dogs and cats. Dirt roads. Buckets of water. Trash. This is what I saw in a slum in South Asia.

✘ But climb a cramped staircase and peer around a corner in this same slum, and you will find a group of children, shouting "Hallelujah" at the top of their lungs.

The children range from toddlers to adolescents, and they are privileged to attend a ministry every Sunday where they can praise God together, learn a story from his word, play games, and even memorize Scripture.

And you should hear them pray. As we pray in English at the end of each session, they whisper their agreement with tightly shut eyes and clasped hands. When we are finished, they pray in their language, with volume and passion. Once they even prayed for a friend of theirs, who told them about some kind of stomach problem he was experiencing. Under the guidance of a minister, they stretched out their hands and prayed for healing.

The poverty itself is appalling, but what gets me even more is the joy ✘ of these children. They live in filth, in need and in tragedy. Yet, they come and praise Jesus. We remind them they must turn to him when they are afraid and bad things happen. The only thing I can pray for these children is that they will do just that.

When they lose a friend to a violent death, when they can't afford food for the week, when they go through illness, when they feel oppressed by evil, when others criticize and deceive, when God seems so far away—they will remember these stories, songs and verses. They will lift their eyes up and continue to say, "Hallelujah."

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