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# unOblivious

**A photographic journal  
by Ray Majoran**

This book is the first volume in a series of  
books to be released over the next number of  
years by Compassion Gallery. Compassion  
Gallery is a collaborative project between  
myself and longtime friend, Brian Klassen.

May God use the stories and images on  
these pages to inspire and challenge you.  
We are just photographers documenting  
what He has already created. He alone is  
worthy to be praised (Psalm 145:3).



COMPASSION GALLERY

# Foreword

by Tom Ward, Advocacy Global

## Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

## Matthew 25:35-36

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.

Tom Ward (right) in Jalaripeta. (India)



Ray looking out over the mountains. (Nepal)



It may sound funny to say, but I never quite know how to get all the way home after a trip to the developing world. Some part of me always remains with the people I've met along the way, calling me back to their world even as I try to reenter my own. And that was certainly the case in November 2015 when Ray and I returned home from South Asia.

Traveling with a photographer as prolific and skilled as Ray means that not only will there be thousands of pictures taken, but some of those images will have an emotional resonance so profound that you can't help but weep when you see them. As I worked my way through *unOblivious*, I had a lump in my throat the size of a softball.

Ray has a gift for capturing the cultural treasures of a place, which are always the people. It's as if his lens is disproportionately drawn towards the image of God (Genesis 1:27), which is something I'm so thankful for, because no matter how despairing his subject, he is able to restore some measure of hope just by being there, taking the shot. And not everyone with a camera can do that.

Reading *unOblivious* is a crash course in compassion. The pictures, captions, and stories all work together to remind us of the "pure and undefiled" religion that the church is called to embody. James 1:27 paints a picture of piety—of devotion to God—that is anything but oblivious.



Our connection to the community of Jalaripeta, which is where this picture was taken, was cemented by a providential encounter with a family in desperate need of help. Sometimes a walk down an overlooked alleyway, in a place many of us would describe as a slum, leads us straight to Jesus (Matthew 25:31-46). (India)



At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children." - Matthew 11:25 (India)



Love goes. It moves towards the suffering and brokenness of our world, never away from it.

The morning after reading *unOblivious*, that softball-size lump in my throat had morphed into something completely unexpected: a heart full of gratitude. During our two weeks in South Asia, we interacted with some of the world's most vulnerable people. They welcomed us into their homes, let us hold and bless their children, and showed us more kindness than we deserved. Now a few of their stories are being told here, not for profit, but because Ray knows

that there is no one in the universe more committed to the wellbeing of the poor than God. *unOblivious* is an offering to Him—to the One David described as the "father of the fatherless and protector of widows" (Psalm 68:5).

As we join God in caring for those who do not have the means to care for themselves, not only is He glorified, but we are aligning ourselves with an agenda that He alone sustains. He does all the heavy lifting. We're just the ambassadors, the ones called to let people know, through what we say and what we do, that God loves them.



The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. - Matthew 7:25 NIV (India)



Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. - Hebrews 13:2 NIV (Nepal)



# An introduction to my personal filters.

**Psalms 119:105**

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

**Colossians 3:17**

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. - Colossians 3:2 (India)



As a photographer, it helps to know when to use the right lens filter on your camera. A UV filter is used by some photographers to protect their lenses. A polarizing filter is used to darken skies, suppress glare and control reflections. A neutral density filter is often used to capture the motion of fast moving objects like waterfalls.

I want to explain to you, a reader of this book, some of *my* filters—but I’m not going to bore you with camera filters; instead I want to talk about *my personal filters*.

When I listen to a speaker for the first time, or when I read the work of a new author, I am often left wondering what filters brought them to their present

worldview. By explaining some of my personal filters, I hope you will be able to understand where I’m coming from as you read this book.

**Filter #1: The world is upside down.**

When a westerner defines *quality of life*, there’s usually a strong hint of *things* involved in the definition. Often we like to tie these *things* to the word, “blessed.” “God has blessed me with this house... God has blessed me with this car... God has blessed me with this money... Thank you God for blessing me!” The Bible clearly teaches that if we’re taking our joy in material things, we’ve already received our treasure here on earth, and not to



But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” - 1 Samuel 16:7





expect more reward in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21, Luke 6:24).

On the contrary, when you visit the poor (either domestically or internationally), you quickly realize that much of what we call blessings are actually superficial fences that unequivocally pull us away from God, rather than drawing us closer to Him. Christ clearly teaches that if you want to visit Him, then go feed the poor, provide (physical and living) water to those who are thirsty, and visit the sick and needy (Matthew 25:35-36).

#### Filter #2: God is already there.

Often, when people take short-term trips to impoverished places, they like to think of themselves as heroes for Christ, somehow doing what God couldn't. The fact of the matter is, God is already there. My hope and prayer is always that Christ would draw the people I interact with to Himself (John 6:44). It is by no works of my own that God intervenes in people's lives. He is completely sovereign.

Furthermore, 999 times out of 1,000, there's already a local church established in the area where I'm going. My goal is to assist the local church, not hinder it by playing the role of a hero who rides off into the sunset, never to be seen again. Anyone who has gone on a short-term trip, if they're honest with themselves, knows that short-term trips have the ability to do more harm than good if we're not careful.

#### Filter #3: One body, many parts.

I am a member of the body of Christ, one that requires many parts. I don't consider myself to be of more value than anyone

else. If I am an optic nerve in the bulb of an eye that can help the body of Christ see the world more clearly, then glory be to God.

#### Filter #4: Treat people with dignity and respect.

In my mind, there's nothing worse than going into a foreign country full of beautiful people and being a nature photographer. What I mean by that is—if someone came into my neighborhood with a 400mm zoom lens and noticeably started taking pictures of me from far off, I would not be happy. Treating people as if they were animals in a zoo is a terrible way to show the love of Christ and shows little respect for the dignity of others.

When I'm doing portrait work, I will ask a person if I can take their picture. By seeking their permission, they recognize that I value them as a human being and, more times than not, are honored that I would ask them for their picture. You might wonder, "How do you get their permission if you don't speak their language?" Very simply actually—motioning with my hands, or by having a translator ask for me.

(Side note: If I'm trying to capture a *scene* or a *moment* in which more than one person is involved, and I'm clearly not aiming my lens at one central stranger as if I were a spy, then my spirit is at peace with capturing that moment. Furthermore, if someone sees that I am taking photos and forms a visual bond with me—this often happens with children—then I usually follow it up with a picture.)

Many times after I'm done taking a portrait, I show them the photo on the camera display screen to get their



For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. - 1 Corinthians 12:12 (India)





approval, again preserving human dignity and valuing the worth of the person that I just had the honor to photograph. In some cases, I'm even able to print a picture and give it to a translator (who is usually a part of a local church), so that they can follow up with them and build relationship.

**Filter #5: Wipe my name from this book.**

Admittedly, putting together Volume 1 of *unOblivious* has been very challenging in that I want God's name to shine brightly, not mine. My desire is that God would use me for His glory; He is the potter and I am the clay (Isaiah 64:8). I don't want to come

across as arrogant or doing something so that I can be seen by others (Matthew 6:1-4). I simply want to show you what He has shown me, obey His commands, and reflect His light as best I can.

Therefore, if you're going to use only one filter for this book, let it be this one. If you read anything in *unOblivious* that comes across like I'm being arrogant or seeking the praise of men, please know that is not my intention and give me the benefit of the doubt. These are images of His creation, not mine. I am a sinner, unworthy of His grace, but through Christ, He has called me to Himself that I might serve Him for the rest of my life.



But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. - Isaiah 64:8 (India)



Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling! - Psalm 43:3 (India)





Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." - Mark 1:16-17 (India)





You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills. - Psalm 104:10 (Nepal)



And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:7 (India)



But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. - Malachi 4:2 (Nepal)



He draws up the drops of water, which distill as rain to the streams; the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind. - Job 36:27-28 NIV (India)





The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. - Isaiah 40:8 (India)





Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. - 1 Peter 5:6-7 (India)





Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created. - Revelation 4:11 (India)



The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life. - Proverbs 9:10-11 (India)



Hear my prayer, O Lord; let my cry come to you! - Psalm 102:1 (India)





Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. - Luke 12:32-34 (India)



# One suitcase.

## Matthew 6:19-20

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." - Jesus

## So where is your heart?

"Show me your checkbook, your VISA statement, and your receipts, and I'll show you where your heart is." - Randy Alcorn

Kids sing at a children's home. (India)



Two young girls walk beside a roadway. (India)



At one of the children's homes that I visited in India, my attention was directed to a series of small suitcases on the ground.

The person asked me, "Do you know what these are?"

I said, "No".

He replied, "Each one of these suitcases holds a child's entire set of belongings. Everything they own can be held in one of those suitcases."

That conversation rocked me to the core.

While we're filling much of our time trying to figure out how to get more and to live well, there's an actual world out there where people are struggling on a daily basis just to live. They aren't thinking about their next smartphone, their next car, a bigger house, or their next vacation; they're thinking about where their next meal might come from.

G.K. Chesterton wisely notes, "There are two ways to get enough. One is to continue to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less."



Everything the children owned could be held in one of these suitcases. (India)





Want to have your heart broken by God? Try attending a church where the worship service is led by orphaned children. (Nepal)





As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. - Proverbs 27:17 NIV (India)



Now is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It won't last forever. We must take it or leave it. - C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (India)



Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. - Proverbs 31:9 NIV (India)





Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken. - Psalm 55:22 NIV (India)





Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. - Psalm 34:8 NIV (India)





But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. - John 4:14 (India)





Kesab, Binda, their relatives, and a number of others put their faith in Jesus Christ. Among those who accepted Christ were an elderly couple named Chaturmaan and Kanchhi who heard about the gospel through their sons, grandsons and Lila.

Up until that point, Lila and other Christian villagers were spending four hours each Saturday to walk to and from Dologhat to get to church. When Kesab learned of this, he and Binda offered to donate their land to build a church so that the villagers wouldn't have to walk into Dologhat. So all of the Christians in Jyamdi rallied together to build a new church on the donated land.

When the church was completed in 2012, Lila became the pastor. They

dedicated the building and asked Chaturmaan (who was 103 when I met him) to cut the ribbon at the ceremonial service. It was a very special moment for him; four generations of his sons live on farms on mountain terraces directly below the church.

Sadly, on Saturday, April 25, 2015 at 11:56 AM, while people in the village were attending church, a massive 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck. The quake killed more than 8,000 people and injured over 21,000. A person in the church was recording the service on a phone and captured the entire event, which can be seen at <http://radiant.gs/Jyamdi>. (Warning: Not for the faint of heart.) You can hear a woman in the background continuously



Chaturmaan and Kanchhi's grandchildren. (Nepal)



Chaturmaan and Kanchhi (Nepal)





The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death. - Proverbs 14:27 NIV (India)



Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart. - Zechariah 7:9 (India)





The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear. - Habakkuk 3:10-11 (India)





Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. - Luke 13:24 (India)



If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. - Romans 12:18 (India)