

Surviving in the Congo



Monday's *Perspective* featured a story told by Dr. Helen Roseveare about the miraculous way God answered the prayer of a 10-year-old girl for a much-needed hot-water bottle for a prematurely born baby girl and for a doll for the baby's sister.

But the life of Dr. Roseveare herself is an incredible account of devotion to God and her strong love for needy people in a faraway land.

Dr. Roseveare was an English Christian missionary, doctor and author. She worked with Worldwide Evangelization Crusade in the Congo from 1953 to 1973, including part of the period

of political instability in the early 1960s. She died at age 91 this past December in Northern Ireland.

Born in Haileybury College in Hertfordshire, England, in 1925, Roseveare became a Christian as a medical student at Newnham College in Cambridge in 1945. She was involved with the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, attending prayer meetings, Bible study classes and evangelical events. While a student, she attended a missionary gathering in North England and declared publicly, "I'll go anywhere God wants me to, whatever the cost."

About making that pledge to God, in later years she related, "Afterwards, I went up into the mountains and had it out with God. 'Okay, God, today I mean it. Go ahead and make me more like Jesus, whatever the cost. But please (knowing myself fairly well), when I feel I can't stand anymore and cry out, *Stop!* Will you ignore my *stop* and remember that today I said, *Go ahead?*'"

After completing her studies, Roseveare went as a medical missionary to the Congo in 1953, assigned to the northeast provinces. She built a combination hospital/training center in Ibambi, then relocated to Nebobongo, living in an old leprosy camp, where she built another hospital. After conflict with other staff at the hospital, she returned to England in 1958.

She returned to the Congo in 1960. In 1964, she was taken prisoner by rebel forces and remained a prisoner for five months, enduring beatings and rapes. Roseveare survived the rapes and trial during the Congolese civil war in 1964 because of the intervention of the villagers she had helped.

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She left the Congo and headed back to England after her release, but returned to the Congo in 1966 to assist in the rebuilding of the nation. She helped establish a new medical school and hospital, as the other hospitals that she built had been destroyed, and served there until she left in 1973.

After her return from Africa, she had a worldwide ministry speaking and writing.

God has a purpose for each human being, and Dr. Roseveare found hers and remained faithful to it. She stuck to her commitment at great peril to herself, and she was motivated by an incredible love for her Lord and for the people to whom she was sent.

And therein is the lesson for each of us: Serve God and serve others. It is the mission to which we are called.

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace (1 Peter 4:10 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter