

Real Life Stories *The Faith of a Little Child*

Helen Roseveare, a missionary doctor from England to Zaire, Africa told the following story as she stood before the congregation on February 4th, 1976.

One night I had worked hard to help a mother in the labor ward, but in spite of all we could do she died leaving us with a tiny premature baby and a crying two year old daughter. We would have difficulty keeping the baby alive, as we had no incubator and no special feeding facilities. Although we lived on the Equator, nights were often chilly with treacherous drafts. One student midwife went for the box we had for such babies and the cotton wool the baby would be wrapped in. Another went to stoke up the fire and fill a hot water bottle. She came back in distress to tell me that in filling the bottle, it had burst, as rubber perishes easily in tropical climates. *“And it is our last hot water bottle!”* she exclaimed. *“All right”* I said, *“Your job is to keep the baby warm. Put the baby as near the fire as you safely can and sleep between the baby and the door to keep it free from drafts.”*

The following noon, as I did most days, I went to have prayers with the orphanage children who chose to gather with me. I gave the youngsters various things to pray for and told them about the tiny baby. I explained our problem about keeping the baby warm, mentioning the hot water bottle, and also mentioned the little 2 year old sister left crying because of her mother’s death. During the prayer time, one ten year old girl, Ruth, prayed the usual blunt conciseness of our African children. *“Please God”*, she prayed, *“send us a water bottle. It’ll be no good tomorrow God, as the baby will be dead, so please send it this afternoon.”* While I gasped inwardly at the audacity of the prayer, she then added, *“And while you are at it would you please send a dolly for the little girl, so she’ll know you really love her.”*

As often with children’s prayers, I was put on the spot. Could I honestly say, “Amen?” I know that God can do everything, but there are limits aren’t there? I had been in Africa for 4 years and I had never received a parcel from home. Anyway, if anyone DID send me a parcel who would put in a hot water bottle (for I lived on the Equator) let alone a doll.

Halfway through the afternoon, while I was teaching in the nurse’s school, a message was sent that there was something sitting on my front verandah. When I reached home there on my front step was a large 22 pound box. I felt tears pricking my eyes, and with excitement mounting, I called the orphanage children together. Carefully undoing the string that held the box together, some 30 or 40 pairs of eyes were focused on what was inside the large container. From the top I lifted out brightly colored knitted jerseys, then there were the knitted bandages for the leprosy patients, then came a box of mixed raisins and sultanas. As I put my hand in again, I felt the . . . could it really be? I grasped it and pulled it out – yes! A brand new rubber hot water bottle! I cried. I had not asked God to send it; I had not truly believed that He could. Sitting in the front row of children was Ruth, and rushing forward she cried out, *“If God has sent the bottle, He MUST have sent the dolly too!”* Rummaging down to the bottom of the box, she pulled out the small, beautifully dressed dolly. She had never doubted. Looking up at me, she asked, *“Can I go over with you Mummy and give this dolly to that little girl, so she’ll know that Jesus really loves her?”*

That parcel had been on the way to Africa for 5 months, packed by a Sunday school class, whose leader had heard and obeyed God’s prompting to send a hot water bottle, even to the Equator. And one of the girls had put in a dolly for an African child – five months before – in answer to the believing prayer of a 10 year old to bring it that afternoon.

“Before they call, I will answer” Isaiah 65:24.