

***Street Children*** by Andy Butcher, Nelson Publishing, Nashville: 1996. (18 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

### **1. “Please sir, I want some more.”**

“These modern-day Olivers (street children) are being educationally disadvantaged. Emotionally wounded. Financially defrauded. Physically abused. Nutritionally starved. Sexually used. Environmentally deprived. Socially rejected. Spiritually scarred.

Young hands hold out begging bowls, glue-sniffing tins, hypodermic needles, weapons. And the unspoken plea I: ‘Please sir, I want some more.’” (Pg. 15)

### **2. Numbers Rising Worldwide**

“‘Up to 50,000 young people are homeless in London,’ reported the street children’s advocacy group Childhope UK in 1991, ‘and in other wealthy cities of Europe like Amsterdam, Berlin and Paris ... it’s more common to see young people begging on the streets.’

“More than 200,000 homeless children across Russia were reported by one newspaper, 40,000 in Moscow and 60,000 in St. Petersburg.”

“According to Graeme Irvine, President of World Vision, there are some 300,000 child prostitutes -under sixteen- in the United States, most of whom have fled homes where they were abused or neglected.” (Pg. 33)

### **3. Numbers Impossible to Calculate**

“If firm statistics are hard to find, that hasn’t stopped people trying to set some scale to the problem. Not surprisingly, there are differences of opinion – sometimes more a reflection of the mindset of the estimators than the reality of the situation.

‘The number of street children around the world is impossible to calculate with any degree of confidence,’ suggested *Newsweek*.

In many countries the government authorities responsible for providing care to such kids cling to outlandishly low estimates, apparently in an effort to deflect criticism at home and abroad.

Relief agencies, which have a vested interest in dramatizing the problem, brandish far higher figures ... Mexico’s social services agency declared that there were only 2,278 in

the entire country; some private welfare authorities estimate that as many as 1.8 million spend at least half their time living on the streets of Mexico City alone.” (PP. 34-35)

#### **4. Numbers Mushrooming**

“If there is disagreement on precisely how many street children are out there, there is consensus on the fact that the number is growing and , without some concerted attempt to address some of the underlying factors, will continue to grow in the years ahead.

‘Unless there is a reversal of current trends, the number of abandoned children is expected to double by the year 2000,’ warned World Vision’s Irvine.

Leading missionary researcher David Barrett, compiler of the World Christian Encyclopedia, projects the number of ‘megacity street children’ mushrooming to a staggering 800 million by the year 2000.” (Pg. 37)

#### **5. Children Abandoned throughout History**

“Historically, in Roman times, babies were frequently abandoned in public squares or on the communal rubbish tips – from where they would be taken in and cared for by others, often Christian families. The early church father, Tertullian, observed how ‘You [pagans] abandon your children to the kindness of strangers or to adoption by better parents.’

Parents often ‘exposed’ their children, as it was termed, either because they were the wrong sex, or the birth exceeded the two or three children considered to be the best or ‘proper’ family size.

According to noted historian John Boswell, ‘Children were abandoned throughout Europe from Hellenistic antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages in great numbers, by parents of every social standing, in a great variety of circumstances’

He added:

Parents abandoned their offspring in desperation when they were unable to support them, due to poverty or disaster; in shame, when they were unwilling to keep them because of their physical condition or ancestry –i.e. illegitimate or incestuous; in self-interest or the interest of another child, when inheritance or domestic resources would be compromised by another mouth; in hope, when they believed that someone of greater means or higher standing might find them and bring them up in better

circumstances; in resignation, when a child was of unwelcome gender or ominous auspices; or in callousness, if they simply could not be bothered with parenthood...

At no point did European society as a whole entertain serious sanctions against the practice. Most ethical systems, in fact, either tolerated or regulated. Ancient and early Christian moralists sometimes reproached parents for exposing their offspring, but rarely because the act itself was reprehensible; it was usually condemned as a token of irresponsible sexuality; or as a dereliction of some wider duty to state or family.

Almost no ancient writers adduced an inherent obligation of procreator to child; and few writers, in law, narrative or literature, blamed individual parents for exposing children.” (PP 44-45)

## **6. From the Frying Pan to the Fire**

“That the abandoned and unwanted children were usually rescued from the streets did not necessarily mean that they had been saved from danger, though. ‘The children who were rescued were abused in ways that boggle even our jaded minds,’ concluded historian C. John Sommerville.

‘Children were sold into concubinage by their parents and might live with the children of those who were using them.

Most Mediterranean cities had boy brothels, sometimes including castrated males used as sexless prostitutes. Abandoned children were raised as gladiators or deliberately maimed to help in begging.’” (Pg. 45)

## **7. Common Denominator: Family in Crisis**

“While there are differences in the cause and effect of street children’s lives between the West and developing countries, there are also, as Agnelli\* observed,

... many features in common.

All those on the street, everywhere, can be described as victims of the crisis of the family. The breakdown of family structure and traditional values, massive emigration, the economic decline of neighbourhoods in the North, and growing sophistication in the cities of the South narrow the difference between streets in different continents.” (P 54)

\*[Italian MP Susanna Agnelli was a member of a mid-1980s multinational committee set up to investigate the problem of street children to the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues.]

## 8. Young Lives under Unbearable Stress

[the following from a report re: street children surveyed in Asuncion, Paraguay]

“...the report found that separation from their families created ‘an emotional vacuum in the child’. It added: ‘He supposedly feels secure, and apparently needs nothing more. It is only when he faces a serious problem... that this security – which in fact was just a means of defence – crumbles, and the sensitivity and vulnerability of a hurt or wanting child or youth appears.’”(Pg. 61)

“Understandably they face not only emotional but psychological stress. ‘The life they live reduces their concentration span so far,’ remarks Judith Ennew, ‘that they find it difficult to sit still and listen.

The frequent fights in which they are involved are a reflection not just of the violence to which they are subjected on the streets, but also of the “short fuses” they have acquired.’”(Pg. 69)

## 9. Sex Plus Drugs Equals AIDS

“...Not surprisingly ‘a study of runaways aided by the Streetwork Project in New York showed that 86 per cent had been involved in prostitution at some time’ said Jo Boyden. ‘Estimates suggest that there may be some 8,000 underage prostitutes in Paris, 150,000 in the United States as a whole...’”(Pg. 70)

“When their sex currency gets low enough, young girls can find themselves serving other purposes. The whores become ‘mules’ – smuggling drugs in swallowed condoms, because their youth usually puts them beyond suspicion.

“**Michelle** and **Liz**, both in their early teens, made the run from London to New York until one of the contraceptives burst inside Michelle’s stomach and the cocaine spilled out, killing her.”(Pg. 94)

“Then there is AIDS. With street children a mobile, largely overlooked population, there is no real way of knowing just how far the virus may have spread already. But many fear that it is a time bomb, ticking away on the pavements.” (Pg. 95)

“Typically, despite its headline-making nature, AIDS is a distant concern for the youngsters themselves. As Reina, a prostitute for almost half her fifteen years on the streets, reasoned: ‘Why should I worry about dying from AIDS in a year, when I could be dead tonight?’”(Pg. 96)

## **10. No Child Labor Laws Here**

“While crushing economic problems are behind India’s millions of homeless, the Hindu belief in reincarnation and karma – that someone’s lot in this life is the reward or cost of how they were in a previous existence – causes many not to want to interfere in the gods’ dealings by offering a helping hand.

The country is said to have the largest population of working children in the world – estimates range anywhere between 15 million and 49 million – though many of them are not ‘street children’ in the big cities, but from rural families, based in factories and workshops out in the rural areas.

Yet many children are also to be found working in cities like Calcutta, where young boys serve as general dog bodies in cramped motor shops and repair yards – close to dangerous fumes and equipment.

One informal survey estimated that 67 per cent of the children worked between eleven and fifteen hours a day, with a further 20 per cent working sixteen to eighteen hours.”(P. 98)

## **11. “The New Frontier” in Missions**

“Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board associate director for Research and Planning, John Cheyne, proposed street children as a ‘new frontier’ in missions in an article for his denomination.

With the majority of street children growing up in totally non-Christian environments, most ‘know nothing of Christ as Saviour’, he observed.

If they consider the church at all, it is in terms of its failure to care...

Where are the churches? Generally, not in the slums. Not on the street corners. Not targeting the 145 million children around the world who represent one of the largest homogeneous groups of unreached and lost within their own countries. Isn’t it past time we considered seriously this new ‘frontier’ as a target for evangelism and for just plain caring?

Tomorrow may be too late.” (P. 103)

## **12. A Biblical Mandate from the Heart of God**

“But if his method was borrowed from Francke\*, his missionary heart in his care for the children came from the Bible. In 1837 he recorded how Psalm 68:6’s reference to God

as ‘father to the fatherless’ had been a ‘special blessing to me, with reference to the orphans’. He wrote in his journal:

The truth, which is contained in this, I never realised so much as today. By the help of God, this shall be my argument before Him, respecting the orphans, in the hour of need.

He is their father, and therefore has pledged Himself, as it were, to provide for them and care for them; and I have only to remind Him of the need of these poor children, in order to have it supplied. My soul is still more enlarged respecting orphans. This word, ‘a father to the fatherless’, contains enough encouragement to cast thousands of orphans upon the loving heart of God. “(Pg. 118).

### **13. Professor August Francke, 1690s Founder of Orphan Houses:**

“The man who was to lead to the founding of Dr. Barnado’s Homes around the world had found his mission field closer to home. ‘I did not choose this path, he later reflected. ‘My Father called me ... I may say, without any presumption, that the work among destitute children which I have been permitted to carry on has, from the first, afforded a remarkable example of the reality of God’s guiding hand in the affairs of life.’

Later in life he reflected: ‘We were enabled to renounce a life of usefulness in another and more distant land.’ And: ‘Of the divine character of our mission we have no doubt.’

His conviction that the needs of the homeless, abandoned children of London were as much a matter of missionary endeavour as the millions of Chinese who had not heard the gospel was shared by William Booth.

On learning of the young doctor’s change of plan, Booth responded: ‘You look after the children and I’ll look after the adults. Then together we’ll convert the world.’”

(Page 119)

“The responsibility of God’s people to care for the poor, the oppressed and abandoned children is a clear, recurring theme of the Old Testament – the law which Jesus said He came not to do away with, but to bring to fullness.

God made His care and concern clear from the earliest moments of the Israelites’ deliverance from captivity in Egypt, setting among the first laws declared by Moses after he reported the Ten Commandments: ‘Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan.

If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused...”(Pg. 130)

## **14. Battling Discouragement**

“...Even recognizing that young broken lives don’t get put together overnight, the long and slow journey from the streets to a new life can exact a heavy toll on those working with the young people.

‘It’s one of the major issues our workers struggle with in terms of spiritual warfare, just keeping going,’ says Johan Lukasse. ‘Because of the time involved, and the lack of results you see. It’s easy to get discouraged.’”(Pg.150)

## **15. The Addiction of the Street**

“The street itself is an addiction stronger than any drug they use there. They need a lot more rehabilitation to get that out of their hearts and systems than the desire for drugs.

I don’t think that it takes anything less than a real miracle of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They might even change their habits for a little, but if they don’t have a change of heart they will be the same person, basically, even if they have cleaned themselves up and have a job. ” (Pg. 152)

## **16. Prayer Is Vital**

“Premila Pavamani and her husband, Vijayan, run a school and orphanage for street children in Calcutta, the city named after the Hindu goddess of destruction, where blood sacrifices are offered regularly in countless shrines.

From their years of work, they are persuaded that prayer is a vital, integral part of ministry, alongside the practical.

‘It’s never enough to just help them,’ says this seemingly tireless school manager, teacher, counsellor and friend. ‘All these kids from the streets are so scarred from being hurt by people and different situations that they will never be able to be fulfilled human beings apart from Jesus, who can heal them,’ she commented.

‘We don’t go into detail with them over the hurts they have suffered in their lives, because we feel that can just make them more aware about things, but we pray and trust God to lead them and wipe away their tears.’

‘So many of them go back to the streets – it’s like a drug. It’s an addiction that has to be broken.’

Vijayan believes that ‘Christian discipleship ... is one of the most important therapies’ in rehabilitation: “The weapon of prayer has achieved much where the best methodology has proved inadequate.” (PP. 170- 171)

## **17. Satan Targets Children**

“Missionary for a quarter of a century, Dean Sherman, a noted Bible teacher on spiritual warfare, believes that children are Satan’s prime target for his war with God.

‘It is easy to see throughout history and today that Satan zealously targets children, seeking their bondage and destruction,’ he says. ‘The enmity between children and the enemy is especially strong.’

‘Children are new and innocent, the “seed of woman” – between the Devil and whom, God said after the Fall, there would be contention. ‘From the fires of Moloch in Old Testament times, where parents sacrificed newborn babies on the red-hot arms of idols; to present-day war atrocities, abortion, drug addiction, and child pornography; children are under direct attack from Satan.

New Zealand youth specialist and Bible teacher Winkie Pratney sees a similar demonic plot behind the headlines, citing the growing number of runaway and abandoned youngsters on the streets of Western cities as one indicator.

Together with the rise in abortions and teen suicides, he sees a new ‘contract’ out on children, like those issued when babies and newborns were killed in the early days of the lives of Moses and Jesus.” (Pg. 176)

## **18. Children Snatched from Hell for the Promises of God**

Then, ‘that rage missed its marks. The targets of that destruction each time escaped. And the ones that got away did untold damage to hell’s kingdom,’ he notes, concluding:

There is something precious and important about this generation, so deeply under attack... It may have among its ranks of survivors the makings of a major spiritual miracle. There may be leaders-to-be rescued from the sword and the burning altars of Moloch that will lead an entire generation of the abandoned, loveless and lonely into the promises of God.” (PP 176-177)