

WORLDWIDE



Heart  
to Heart  
Children's Village

GIVING LIFE, BRINGING HOPE TO ORPHANS IN HONDURAS

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## Amy Serrano

*She will forever be missed*

**A**my Marie Serrano, beloved wife of Oscar Serrano, beloved mother of Sarah and Rachel, and beloved spiritual mother of over 130 children who called her Mami, went home to be with Jesus suddenly, on Wednesday, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018. She was born, the fourth child of I H and Jackie Marie Rills on July 21, 1975. She is survived by the absolute love of her life, next to Jesus, Oscar B. Serrano, her husband of 22 years, her beloved beautiful daughters, Sarah 20, and Rachel 18, and all her spiritual children and family here in Honduras, her sister Connie and brother Ken, her Nana Callie, and her birth family and friends in Louisiana. She was preceded in death by her mother, Jackie Marie Rills, her father, I H Rills, her brother Mark Rills, and her spiritual daughters Maby Ramos and Diana Posadas.



*A family is a circle of love,  
Not broken by a loss,  
But made stronger by the memories.  
We are forever blessed that  
God Connected us to Amy*



## From H2H President, Mary Frenter

This is the first H2H Newsletter that does not have the blessing of wise words from our founder and beloved, Amy Serrano. What she would want each and every one of you to hear, is her personal testimony.

One day Amy and I were discussing the Prayer of Serenity which says:

*God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.*

Amy told me, "That's not my prayer!  
Mine is..."

*"God grant me the wisdom and courage  
to change the things I cannot accept."*

That is Amy's philosophy in a nutshell. God told Amy that whenever a team came to Honduras and she was giving the Sunday School lesson for the "gringos", she was to tell her testimony, and she always did just that. I have heard her testimony more times than I can count, and I must honestly say, I never tired of hearing it. In fact, each time it brought me to tears, and to a closer walk with Jesus. I had a preliminary draft of Amy's book about the story of H2H on my computer. I opened it and there it was, her testimony in her own words. So, here it is, what I know she wants you to hear, and in her own words...



*A life that touches others goes on forever. . .*

### *- Amy's Testimony*

Honestly, I am shocked that I ended up part of this great work of God. The truth is, I had never succeeded at anything. My friends in high school knew me as a clown, but I knew I had died inside. My mom passed away when I was 9 years old. Later, my dad married a woman who suffered from severe mental illness, and the next 4 years of my life were filled with physical and emotional abuse. By the time I was 14, I lost all hope and the desire to live. I had come to believe what my stepmother repeatedly told me, that I was the one who killed my mother because of my selfishness.

I was born late in my mother's life; she was 40 years old. But according to my dad, I was not an accident. My mother always wanted a big family; but after nine years of marriage, my mother had not become pregnant. She prayed to God and began a series of treatments with her doctor. My mother suffered from irregular and painful periods. Her doctor finally told her, "Jackie you are sterile. Why

don't you just get a hysterectomy and be done with it?" My mother sadly agreed, and the doctor planned the surgery. My mom shared these plans with her sister and my aunt wisely



advised her, "Jackie why don't you get a second opinion?" My mother took her advice, and to her great surprise, was three months pregnant with my sister! And as she was nine years behind on her

dream of having a big family, she had children until she couldn't any more. My mother had other physical problems as well; she had a severe heart murmur and asthma. She died suddenly of a massive heart attack at 48. For years, I was told I caused her death because she was too sick and old to be having children, and because I was a selfish brat who had sucked the life out of her.

*"You are altogether  
BEAUTIFUL, My love;  
There is NO flaw in  
you "*

*- Song of Solomon  
4:7*



I can't pinpoint the final straw but remember having a fight with my only friend and found myself at rock bottom. I recalled learning in science class days earlier that the best way to commit suicide was by using aspirin. My parents were at work and I found a small bottle of aspirin and lots of other random pills. I remember frantically swallowing mouthfuls of those chalky pills. After desperately downing every pill in my parent's medicine cabinet, I went and lay down on my bed and waited to die. I believed in God. I was raised Catholic and was taught about His reality. I truly believed that God was good, but I believed even more that I was not. I can remember lying in bed and asking God to take me away from there and closed my eyes and fell asleep. I remember waking up disappointed, thinking I couldn't even kill myself right! I got up and went to make dinner. By that time, my parents had come home from work. I ate dinner, did the dishes and went off to my room to start my homework. I don't remember anything until I woke up the next day in the hospital. My dad said he called to me to bring out a detention slip he had to sign, but I never answered. He went to my room to find me and didn't see me. Just as he was about to close the door, he saw the night stand on the other side of my bed begin to shake. He walked around the bed to find me having a seizure.

I spent a few days in the hospital and then a month in rehab, where people repeatedly questioned why I would want to kill myself. My dad realized that my stepmother was the reason, and they separated. We moved back to my home town and life became more bearable. It was then I began a spiritual voyage that would take me from new age to devil worship. I loved witchcraft and the occult, because they made me feel powerful. However, through all my searching, I kept coming back to the Christian faith I had been raised in. Jesus Christ held a powerful fascination for me and each time I looked away, I knew I was turning away from the truth.

I eventually wound up in a drug rehab facility with a counsellor who was a born-again Christian. I thoroughly enjoyed my conversations with her about God and spirituality. I was being fed powerful truths. I began praying each night before I went to sleep, looking out of my window and speaking with God. Within the next few months, I gave my heart to Jesus and started attending church. I got baptized in the Holy Spirit and started to have the desire to live my life for Jesus. One day in church, the pastor addressed the youth saying, "Who knows? Maybe some of you will end up missionaries in China." I clearly heard a voice in my head say, "You're one of them". I knew it might not be a call to China, but would be somewhere on the mission field. Later, a visiting pastor came for a special service at our church, and he called forward all the youth who wanted to go onto the mission field. All the pastors' and deacons' children went forward, and I felt I did not deserve to stand among them, so I stayed in my seat. "Lord, here I am. Send me!" I was thinking perhaps I could scrub toilets for these great men and women of God. Little did I know, I would be heading out soon to be a missionary and would never come back "home".



I grew up 30 minutes southwest of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where the church I attended was located. The church had cell groups in my town.

About six months after becoming a Christian, the ministry, "Park West Children's Fund", later known as "Friendships", came to the port of Baton Rouge and joined forces with our church. The cell groups in our church "adopted" missionaries on the ship and ministered to them by taking them to the dentist, eye doctor, movies, and into our homes. It was through contact with missionaries from Guatemala, that I knew I was supposed to be on that ship.

One night after coming back from a cell group dinner, I told my dad and his third wife, "Guess what? I'm going to be a missionary on a ship. Isn't that great?" My dad responded, "Oh, wonderful sweetheart," without looking up from his newspaper. I sent my application in and waited for the response. When my parents realized I was serious, they were strongly opposed. My dad believed I needed to get my life in order first. I decided to honor them and let God change their hearts if He wanted me to go. I believed my parents' change of heart would be confirmation that it was God's will. I finally got my response. The letter said,

*"Dear Amy Rills,*

*We would love to have you come and be part of our ministry at our main offices in San Pedro, CA."*

I can't recall many times in my life I have felt so joyful! But I had made a promise to God that I would obey my parents and their decision in this matter. I was nervous as I brought the letter to them, not knowing what their response would be. I pulled it out of the envelope and said, "I've been accepted to the ship I told you about." My stepmom leapt out of her seat with excitement. To my astonishment, my dad also smiled and said, "Wow, that is wonderful!" I responded by asking about their change of heart. He told me he was never really against it but didn't think they would accept me. I was so young, and he didn't want my heart broken. Now that they had accepted me, my parents were elated and even agreed to pay for my ticket to California!

**My** cell group spiritual leader also believed it wasn't a good idea for me to go. When I got my acceptance letter, I brought it to her. She said, "Why don't we talk to our pastor about this?" The next Sunday, we met our pastor after service. I watched as my leader and pastor read through the letter. They discussed it, and then called me over. The pastor warmly told me he was very excited and felt this was God's will for me. Two weeks later, I was on a plane to Los Angeles. I spent three wonderful years on the ship and married my incredible husband.



I want to tell you about my **"dangerous"** prayer. I was serving on the ship but did not understand why. I was compassionate but did not understand poverty. I was raised to believe that hard work and pulling your own weight brought success. I did not understand places existed in the world where a person could work 14 hours of hard labor each day and not make enough to feed their family. My eyes were blind, and I knew it. One day at devotion time with the team on the ship, a girl stood in tears, passionately praising God for the privilege of loading crates of mayonnaise on the ship. I thought, "I just don't get it." I went to the bathroom, sat on the floor and told

God, "If I am going to stay here, You need to show me what the rest of them already know." I couldn't stand another day of loading pallets, without understanding. So, I simply prayed and asked the Lord to open my eyes. It took Him five years to thoroughly open them, but once they were, everything changed.

*"The lens  
we look through  
will determine  
what we see "*

-Renee Swope

A couple days after I had prayed that prayer, I was in the dining hall on the ship. There were some Christian magazines on the coffee table. It was 1994 and the headlines from that year were all about Rwanda. The magazine had a long article detailing the atrocities going on at the time, but one part of the article overwhelmed me. It was a picture of a young boy with no legs on a skate board with a man standing over him beating him with a belt. The child was born with legs, but since he was an orphan, they had amputated his legs to make him a better beggar. The man standing over him was his "boss", and he was being beaten because he had not made his quota begging that day. Holy anger rose up in me. The injustice was more than I could bear. Why weren't children protected from this? It was at that point that I started to "get it". Beyond my safe, clean world, was a world that was broken, bitterly unfair and crying out for help because it was helpless.



**It's hard  
to forget  
someone  
who gave  
so much to  
remember**



Life went on. I married and went to Honduras for the first time with my husband in January 1998. The trip was amazing and troubling at the same time. Some friends took us to a local garbage dump. When we arrived, we were greeted by mountains of stinking garbage, and children crawling all over the mounds like ants. These "children" were really babies, all less than five years old. As we walked, we found one little 8-year-old boy who told us that all he wanted to do was go to school. I looked around as tiny people scavenged through the garbage for anything they could find to eat, to keep or to sell. They had scavenged partially eaten tortillas and laid them out on rocks to dry and eat later and were fighting off competing vultures with 7-foot wing spans that were scavenging the same piles of garbage. Suddenly our friends grabbed us and led us back to the waiting taxi. A drunk, naked old man was staggering towards us and the group of little children. I struggled to look out the back window as this man made his way to the children who stood by helplessly as he approached them. I thought, this is not right; get those kids out of there!

On that same trip we went to visit a public hospital. It was a frightening place, especially since I was pregnant for the first time and did not know what to expect. The hospital was filthy, covered in rust and bloodstains. Supposedly sterile gloves were simply washed out and hung to dry to be used again. In the public hospital, they give you a bed and nothing more. You have to supply your own sheets, pillows, food, water, toilet paper, fan (the heat is stifling) and anything else you might need.



**O**n the children's ward, we saw many patients, but one that particularly struck me was a child burning up with fever in a soiled cloth diaper sitting all by herself on a plastic mattress. Her mother had left her there in order to go to work. I was young, frightened and didn't know much about babies, but knew I desperately wanted to hold and care for her but was too scared to touch her. If it were today, I would take charge of the situation, "Get me a diaper! Let's buy her food and sit with her until her mother comes back." But at that time, I didn't know what to do. Then it happened, the levy broke. The little girl's wailing could be heard throughout the hospital. She was screaming for the attention she desperately needed. At that point I covered even more, and we left.



Two years later, Oscar was pastoring a church in Washington State and I was pregnant with our second child, Rachel. We were at the church late and I was tired. Oscar was in a meeting with the leadership, while I stayed out in the sanctuary caring for the kids. I watched as my 1 ½ year-old daughter Sarah ran around and played. Suddenly, I found myself thinking about the children at the dump and wondering what they were going to eat tonight, and where they were going to sleep. I thought of my Sarah being there trying to find a safe place to sleep. Extreme sorrow swept over me. I ran to the

bathroom and cried so hard I fell to the ground. I didn't want anyone to worry about me, so I stayed in the bathroom a few more minutes, washed my face and got my composure back. The meeting ended and we headed home.

Missionary friends from Guatemala were staying with us, and Oscar stayed up talking with them, while I headed to bed. As soon as I lay my head down, I thought about the little girl in the hospital and wondered, "What if it had been Sarah in that hospital bed?". Again, this profound sadness came over me, dramatically stronger than before. I went into the bathroom and sobbed uncontrollably. The sorrow was so deep I thought it might be demonic and began to try and cast it away. It was then I felt God say, "No, Amy, it's not the devil. Twice today, I let you see what I see." He used thoughts of my own child to help me understand how he feels about all His children. I sat and cried for thirty minutes on my bathroom floor. The prayer I had prayed five years earlier had been answered. There was no going back. I thought, "So this is reality, Lord? The dark and hopeless truth? It's all messed up. What can we do?" Suddenly something rose up in me. I got off the floor and looked at myself in the mirror and said, "What you are doing on the floor? Wash your face. You have work to do." I decided I was no longer going to cry about it. I was going to do something about it. For me personally, WWH2H began that day. When dark realities and gross injustices are put in front of me, I say, "We need to fight harder!" And that is what I have done ever since.



*A Fallen Limb*

*A limb has fallen from the family tree.*

*I keep hearing a voice that says,  
"Grieve not for me.*

*Remember the best times, the laughter, the song.*

*The good life I lived while I was strong.*

*Continue my heritage. I'm counting on you.*

*Keep smiling and surely the sun will shine through.*

*My mind is at ease, my soul is at rest.*

*Remembering all, how I truly was blessed.*

*Continue traditions, no matter how small.*

*Go on with your life, don't worry about falls*

*I miss you all dearly, so keep up your chin.*

*until the day comes we're together again.*

*Author Unknown*



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2 Corinthians 1:3-5 (NIV)

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.”

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*When it comes to orphans we're not liberals or conservatives. We are radicals!*

## TO OUR HEART TO HEART COMMUNITY—THANK YOU!

### VOLUNTEER

Below is a list of upcoming teams who will be going to our Village to love our children and support the ministry. If you are interested in going, please contact us at [office@h2hcv.org](mailto:office@h2hcv.org). Join us!

- March 23-30 School Support, Gary Thacker**
- March 28-April 5 School Support, Gary Thacker**
- April 13-20 Go Be Love Intl.**
- June 6-14 School Support, Gary Thacker**
- June 17-27 Bethel Construction Team**



Gift/Letter Dates

To get gifts & letters to our kids on time we need to receive them at our office by the following dates:

- 1st Quarter January 31, 2019**
- 2nd Quarter May 15, 2019**



—Information provided to Heart to Heart is held in the strictest confidence and is not shared outside of the organization—