

Very good intentions but too many sad stories. That's how I would summarize missions. Changed lives, but at an unexpected high price for many. Please don't skip the word "unexpected". There are many attempts and approaches to reason with suffering, but hardly any, if any at all, satisfying answers for victims. "God is good!", "God the healer" "By his stripes we are healed" ... doesn't really cut it.

# Too many sad stories

## Harry, with a larger organization somewhere in Asia

There is something about this topic on violence, persecution and martyrdom, which I don't like. Don't misunderstand me: I appreciate and support the developments, political works, and support groups for human rights very much. I live in a country where many of the older pastors have been in jail and labor camps for 20 years. They paid an extremely high price for their faith and I don't want to belittle that. But something is missing in evangelical circles, when we talk about this.

And I think I am referring to the emotional violence and pain. Emotional violence is usually embedded in physical violence and persecution. But there is a whole world out here of violated emotions without physical persecution and dangers.

I think that's why the recent killing of two young YWAMers in Colorado/USA doesn't raise any outstanding thoughts or emotions. There is another world out there, where other people get killed, but it's not on CNN. And there is another world out there, where people don't get killed, but carry devastating emotional wounds with them, which effect their work, their lives and the lives of their families and friends FOR EVER!

**Harry Hoffmann**, Germany, started his overseas work with establishing a rehabilitation center for handicapped orphans. Since then he founded two interagency Member Care centers in East and South East Asia. He loves leadership coaching, team development & organisational consulting.

**Case:** A Christian house helper of missionary friends brings her little baby to work. While cleaning the house the baby falls out of the window of the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, almost in front of some missionary friends feet who happen to pass by. They try to reanimate but the baby is dead.

**Case:** When the Taliban invaded Kabul, some of my missionary friends, while on vacation or home assignment couldn't go back to get their personal belongings, family pictures, personal memories nor their cat.

**Case:** One missionary mother starts hitting her child during their first year overseas. Their particular mission organization even has a child abuse department, which I have never heard of before in an agency. They were asked to move to another city to receive counseling for the whole family.

**Case:** One missionary, after working in a third world countries' orphanage for 3 years, was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, an anxiety disorder. It was diagnosed 10 years later, after a decade of struggle with self, life, faith, marriage and friends.

**Case:** We met Tsunami survivors who were able to find the body of their daughter, but can't find the body of their son. They still believe that he might be alive somewhere.

**Case:** The sons of two friends of mine in two different countries died, one due to

drugs, one committed suicide. They were marginalized by the church and in both cases a Christian funeral was denied.

**Case:** A lot (and not too much) has been published on missionary kids and their emotional suffering due to abandonment, abuse in boarding schools, absent mothers and fathers, and high expectations projected onto their lives.

**Case:** A missionary man runs off with his local secretary, leaving his wife, 3 kids and one just adopted local baby. And the reverberations are huge, with a long term negative effect on the unreached people group they were working in.

**Case:** A mission leader, who I would diagnose with a narcissistic personality disorder, leaves a long ditch of destruction behind him where ever he goes. Over 8 years now, people come to me talking about him, but there is no evidence to take action, except separation. One family joined a two-week "spiritual abuse counseling" and left the controlling environment right after that.

I could go on and on and on and on. And these events not only affect the immediate victim, but it negatively affects the lives of their families and friends as well. There is so much pain in this world. How does Jesus deal with that? He created us as fragile beings, easily wounded, physically as well as emotionally. Why?

Harry Hoffmann

And it's good that persecution and martyrdom gets our attention, but what about all the emotional pain, people are carrying. Does that get our attention? No! The evangelical leadership world, largely a male world, as well as many of our home cultures are less emotions based and more fact and cognitive based. The suffering which greatly is on an emotional basis is hard to catch, hard to describe. Physical wounds are much easier to deal with.

That's why I want to advocate for all those with emotional pain. You are OK! You are important! Your pain is real! Your suffering should be acknowledged! Your experiences

should be validated! You should be included and cared for by the church, by your mission and the body of Christ!

I remember one of my organisations regional conferences, where all of a sudden women started to come on stage and shared about their pain within the organization and with their male leaders in front of 600 people. It was a highly vulnerable situation but the leadership had enough guts to let that happen without justification. It deeply impacted me.

And I am so sorry, that so many weren't given a chance or enough chances to share.

It grieves me that many people get excluded from church because of emotional suffering. It grieves me that the body of Christ is not more healthy. It grieves me that many missions projects are run by goal-oriented man, where neither women nor emotions have space. It grieves me that it's so often about the task and the goal, and not about the people. And I am very sad that all of those with an enormous amount of pain don't have a voice, are not heard, feel pushed to "just sort it out", "get over it" and resolve it, are abandoned by the church and the body of Christ.

I really believe that's wrong. And it needs to change! <<