



Charles Lyons, Pastor  
Armitage Baptist Church  
Chicago, Illinois

## A journal entry by Michelle Thompson

**Y**esterday I was able to make my way up the stairs and into a home that has consistently been hostile to our ministry. I knew, or thought I did, the kind of apartment that I would find. However, after years of entering poverty-stricken homes, I was surprised when I went inside. The walls were caked with dirt and grime, tattered clothes lay in a heap next to a pile of dumped-out oatmeal and overflowing ashtrays. Cockroaches swarmed around oblivious to the fact that I was trying to walk. There was no furniture, just a few overturned box crates that served as chairs next to an enormous-sized television blaring rap and profanity. A smell of staleness, smoke, and sweat was being blown around by a window fan. There were bunk beds with only a pillow and a torn sheet. Teenagers and younger kids ran in and out of the rooms cursing and yelling, and fighting with each other. There were no pictures, no personal touches, nothing to show that a family lived here. The refrigerator plug lay dangling on the floor unplugged. The cabinets were completely bare, save one half-empty carton of oatmeal. Someone had started sweeping but had long since abandoned the project leaving behind a pile of dirt, cigarette butts, and condom wrappers.

I had come to see about a young girl who was having a hard time dealing with the death of her grandfather. I found her crying in a corner room being yelled at by an older sibling. She was, I discovered, supposed to be washing the dishes. I was right in the middle of kids' club with 25 kids and 12 leaders from Ohio across the street and I knew that

*in 15 minutes they would be waiting for me to teach the lesson. How easy it would be to simply offer her a hug and quickly exit to the safety of the backyard. But I knew that God wanted me to stay and encourage this young girl by serving her.*

*So we washed dishes. I soaked my hands in the lukewarm water and with only a teaspoon of soap attacked a pile of dishes with a filthy rag that had just wiped down a counter of dead (and live) roaches. It was a test of humility. There is absolutely nothing pretty about dipping your hands in tepid water and washing other people's dirty dishes with a grimy rag while cockroaches run over your flip-flop-covered feet. But as I immersed my hands in the water I knew that God was pointing out to me an area of pride. Am I too good to stand in a kitchen and serve a child in this way?*

*God began to remind me that Jesus came and clothed Himself in humanity, was born in a manger, and laid in straw. He bore the indecencies, the pain, and the humiliation of the cross. My attitude, my ministry, and my love must be about serving, and about humbling myself and following the example of Christ. I am grateful that God allowed me the opportunity to love this girl by serving her, and continue to pray that one day I can rejoice in her salvation!*

The little girl accepted Christ at the end of 2008 and she and her two brothers attend Armitage - Garfield faithfully.

Michelle, along with her husband, Curtis, directs the children's ministry at Armitage - Garfield. They are part of the ministry team with Pastor Jamie

Thompson at our congregation in West Garfield Park on the west side of Chicago.

### The Streets I Feared to See

I said: "Let me walk in the field."  
God said: "Nay, walk in the town."  
I said: "There are no flowers there."  
He said: "No flowers, but a crown."  
I said: "But the sky is black,  
There is nothing but noise and din."  
But He wept as He sent me back,  
"There is more," he said, "there is sin."

I said: "But the air is thick,  
And fog is veiling the sun."  
He answered: "Yet souls are sick,  
And souls in the dark undone."  
I said: "I shall miss the light,  
And friends will miss me, they say."  
He answered me: "Choose tonight  
If I am to miss you, or they."  
I pleaded for time to be given.  
He said: "Is it hard to decide?  
It will not seem hard in Heaven  
To have followed the steps of your  
Guide."

I cast one look at the fields,  
Then set my face to the town.  
He said, "My child, do you yield?  
Will you leave the flowers for the  
crown?"  
Then into His hand went mine,  
And into my heart came He;  
And I walk in a light Divine  
The streets I had feared to see.

—George MacDonald (1824-1905)