



## THE GREATEST HANDS

Hands can hold a child tenderly, or crack a whip to move a crowd. They can touch the sick and bring healing. They can hold a cup of water and pass it to a dying man. And Jesus' hands did it all.

I wonder what they looked like. He walked everywhere, always on dusty roads. When He ate fish by the shore with His disciples, there was no anti-bacterial soap dispenser nearby. Were His fingernails dirty? When He laid them on the heads of the sick, did they look like the hands of a physician?

When I was in Viet Nam, my little world came crashing down around me. About 6 months into my tour of duty my fiancée dropped me with a "Dear John" letter. A week later I learned my family was no longer going to our home church. A rift came between me and my family, and my future marriage plans were over. I got depressed, and Viet Nam was not a good place to be depressed. Too many weapons.

I left my duty post one day without permission. My CO yelled at me, but I kept going. I don't know where I went. I just walked around my base camp. Walked out to the wire, didn't care if a sniper took a shot or not. Finally I trudged back to my hootch and collapsed. I fell on my knees and laid across my cot.

I didn't pray. I kind of felt that God had failed me. I didn't know what to say to Him. So for a half hour or more I just laid on my face, my knees on the floor.

I wanted so badly to be able to communicate with someone back home. It's hard for kids these days to understand what life is like without cell phones, but in Viet Nam we not only had no cell phones, we had no phones of any kind. You couldn't go down to the corner pay phone and call home. No computers, no internet. Mail took 7 to 10 days to get home, and another 7 to get back, so communication had a two-week lag. It was lonely and miserable.

I lay as long as I could without moving, and eventually I thought I would just lift a hand toward God. So with my eyes closed I raised up off the bed, still on my knees, and reached a hand up toward heaven.

Beside my bed was a plywood divider. It was just a sheet of plywood I had scavenged from maintenance, but it gave me four feet of privacy in my little corner of the hootch. When I raised my hand up, one of my buddies, who had apparently been watching me in my prone position, reached over the divider and gripped my hand.

I flushed with embarrassment. I don't know why. They all knew I was Christian, and praying was not something I was ashamed of. But I was depressed, and I didn't want anyone to see me like this. And now a buddy was squeezing my hand over the divider.

I counted to ten to decide how to respond to him before I opened my eyes. I decided I would say something like, "You nut! What are you doing?" So I swallowed, got my composure, and opened my eyes to see which nut was, in fact, gripping my hand.

Imagine my surprise when there was no one there. Yet I was gripping someone's hand, and He had actually squeezed mine twice! I was nothing but goose pimples. I gasped, unable to find words. And then, in one of the few times I've really felt that God whispered to me, I heard: "If you'll just keep holding to this hand, I'll see to it that everything back home works out just right!"

Now the dam burst and I wept. I laid across my cot and wept, a good kind of weeping. I was reconnected. I trusted again.

And God kept His Word. He worked everything out, not just for the next year, but He continues to work it all out today.

It's the closest I've ever come to seeing what His hands look like.

Danny Carpenter is pastor of Grace Christian Family Place in Tomball, Texas