

Evidence Not Seen

The Story of Darlene Deibler Rose

August 3, 2025

HDBC

3 years ago our Evangelism Team felt the call of God to choose an unreached people group.

The IMB sent us a list after we contacted them. After checking the list, we all felt led to the Afar Group. Contacts were made and the Team was given missionary names serving with the Afar. After several emails, phone conversations over the past 2 years, a trip to meet the Afar people group has been scheduled for January 2026.

The pen and bracelet you received today is your call to pray for the Afar and for the Team.

Afar Video

God is one who **sends**. The word in its various forms is found in the Bible more than 320 times. Many of those refer to God as the one who sends.

He sent **the rains** to cover the earth during Noah's time.

He often sent **angels** to deliver messages to people.

He sent **Moses to Pharaoh** to rescue His people.

He sent **plagues upon the Egyptians**. Hornets. Locust. Gnats. Flies.

He sent **manna and quail** to feed the Hebrews in the wilderness.

He sent **prophets to declare His word** to kings and common people.

But most importantly . . .

He **sent His Son** to be the Savior of the world.

He **sends His disciples** to take the gospel to the nations.

Go, therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Matt 28:19

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. Acts 1:8

While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. Acts 13:2-3

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? They I said, Here am I. Send! Isaiah 6:8-9

God sends; therefore we go. But we do not go alone. The sweet, powerful, protective Holy Spirit goes with us. He leads, empowers, enables and inspires us. But we also go with others who are currently going and with others who have gone before us.

There is something special that happens when we hear of the courage, faithfulness and obedience of others who have gone before us. Their lives, their legacies are used of God to call out others who will follow in their footsteps. We acknowledge that **there are many whose names are stories are not known to anyone except God** and those who are already in heaven. Some have served, suffered and died in obscurity. They are not forgotten by God. But there are others, whose stories have been preserved for us and whose lives motivate us and challenge us.

This morning I want to share the story of one such person. Her name is **Darlene Diebler Rose**. She was separated from her husband on March 13, 1942. The last words he said to her were these; **Remember one thing, dear: God said He would never leave us nor forsake us.** They were quickly separated and never reunited in this life.

She later reflected on that moment and those words in her biography, ***Evidence Not Seen.***

Everything happened so fast and without the slightest warning. Russell had said, "He will never leave us or forsake us." No? What about now, Lord? This was one of the times when I thought God had left me, that He had forsaken me. I was to discover, however, that when I took my eyes off the circumstances that were overwhelming me, over which I had no control, and looked up, my Lord was there, standing on the parapet of Heaven looking down. Deep in my heart He whispered, "I'm here. Even when you don't see Me, I'm here. Never for a moment are you out of my sight."

Darlene was born May 17, 1917. She was saved at the age of 9. One year later, during a revival service she felt a call of God to missions. That night, at the age of 10, she prayed, *Lord, I will go anywhere with You, no matter what it cost.* She had no idea of the journey that lay ahead of her.

She married Russell Deibler, who was a veteran missionary in SE Asia. She was only 19. He was 12 years older. They spent six months in Holland for language study, then returned to Russell's pioneer work in New Guinea. She accompanied him into the jungle to establish a new mission station. There they worked with a near stone-age tribe which had only been discovered a few years before. She was the first white woman they had ever seen. She fell in love with those primitive people.

WWII broke out in 1941 and engulfed all missionaries in the region in 1942. They could have left and returned home, but they chose to stay. The Japanese took control of the area and initially put them under house arrest. They later placed them in prisoner of war camps, separating the men from the women. Over the next few years she suffered greatly and remained separated from her husband. She experienced near starvation, had to endure forced labor, serious health issues, solitary confinement and tortures that we could not even imagine.

Her suffering reached a new peak when she received the news that her husband had died. She was only 26 years old. By the time the news reached her, he had been dead for three months. She relates her own thoughts with these words.

I was stunned. Russell is dead. He'd been dead three months already! It was one of those moments when I felt that the Lord had left me; He had forsaken me. My whole world fell apart . . . In my anguish of soul, I looked up. My Lord was there, and I cried out, "But God . . .!"

Immediately He answered, "My child, did I not say that when you pass through the waters I would be with you, and through the floods, they would not overflow you? She was sustained during those dark days by prayer, memorized Scripture and praise songs.

But something else happened that would shape her future. As the news of her husband death spread through the camp she was summoned to the office of the prison camp commander, Mr. Yamaji. He was a brutal, cruel man who had beaten a male POW to death in another camp. Here is the conversation that took place between the two.

Ms. Deibler, I want to talk with you. This is war.

Yes, Mr. Yamaji, I understand that.

What you heard today, women in Japan have heard.

Yes sir, I understand that, too.

You are very young. Someday the war will be over and you can go back to America. You can do dancing, go to the theater, marry again, and forget these awful days. You have been a great help to the other women in the camp. I ask of you, don't lose your smile.

Mr. Yamaji, may I have permission to talk to you? He nodded & she spoke.

Mr. Yamaji, I don't sorrow like people who have no hope. I want to tell you about Someone of whom you may have never heard. I learned about Him when I was a girl in Sunday School back on Boone, Iowa, in America. His name is Jesus. He is the Son of the Almighty God, the Creator of the heaven and earth.

God opened an opportunity for her to share the gospel. Tears began to run down his cheeks. She continued.

He died for you, Mr. Yamaji, and He puts love in our hearts, even for those who are our enemies. That's why I don't hate you, Mr. Yamaji. Maybe God brought me to this place and time to tell you that He loves you.

He quickly jumped from his chair and left the room. Darlene waited, then realized he was not returning. She quietly left. God was working.

On May 12, 1944, the Kempeitai, (the Japanese Gestapo) came for Darlene. She was falsely accused of spying. They took her to a prison where she was placed in solitary confinement. They took away her Bible.

Over the door of the cell were the words in Indonesian, ***This person must die***. She realized she was on death row. She sank to the floor, filled with terror. But she prayed, ***O God, whatever you do, make me a good soldier for Jesus Christ***. Then suddenly she found herself singing a song she had learned as a young girl in Sunday School.

*Fear not, little flock, Whatever your lot,
He enters all rooms, The doors being shut,
He never forsakes, He never is gone,
So count on His presence, From darkness till dawn.*

She later wrote that she felt the Lord tenderly wrapping His loving arms around her. ***They could lock her in but they could not lock Him out.***

For weeks she was kept in a six-foot square cell with only small amounts of rice to eat. She suffered the bites of hundreds of mosquitoes that invaded her little cell at night. She was often taken for interrogations. They would often strike her on the face and head. She often had two black eyes and at one time thought they had broken her neck.

She never cried in front of them, but back in her cell she would weep before the Lord. She often sensed His response to her grief with the words, ***my child, my grace is sufficient for you.***

The Kempeitai insisted that they had evidence that she was a spy. She knew she would be condemned and beheaded.

One day she pulled herself up to the window of her cell to watch women who were in the courtyard. One woman's actions intrigued her. The women slowly moved toward a fence covered with vines. When the guard was not looking a hand clutching a bunch of bananas slid through the vines to the woman. She grabbed them and folded them into her clothes and walked calmly back to the other women.

BANANAS! She craved bananas. She prayed, ***Lord, I'm not asking for a whole bunch like that woman had. I just want one banana.*** She pleaded with the Lord, but began to think of how impossible it would be for the Lord to get a banana to her. She tried to put it out of her mind.

The next morning she had a surprised visitor. It was Mr. Yamaji. When the door opened she saw him standing there and smiling. She clapped her hands and said, ***Mr. Yamaji, it's just like seeing an old friend!***

Tears filled his eyes and he didn't say a word, but he walked back to the courtyard and talked with the officers for a long time. When he returned he said, ***You are very ill, aren't you?***

Yes, Sir, Mr. Yamaji, I am.

I'm going back to the camp now. Have you any word for the women?

The Lord quickly gave her the words to say.

Yes, sir, when you go back, please tell them for that that I'm all right. I'm still trusting the Lord. They'll understand what I mean, and I believe you do too.

When the men left, she realized she had forgotten to bow to them. She knew they would come back and beat her. When she heard the footsteps returning, she braced for the worst. The guard opened the door, walked in and laid at her feet a bunch of bananas. They're yours and they are all from Mr. Yamaji. She was stunned. She counted 92 bananas.

She pushed them into a corner and wept before the Lord. She confessed that she had failed to believe the Lord could even get one banana to her, and now He had given her almost a hundred.

That was only one of many times the Lord proved Himself strong, powerful, loving and gracious to His precious daughter. Soon after this incident she was only moments away from her scheduled execution by beheading, when she was transferred from the Kempeitai back to her prison camp.

She survived the war and her imprisonment and was later able to return to America. But she never lost the fire for missions. The Lord brought into her life another missionary, Gerald Rose, whom she would marry and join with back to New Guinea in 1949. She labored in New Guinea and Australia for over 40 years.

She quietly entered the presence of Jesus on February 24, 2004. She was 87 years old. Her obituary included these words:

Together, Darlene and Jerry were used of God to bring hundreds of Aborigines to the Lord and disciplining them in Christ. They were also instrumental in beginning several indigenous churches.

There is one more part of the story that you need to know. At the end of the war, Mr. Yamaji, the prison camp commander was tried, convicted and sentenced to be executed for brutally beating a POW to death prior to meeting Darlene. His sentence was later commuted to a life sentence with hard labor. Even that sentence was later commuted and he was released.

Years later, in 1976, Darlene would learn from a friend that Mr. Yamaji had been heard on Japanese radio, sharing the gospel with his people. He testified of his cruelty as a camp commander but sharing that he was now a different person because of Christ. Darlene had been the first to share the gospel with him and that came on the day she learned of her husband's death. **God brings beauty out of ashes!**

Throughout her life she continued to say ***I would do it all again for my savior.***

He sent her to some hard places to do a hard work. But He sustained her through every challenge. And there were so many other parts of the story that I did not have time to share. Get her book, ***Evidence Not Seen.***

And read other missionary biographies. Learn the stories of Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Bill Wallace, Adiniram Judson, Bertha Smith, David Brainard, Hudson Taylor, John and Betty Stam, William Carey, Eleanor Chestnut, Roger Youderian, Pete Fleming.

Better yet, be willing to allow God to write your own story of taking the gospel to the nations. Be like Isaiah who prayed . . .

Here am I. Send me, Lord!