



Living Out “Christ In You” Every Day

Greg H. Parsons



I was recently asked to serve the leadership of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) as a global strategist. My first assignment was to glean major themes and action steps in the papers from the 31 Issue Groups that met last year at a LCWE conference in Thailand. Almost every group identified one major need: to raise up committed believers who take their

faith seriously. Many groups suggested *that* would solve many other global problems inside and outside the Church.

This need came to mind as I thought about the life of Elsie Purnell, a friend and co-worker who died June 25, 2005. We need more people like Elsie.



Elsie Purnell, 1934-2005

I am deeply challenged by the stories told by those Elsie loved and served. Some stories come from new missionaries Elsie counseled. Others come from those advised by Elsie when they were adjusting to different cultures. Some come from parents or missionary kids (MKs) or adult MKs who needed help in adjusting to their home cultures. Others come from families shattered by the murder of a son or daughter.

Elsie and her husband Herb served with the Overseas Missionary Fellowship in north Thailand for more than 15 years, and in 1982 they came to Pasadena to serve here in a variety of effective ways. Those who knew Elsie employ these kinds of words and phrases to portray her life.

- She loved: her roots in New Jersey; her children; other mothers; the richness of culture; art; opportunity.
- She was: a faithful encourager; a low-key leader;

an organizer of women; a connector of all kinds of people; able to maintain friends over many years and places; a counselor to missionaries, parents, kids, and others in deep need; able to listen to those in pain and help them verbalize it; fearless with the truth.

- She was: a fighter through the murder of her oldest daughter, through a fire that destroyed her home, and through cancer; a minister alert to opportunity and need; consistently present for community meetings.
- She saw needs and met them, like giving renewed energy to the local chapter of Parents of Murdered Children, or ministering to Third Culture Kids and adult MKs.
- She always had more time than you did, and never seemed in a hurry when it came to people.

Elsie was one who acknowledged her own inadequacy, not just in the big things, but in everything. She could say with the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:5-6, “Not that we are adequate to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who has made us adequate as servants of the New Covenant.”

Elsie sought to impart life in the midst of difficulty and pain. Yes, we need more believers like Elsie Purnell. While key ministries like the LCWE identify broad themes in world evangelization, the LCWE and others remind us that there’s no substitute for salt-and-light sisters and brothers who reveal the life of Jesus amidst gritty, daily challenges. Thank God for friends like Elsie who point the way. 🌐



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