

# LEARNING TO LOVE

PASSION, COMPASSION AND THE ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL

HEIDI AND ROLLAND BAKER



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# Foreword

*Learning to Love* is a compelling story of the day-to-day workings of one of the world's most amazing ministries through one of the world's most amazing couples. Church history testifies to this fact. And thankfully, it's happening now, not hundreds of years ago. The setting is Mozambique, Africa, where everything seems to be experienced in the extreme.

This book has been birthed out of a life of deep contrasts—great suffering and great joy, extreme poverty and supernatural supply, tragic loss followed by great gain and advancement. There has been so much opposition and persecution, so much loss and daily opportunity for discouragement and giving up. But you won't find that theme here. This book is a book of victory, healings, salvations, overcoming insurmountable odds and the continuous celebration and joy in the goodness of God that meets every need presented.

Rolland and Heidi Baker's impact on my life is hard to articulate without sounding careless with flattery. Yet everything I could say is understated. They illustrate the fullness of Jesus'

life and ministry in a greater measure than is normally seen or heard of in our day.

All the elements that make up a true kingdom lifestyle of significance are theirs and are increasing—the sheer number of conversions, transformation of society, purity in heart and life and demonstrations of power, including resurrections from the dead. All these things testify of the wonder of the Lord Jesus Christ working in and through them. Their impact on Mozambique is legendary, especially considering the measure of darkness that overshadowed that nation when the Bakers arrived so many years ago. But though these measurements may provide a legitimate standard for examining their “success,” their outstanding feature is unquestionably love. Hence, the title of this book: *Learning to Love*. Everything listed above flows from this one thing—love. They love. And they love well.

Simply put, *Learning to Love* raises the bar on our understanding of the normal Christian life. Rolland and Heidi Baker would be the first to tell us that they are normal believers with an extraordinary God, and what they do is meant to be the norm. The simplicity of their devotion to Christ is alarming. And the measure of power that they and their team live in is breathtaking.

Because of this, much happens out in the bush with tribes that have never before heard the Gospel. The setting is almost always dangerous, from the treacherous roads, to flying to remote villages, to finding a way across the sea in a boat to reach the unreached, to the angry witch doctors who are threatened by their presence. The day-to-day takes on a whole new meaning as you are taken on the adventure of giving the Gospel to hungry people in remote places and seeing the goodness of God demonstrated time and time again. Healings happen easily, and so many have come to the Lord because of this willing and giving ministry. Life as usual pales in the light of

these stories. This book stirs up a hunger for the “more”—at any cost.

Rolland and Heidi Baker have not tried to deviate from the standard or example that Jesus gave us. Love is supreme. Settling for life without power is unacceptable. Going into the darkest places on earth to find the lost is the mandate: no excuses. This is how they live. And we are the better for it.

Bill Johnson, Bethel Church, Redding, California; author,  
*Hosting the Presence* and *When Heaven Invades Earth*

# Introduction

*Hong Kong, the late '80s.* Having begun Iris Ministries in 1980 in the United States as a short-term missions organization reaching out to the Philippines, and later basing ourselves in Indonesia, Rolland and I were eventually denied permanent missionary visas and found ourselves on a plane to Hong Kong, where we would minister for the next few years.

Walking through the backstreets one day, far from the bright lights and bustling thoroughfares of downtown, I saw a small girl huddled in an alleyway. She was lost, alone, dirty and abandoned. The thought struck me: *If I don't pause to show this girl even the smallest, most basic act of kindness, then who will?* She wasn't crying out, demanding my attention or making a fuss. It would have been so easy to just keep walking, look the other way, go about my business. . . .

*London, England, the early '90s.* Rolland and I moved to England to study for our PhDs at the University of London. In this vast, sprawling conurbation we found the same paradox: incredible wealth living shoulder to shoulder with utter poverty



and desperation. In London this can somehow co-exist in areas barely one street apart—or even at opposite ends of the same street!

In no time at all we were confronted with the need we had encountered on the streets of Hong Kong. A homeless man was roaming the streets. He had lived another life in Eastern Europe as a celebrated concert pianist. He had left everything and moved to London to further his career. But the expected connections never made good, doors of opportunity shut in his face and his finances dwindled. Before he knew it, he had nothing; no credentials in this city and no way of returning to his former life. I saw him sitting in a doorway, lost in his thoughts, wondering how circumstances had conspired to bring him to this. He reminded me of the little girl in Hong Kong; he had that same faraway look of resigned hopelessness.

Someone had to do something. We began a church among the homeless, which we ran for the duration of our doctoral studies. We were determined that the *homeless* should not also be the *hopeless*.

*Mozambique, the mid-'90s.* We arrived in Mozambique in 1995 and it has been the focus of our ministry ever since. One day I came across a young girl by the roadside. She was a ten-year-old with one leg missing, which she had lost in a house fire. Being of “no use” to anyone as an amputee, her grandmother had ordered her brothers to stone her to death in a field. One less mouth to feed. They left her for dead, but she somehow survived. Now she was living on the street, selling her body for the price of a soda or a mouthful of bread. It broke my heart to see her and I was faced with that question again: *Who will stop for this one? Who will make a difference in her life? Who will be the hands of Jesus to her?*

This little girl, Elaina, taught me that *love looks like something*. What is love if it does not look like something—a

comforting word, an offer of help, something to eat, clothes to wear? This is the Gospel.

I realize that reading this account of what God is doing in Mozambique can seem terrifying, overwhelming and somewhat detached from the day-to-day reality of life for many.

Or is it?

If there is one thing I have learned it is this: Poverty and desperation do not always look the way we expect. There are countless thousands in our world who need someone to stop for them, someone to show them God's kindness and mercy. Never let the fact that they wear suits and drive nice cars fool you—nor the fact that they appear to have their lives together. Simmering just below the surface is the same hopelessness and despair that lived in the eyes of the girl in the alleyway, the man in the doorway, the girl by the roadside; they have simply learned to disguise it. There are people in need where you are, just as there are people in need where I am.

Another thing I have learned: *I am not qualified to do what I do!* I am far from perfect. In and of myself, I can do nothing. It is only Christ in me that empowers me to stop for the one, and then do something practical for that person. But I have found that as I make the decision simply to stop and pay attention, Jesus unleashes miraculous power beyond my imagining.

This is how I know, without doubt, that He can do the same through you. If He can use me, He can use anyone. Jesus can use you to be an example of His love wherever you are and whatever you do. Whether you work in a store, for a bank, at a hospital, in an office . . . as you learn to surrender your life to Him more and more, He *will* touch lives through you and you *will* see miracles. You may not need a miracle of food multiplication in your situation. But you may need the miracle of hard hearts softened and relationships transformed. You may need the miracles of emotional brokenness healed and wholeness restored.

Wherever you find yourself on your journey with God today, please know that He can use *you* to do something amazing. All that is required is a simple act of obedience on your part. Do what only you can do—because you are there!—and God will do what only He can do.

Heidi Baker, 2012



# Preface

The glistening blue-green ocean could not be any more beautiful. Gleaming, wet children are running, leaping and doing cartwheels all the way up and down the beach. Many others are splashing and diving into the water. Palm trees and cumulus clouds drift softly in the gentle breeze to complete the impression of *freedom, peace and joy*. Today we are celebrating all the birthdays of the month of our Iris Ministries family here in Pemba and our students' success in school.

After hours of play we all gather to distribute gifts. Each birthday child and top student gets a colorful bag full of presents. Then we line everyone up for cake and soft drinks. From two-year-olds to teenagers, everyone is enjoying a rich day together.

It is both our calling and our inheritance to bring His life to the homeless, the desperately poor and forgotten. Their beautiful, beaming smiles are the reward Jesus gives us. We love bringing salvation *to the least of these*. Without the power of God we could not exist here. Every celebration drink and bag of gifts is made possible by the miraculous generosity of God's people.

Our missionary and Mozambican teams are heroes to us. Our passion and compassion are ignited by the Holy Spirit. Our health and sustenance come from Him. Our hope for all these children comes from the Gospel alone. For us, every day is a celebration of our life in Jesus. *Thank you* for celebrating with us!



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PART 1

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# **PASSION AND COMPASSION**





# 1

## The Great Wedding Feast

*“Lord, I’m asking You to wreck my heart and to make it bigger.”*

*Heidi:* We are profoundly grateful for everyone around the world who remembers us in our beloved Mozambique. We receive support from all around the world, which goes to feed the hungry people here that Jesus has asked us to feed—both spiritually and physically. It amazes me how God has raised up such faithful ones to assist in accomplishing His work. They are our beloved and extended family, and we so appreciate the prayers, love and extravagant gifts for the poor that every person contributes.

Recently, the Lord has been speaking to me from the parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14. I had the honor of hosting more than four thousand guests at the wedding of our daughter, Crystalyn Joy, to Brock Human. It was a glorious, beautiful day with the sunshine shimmering on the stunning turquoise Indian Ocean.



Our daughter, Crystalyn, on her wedding day

Rolland walked Crystalyn down the sandy aisle. A sea of African children, all singing, streamed down from the streets and joined in the bridal procession. Pastor José from Maputo and Pastor José from Pemba—our coastal town of some fifty thousand people in the northern province of Cabo Delgado—helped me officiate the wedding ceremony.



Crystalyn and Brock stood under a massive bougainvillea wedding arch. The wedding was set on the beach right across from our “Village of Joy,” and 64 of our Mozambican children comprised the bridal party. They looked fabulously colorful in their blue and yellow *kapelanas* and African shirts.

The reception was filled with praise and dancing. Hundreds of pastors and our Harvest School of Missions students served at the wedding feast, dishing out plates heaped with rice, chicken and salad, with cold Coke to drink. The prime minister of Mozambique, business leaders and the poor all ate together. Every one of our four thousand guests received a piece of cake. Many

of them ate cake for the first time in their lives. What fun to watch their smiles as all were fed! Food was served for hours. We had commissioned every student and missionary to be baking cakes for days on end.

All of us felt we should model this wedding feast after Luke 14:13: “When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed.” We printed invitations and, just as in Luke 14:21, we went “out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town.” After doing this, I was delighted to learn that we still had room, so then we went out to the roads and remote villages, calling people to come so that our church would be filled.

God longs for His house to be filled. He is calling His servant-lovers to run out and call in the poor to His incredibly beautiful wedding feast. He paid for this banquet with His own Son’s life, so that all of us could eat. It was a delight to see our new church building filled to overflowing, with everyone enjoying this great wedding day. I felt God smiling on the service as our daughter was married during the most stunning Mozambican sunset.

## Family Ties

I love having my natural-born children and family with me this summer. Last week, together as one big family, we rode off to the “bush bush” to preach the Gospel. For the uninitiated, the “bush” in Mozambique is the remote, hard-to-reach places. We have explored the bush, now God is calling us into the “bush bush”—the places where hardly any living souls have cared to venture before.

Over potholes, through fields and unpaved roads, we bounced along for hours singing in my Land Rover, one of a small convoy of vehicles. We love bringing the Good News to the ends of the



Reenacting the parable of the Good Samaritan

earth. Later, in the African night, we pulled into an unreached village where only sixty people had even heard of the name of Jesus.

I climbed up on our four-ton truck, our makeshift preaching platform, as the night began. My spiritual sons and daughters performed a drama about the Good Samaritan. I used this passage to invite the village to meet my Friend—the One who stopped for us—King Jesus. I preached my heart out and loved watching the crowds raise their hands in response. They wanted God! A deaf girl heard, many others were healed and the fame of His name went out from that village.

The village chief was overwhelmed with joy and asked us to open a children’s center in his village. He called all the village elders together the next morning to meet with me. He himself had given his life to the Lord in his mud hut as I shared about the beauty of Jesus. We camped out in tents and sleeping bags underneath the African stars, gathering around a campfire as the Mozambican student-pastors shared their testimonies with our mission-school students. Early in the morning we serenaded Brock for his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. What a wonderful and unusual way

to spend a birthday! The next morning we drove our vehicles to the beach to baptize the new converts.

On the way to the ocean, one of my spiritual sons, Herbert, got his Land Rover stuck in the mud. He had spent two months last year during our terrible floods driving his Land Rover across Mozambique to help feed the fifty thousand people facing starvation. But today—a clear and sunny day—his vehicle was stuck in the mud for six hours! The tide was coming in, so it took a small village to rescue us. Twenty-six new Makua friends (the Makua are the largest ethnic group in northern Mozambique) gathered around the car for hours, working as a team to pull the vehicle out of the mud.



Being dug out of the mud

If the Land Rover had not been stuck, they might not have gotten saved. Jesus stopped for us. We stopped for them. But then they stopped for us! I loved not only giving to the villages, but also receiving from them. We needed their help, and we all worked as one big family, pulling the Land Rover out. We did it together in Jesus. Surely, He lifts us up from our miry pits to set our feet on solid ground. We gave the villagers a gift of

three solar-powered New Testament audio players, which they will listen to every night.

I learn so much from my Mozambican friends in their villages and mud huts. I come as a learner first. Then I have the joy of watching them meet Jesus. Village after village is meeting Him and being shaken by the power of His love. We want to invite an entire nation to this wedding feast.

## Into His Love

*Rolland:* One week after the outreach Heidi just described, we set out again in our Land Rovers and four-ton truck—this time to a village that had never heard the Gospel at all. No one in the village knew the name of Jesus.

Somehow we had missed this village, even after planting 670 churches in this “unreachable” province of Cabo Delgado since we arrived five years ago. But once more a deaf-mute was healed and the entire village was electrified and turned to Jesus.

In this case Heidi prayed for the deaf young man and suddenly he could hear. He had neither heard nor spoken a word in his entire life. With his newly found voice he began to imitate Heidi’s syllables and the crowd went wild. Everyone knew this man and they knew this had to be God. Clapping, laughing and cheering, the crowd hoisted him up onto their shoulders. Hope came to this village, to every hungry, childlike heart.

The next morning we got down to business and bought a piece of land on which to construct a church building. We will send them a pastor and bring potential leaders among them to one of our Harvest Bible Schools to be trained. Now the village is part of a larger family, and we pray that mercy and grace, power and glory will rain down on its people without measure. They will need much teaching and discipling—something that happens when missionaries take time to visit villages and spend



Deaf and mute from birth, he is now hearing and speaking

one-on-one time with the people. This is where the most spiritual progress is made.

### It Starts with a Question

*Heidi:* Jesus loves us so much that He *never* leaves us the way He finds us. His love often starts with a question—a question that reaches down from the safety of our minds, right into our hearts. *Do you love Me?*

Often we are too quick to answer when God asks us a question. Usually, our hearts have not fully grasped what He wants us to understand. God is looking to affect our hearts more than our minds. He wants to *wreck* our hearts—to change the way our hearts feel and react to the situations that exist in a broken world.

*Do you love Me?* Will you complete your work? Will you fulfill your destiny because of who Jesus is? That is the only reason to do anything, beloved, and it is the only safe place to be—in Him, drinking Him, imbibing Him over and over; to be filled and poured out, filled and poured out.

Day and night Jesus is the Bread and the Wine that sustains me. He is everything I need. Unless I have more of Him, I cannot function. I do not have a backup plan. Some speakers can pull out their laptops and show amazing PowerPoint presentations. I am not being facetious when I say that these things really *do* impress me. I always say “Wow!” when I see them. But that is not me. I can barely operate a computer. There are many things I am not good at—but I do have *passion* for the Presence of Jesus. The cry of my heart is: *God, unless You show up, I’ll die!* I am a desperate person.

Scripture says, “Love the Lord your God with all your mind.” We are called to love God with every fiber of our being. All of us, in our entirety, must be wholly given over to the Master—our hearts, our souls, our minds, our emotions. God wants us to be fully yielded to Him. To “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”—this is passion. Why would any of us want to go to one more church meeting if we did not possess this kind of passion? I confess: I do not like church! Unless God shows up, I do not like it. Without Him it is almost entirely pointless, isn’t it?

Let us determine to live a life abandoned to His love—a life made up of passion. Decide to trade the worst for the best, death for life, darkness for light.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:7–8

In surrender we actually lose nothing. We stand only to gain. We are gaining a life lived in His love. I pray that we will lay down



our little lives in His love, like tiny seeds, asking Him to water us with the Spirit of the Living God—seeds that are planted to bring forth life as He shows us how to live.

An oak tree starts life as an acorn hidden in the dirt. Nobody would even know it was there. But contained within that tiny, hidden thing are all the makings of beauty, might, splendor and shelter. The little acorn simply takes a lifetime to become all that it was always meant to be.

Before anything else, beloved, we are His, hidden in Him.

### **Time to Reflect**

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When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

John 21:15