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Natalie Vellacott took a two-year break from her job with Sussex Police to join the Logos Hope Christian missionary ship. She was forever changed when, the ship having repeatedly broken down in the Philippines, she unexpectedly encountered and fell in love with a group of street teenage boys addicted to a solvent called "rugby." The dirty, wild, miserable, rabble were accustomed to hostility. Their curious approach in order to investigate the foreigners was cautious and sometimes abusive. Local Filipinos watched from a distance, fascinated yet fearful. These were the "rugby boys"--untouchable and invisible, even dangerous and definitely not worthy of time, attention, love and care. But now a small group of highly regarded foreigners seemed intent on drawing attention to them.

A true missionary story about Christian hope being brought to the hopeless in the Philippines...

They're Rugby Boys, Don't You Know? Details

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From Reader Review They're Rugby Boys, Don't You Know? for online ebook

Gregory Brown says

Natalie's book, "They're Rugby Boys, Don't You Know?" is an excellent read. Natalie is a missionary to the Philippines whose life forever changed when she encountered street boys addicted to a glue solvent called rugby. To everybody else, these children were invisible and a lost cause, but by God's grace, doors opened for Natalie, and her missionary friends, to befriend and minister to them. This book details the heartache and victories of that ministry.

To me, the best part of the book is getting to know the personalities and stories of the children. Even though invisible to others, through Natalie's story you can see how important they are to God and how they bare His image. As you read, it is hard not to ask yourself, "How can I do more?" and "Would I really be willing to serve them?"

It reminded me of Christ's challenge in Luke 14:13-14, "But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Natalie's story is about reaching out to those man has rejected and who cannot repay us. It is a modern day Good Samaritan story. It is challenging, thought provoking, and inspirational. It is definitely worth reading.

MKay says

Really enjoyed this book. I certainly sympathized with her in wanting to help the boys and am glad there is positive change for the most part.

Christabelle says

I am so thankful for this book. In it, we see the persistent love of God poured out on the "invisible" children of Olongapo in the Philippines. These are boys addicted to a substance called "rugby" that they take while living on the streets. Natalie personifies Jesus as she seeks to redeem the boys from their circumstances when they can offer nothing in return. Her faith takes on feet as she seeks to minister to "the least of these." But the story also takes on heartbreak as not everyone is content to view their lives past the current day, not to mention eternity. Honest about her failures, Natalie gives us a bold look into what it's like to be a missionary with the triumph and the sadness of life in the field. Definitely worth a read.

Loretta says

An interesting look at how one woman volunteered to spend a couple of years working with Filipino street

boys who were addicted to solvents - the rugby of the title.

Natalie shares her joys and sorrows as she tries to bring the Gospel to these boys and give them an understanding of how their actions have consequences.

In this type of work, there are many heartaches as the boys struggle to change their lives - some with more enthusiasm than others.

Natalie shares the Gospel with them and tries to give them a sense of self-worth, showing Christ's love to them in her everyday actions, trying to meet their needs and deal with their issues.

Some successfully turn their lives around. Others have, at least, had a Kingdom seed planted in their hearts. Sometimes, it takes years of frustration before fruit is born from this type of labour, but I believe Natalie's efforts will not be in vain.

I received a free copy of this book from the author.

Josiah says

Plot: B

Writing: C

Vocabulary: C

Illustrations: none

Level: Easy

Rating: PG (children living on the streets, drug abuse, petty crime)

Worldview: Street people may be invisible, but they are cherished by G-D and so we should do the same.

This book tells some of the adventures missionary Natalie Vellacott had while stationed with the ship Logos Hope in Subic Bay, Philippines. She writes about her outreach to a gang of street boys she encountered while working in at a book fair on a city bridge. This reads like a chronicle of events, with little of how the author feels about the events. She also seems to have little imagination or patience for why people who grew up differently than her would make certain choices. This is a good read, though, if you want insight into some of the struggles of street children and how to reach out to them. Natalie obviously has a heart to care for "the least of these," and has committed her time, energy, money, and career in doing so. It is encouraging to know that she is sharing G-D's love with them!

Angela Castillo says

Natalie Vallecott, a Christian Police Sergeant from England agreed to join a Logos Hope team on a ship to bring Christian literature to the world. What was intended to be a routine stop of three weeks at a port in the Philippines turned into a stop for repairs that lasted for months. During that time, Natalie's life was forever changed by a group of 'invisible' street children known as the Rugby boys.

Rugby was an addictive substance these boys would use to get high on during the day because it helped to stave off their constant hunger. Abusing this substance would lead to brain damage and eventually, death. What amazed me about this book is the author's heart and determination.

It reminded me of the starfish story. A beach is full of thousands of starfishes. A man notices a little boy throwing as many as he can into the ocean. The man says, "I'm sorry, but you know you can't possibly save

all of them." The boy picks up another small, orange shape and tosses it in the waves. He turns to the man. "But I saved that one."

Natalie dealt with many frustrations as she tried to minister to the children. Language barriers, stubborn hearts, and a community who had given up trying to help. But she never gave up. No matter how many times 'her' boys turned on her and threw her kindness back in her face, she kept trying to help them and show God's love.

It made me think about how many times in my life I have given up on someone who was less than pleasant to me? But God wants us to keep praying and showing love, even if we never see the results of our labor.

They're Ruby Boys, Don't You Know? is well written and engaging. I found a few typos but just a few and they did not break my immersion in the story. I think any Christian would be inspired by this book of hope and determination.

Louisa Black says

I have thought a long time how to sum up what I've just read and to put it into words is nearly impossible. This is a journey, that puts mine to shame, sometimes we don't realise how good we have it.

Through the book, the compassion from this author is tangible, she doesn't judge the boys in any way but the stories are heartbreaking and hopeful in equal measures.

It is a book that made me think 'what would I do in that situation and what are you going to do now?' I can't read this and then do nothing, that would be criminal [no pun intended]. Although I regularly donate, this makes you even more determined to give.

The individual stories of the 'Rugby boys' seem from a different time and place. Can this really be happening today? Yes, sadly it is.

Through a church, I used to go to we welcomed missionaries and helped in various ways financially, physically, etc this book really puts its all into focus just how vital it is not just for the people in need but for the workers to go out and do what their hearts desire.

I see the adverts of 'please donate just £2' and I think seriously that's all you're asking? But when you see the monetary terms, the author puts it into you see it's vital.

The author clearly has a big heart and you learn so much about her through the book and her highs and lows, which she is refreshingly honest about.

Towards the end of the book you learn what happened to the boys you grew so fond of while reading and there are even maps that draw you closer to the place you've been reading about.

If you decide to get this book, you won't regret it.

I have given this review as part of a swap and an honest review. And me don't lie when it comes to books xx

Kristin Spencer says

This is an honest and heartbreaking story about living on the mission field. As a missionary, I related to many of Natalie's frustrations and her deep grief over the state of these lost souls. The style of storytelling is easy to read and to relate to. At the end of the book she also includes an update on each of the boys and her personal testimony. This book glorifies Jesus Christ in such an obvious way. Thank you for sharing Natalie.

Praying for you and the boys (some of whom are now men).

Jason McIntire says

For those who think that mission work is always glamorous and glorious, with mounds of fruit for a few weeks' labor, *Rugby Boys* is a trip back to reality. You'll learn patience along with Vellacott as she and her companions struggle mightily to get just a few boys free from solvent abuse and a self-destructive life on the street. The things that drive these boys to go back to lives of drugs, over and over again, may not be the same things you'd expect.

A couple of highlights:

(When two of the boys were in Rehab, which is pretty much like prison.) "Interestingly, the thing that Paul and Joel were most concerned about was that their Facebook profiles might be deleted due to inactivity on their accounts. I was incredulous when they mentioned this, as that would have been the least of my priorities in a place like Rehab, but, again, it demonstrated their immaturity in setting priorities and reminded me that they were just children."

"...it remains true that a person can be given all of the food and material help in the world, but if they die without Jesus, they will spend an eternity in hell. After my time on the ship, my slogan became 'Help and Hope must go Hand in Hand.'"

There is some adult-themed stuff in *Rugby Boys*, mostly about the boys being unclothed or behaving inappropriately. Nothing sensational, but I wouldn't recommend the book for kids because of those elements.

The writing style, with a typo here and there, is not particularly literary. It reads like a blog - but the kind of blog you keep coming back to, because stylistic or not, it has something to say.

Faith says

They're Rugby Boys, Don't You Know? is an inspirational story of one woman's journey to bring hope to the hopeless and love to those deemed unlovable.

While her missionary ship was in port in the Philippines, Natalie Vellacott met a rag-tag group of street boys known as the 'rugby boys.' When I received this book to review, I thought of rugby as that extremely-painful-looking sport that's one-third soccer, one-third football, and one-third pain. (Can you tell I'm not a sporty person? xD) This book introduced me to another meaning of the word 'rugby.'

In the Philipines (and maybe other places – I'm not sure), rugby is a type of glue. These rugby boy outcasts would inhale the solvent-based glue and get high off it. Why? Because they're literally starving and the drug takes away the hunger pains and gives them the feeling of having a full stomach. If your heart didn't just break, I don't know what's wrong with you.

It hurts my heart, and most definitely the author's as well. She along with a few others began reaching out to these boys, ministering to their physical as well as spiritual needs. Sometimes the boys lied to them, stole, didn't keep their promises – but Ms. Vellacott and her band of helpers didn't stop showing them love.

The author does not sugar-coat the hard stuff. She doesn't keep hidden the personal, emotional struggles she faced while reaching out to these boys. This book is the raw story of her journey during the time her world collided with that of these gangs of street boys.

I laughed and smile when I read of the boys joking and having fun with the missionaries. (And when they were in the church showers – haha, oh my!!) My heart hurt when I read of the churches who refused to help the boys and the health issues some of the boys dealt as a result of drug abuse.

The writing style isn't that great at times, and there was some grammatical errors. But, as I saw other reviewers point out, the book reads like a blog, and I was okay with that.

This book is obviously very real – there is no fairytale ending. Some of the boys changed, found Christ, and were able to stay strong following drug rehab. Others returned to their former ways, only to remain in the cycle until they do finally give their lives completely to Christ or the drug abuse takes its toll.

I enjoyed this story and it served well to open my eyes to suffering around the globe. Definitely recommended for any Christian, particularly those called to foreign missions.

I received an e-copy of this book from the author in exchange for my honest review.

R.A. says

Let's just pause for a moment to let it all sink in...

Wow! Such an incredible, deep book! The stories Natalie told of the Rugby Boys were so heart-breaking, but it showed me how difficult people's lives can be! Although I've never been to the Philippines, I've lived in England for several years. The lives here in this country, although not *exactly* like those of the Rugby Boys, can be quite depressing and sad! And it's hard knowing what to do for them, so the main thing is to tell them about the Lord!!

I couldn't help but be drawn to those young boys! What lives they held!! They need Jesus too!

To summarize this book, let me just say there's hope for every person, whether they're in horrible situations or not. God loves every one of those precious souls! And even those individuals in the Philippines, England, or wherever, need to hear of Him!

Content: There was quite a lot of stuff with drugs, but Natalie wrote about it very well.

Although there wasn't much dialogue throughout this book, it was a great read! I'm so glad I took the time to read it!

*I received a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review - Thanks, Natalie!

Trish says

A moving and poignant account of persistence and humanity among some of the poorest and most vulnerable children and teenagers in the Philippines. I admire the strength and courage of people who are willing to put their everyday life aside to work with the disadvantaged, as I know I couldn't be one of them.

Helen says

I was e-mailed a free PDF proof of this novel by the author over a year ago but have only recently figured out how to send it to my kindle in order to read it more easily!

This book was an impressive account of the author's experiences ministering to the street kids of the Philippines. The dedication to these young people clearly shines across throughout the book. I wish there had been photographs of some of the places described but these may well have been included in the final published version. The writing is easy to read albeit very informal - it reads mainly like a journal entry or a report document. Some areas did not flow that well but this is expected when narrating real-life events.

Some readers may find it a bit emotional/upsetting as it goes through quite a rollercoaster ride of situations with the various boys - they seem to make progress then relapse and either return to solvent abuse or run away from safe homes and back to the streets again.

I did spot a few errors but these may well have been ironed out in the final edition and therefore not be an issue for other readers. Also, sometimes I found it a bit hard to follow all the different stories of the boys as there were so many to differentiate between but this is also a credit to how many lives of these 'Rugby boys' that the author and the other missionaries tried to help whilst over there.

All in all, it was a very informative and certainly enlightening account of the problems faced by a lot of young people in Olangapo and other areas. It is Vellacott's first book and it shows a great deal of heart.

Jestin James says

I wasn't sure how to review this book as I usually don't give in-depth reviews. Frankly I found out about this book by accident.

And I was very happy that there was a audio version I could listen to. I am not going to delve into what I know about the author, or what exactly is the book about as there are enough of those reviews.

Rather I want to talk about how the author truly understood and practiced what was and is - the heart of 'The Gospel'. The fruits of her labor through her faith are presented in this book.

Natalie saw these children not as the rest of the world, not as invisible objects or vermin that needed to disappear but as human beings who had a beating heart and a soul just like the rest of us and wanted to be heard and not ignored. She provided them with attention both physically,mentally as well as spiritually.

Sometimes we hand money over to the poor to satisfy our egos or maybe because we'd like to be left alone, and sometimes for a much deeper reason which is, that sometimes we prefer to be ignorant and not be truly aware of the ugliness of poverty, of the struggles of the underprivileged. Because it makes us uncomfortable. Because it may require us to do something about it, even though we don't want to.

Natalie not only noticed these children, she pursued them. She did everything to get them the basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter. Even when they hurt her, or robbed her, or frightened her, or broke her heart.. (The list goes on). This is the very essence of Christ who wooed us even when we didn't care about him, when we were the most rebellious people. He still loved us.

This is a story where the author's heart is buried on the mission field. Which means the pomp and the glamour is stripped away and what remains is a journey of self-sacrifice, loss and redemption.

Most of these boys were druggies. Many times they had no control over their senses or actions. There were instances when they were extremely dangerous. The smell of the substance 'Rugby' itself was very intoxicating even around people who did not abuse it. There were chances of addiction even with those who worked closely with them. One would have to even consider one's own personal hygiene while working with these children which could have led to procurement of various diseases. And yet none of these things (as daunting as they seemed) slowed Natalie down during her ministry.

Natalie was at a place that was out of her league (so as to speak): a new place where she didn't know anyone, a language barrier that could have ended the ministry before it even began, a financial constraint due to a meager salary, not too many like minded individuals to share the burden with her, and ministering to a group of boys who at the best of times tolerated her. And yet, she pushed on through faith and through perseverance, finding joy only in the knowledge that she was doing the Lord's work.

Many times I wanted to stop listening as it was too painful or frustrating to see how certain characters kept repeating their mistakes and kept falling back to solvent abuse.

I had to keep reminding myself that this wasn't a work of fiction where the heroes would walk off into the sunset with their heads held high and all their problems resolved.

But that these were actual human beings just like all of us, fallen and corrupted with sin and just like all of us, they would always fall at some point of time and it was only the persistent call and love of Christ that had to pull them back. I love how Natalie never gave up on them.

Sometimes I did lose track of the names of the boys, but some of them stood out. Natalie does go out of her way and gives a summary on each of the boys she spent time with and about her ministry with them.

Along with the author our hearts cheered for Paul as he came out of his addiction, as he made tough decisions to change, to live with a family; and then were instances when our hearts were broken - When he returned back to solvents, whenever he ran away, whenever he made terrible gut wrenching mistakes, when he contracted an incurable disease.

We felt the pain and the troubled thoughts of the author as she dealt with the rebellious natures of Reuben or Mark or Joel along with other boys as she was only trying to help them and at many instances they refused adamantly.

As a closing thought I want to add:

Don't keep waiting for the right time to act, to share the gospel. God is always providing opportunities for us to act. Trust him and act on it.

As James mentions at the end of chapter 1: Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Religion is not just a label we give ourselves, The definition of religion is:'an act of worship'. Which means true religion is only reaped through authentic worship which needs to be in the present continuous tense. And authentic worship leads to action. To works by faith. To care for the weak and needy, To pursue and love them just as Jesus loved us.

Thank you Natalie for showing this to the rest of us. It was a really good read. May God continue to bless you on the endeavors ahead.

Jeff Shelnutt says

Older missionary biographies tend to glamorize their subject matter while minimizing the emotional and spiritual dynamics involved in ministry. The author of this book, however, takes the reader by the hand, allowing them into her heart as she attempts to understand what God would have her do with the neglected "rugby boys."

Stepping off of the Logos Hope mission ship into the city of Olongapo in the Philippines, the author helps operate a Christian book stand on the local pedestrian bridge. Before long she begins to notice boys and young teens who are all but ghosts to the local population. They are dirty, poorly dressed and apparently squatting in tunnels under the bridge.

Upon further investigation, she begins to understand these boys are addicted to "rugby," a cheap solvent that they inhale from plastic bags in order to stave off hunger pangs. The obvious result of this activity is the ravages upon the mind and body that addiction inevitably brings.

Day by day, she seeks to draw them in, to learn their names and to offer whatever assistance she can. But it quickly becomes clear that these boys need so much more. They need someone they can trust is going to stick around and invest in their lives.

"They honestly don't think about anything except the next few hours in front of them. They have no plans and no future. Part of the reason is because they have become invisible to people and they are just crying out for attention."

And attention the author gives them. Their physical and spiritual well-being begins to consume her thoughts and shape her plans. She shares the gospel of God's love in Christ with them, both in word and deed. She takes them to the hospital when they are sick, sits with them when they are depressed and plays with them when they simply need to be children.

So begins a journey...

"As Christians, it is almost always 'time' that is required to take that first crucial step in reaching out to that lost person..."

People often wonder what missionary life really looks like on the ground. When the charm and mystique are stripped away that which remains is sacrifice and loss, resurrection and redemption. These themes intertwine in both the life of the missionary and in the lives of those to whom the missionary attempts to reach.

What does missionary work look like? Here it is in Natalie Vellacott's ministry with the "rugby boys."

Be sure to check out the author's blog at christianmissionaryinthephilippines.blogspot.com!

Olivia says

As another reviewer has mentioned, this reads like a blog. It was simple, easy to read, and really fascinating. I love non-fiction books that give an insight into real life. The "Rugby boys" are like so many in the world...needing help and God's love in their addiction of drugs. But are we will to help people like that? I believe God is looking for those that will help just as Natalie Vellacott has.

Toward the end I wasn't able to concentrate on the book as much. I think because there wasn't a lot of dialogue, but that is totally just me! I still highly recommend reading this. Probably better for 16/17+ as drugs are a big part of this book, although written in a discreet way.

Todd Coburn says

Impressed. That is what I feel when I see people living the life Jesus calls us to.

Grateful. That's what I feel for people like this.

This book presents a play-by-play account of a normal Christian girl as she takes a two year break from her life to minister to others. The ministry changes her, and others, as it often does when we sacrifice for the God Who gave everything for us.

The book is not elegant, nor overly compelling, it simply tells a beautiful story of a normal person investing her life in a manner pleasing to our Lord.

If you love Jesus Christ and are inspired to see people living His love for the unloved, then you may enjoy this book. If you have a heart for the weak and broken and cast-off of this world, and are encouraged to see folks ministering to these people, then you will probably enjoy this book. If you want to minister for Jesus but are unable for health or other reasons, then this book is for you, and her ministry is one you may consider supporting.

Thank you Natalie for having a heart for these boys. May the Lord bless you and your ministry.

Victoria Lynn says

This book was a well written autobiographical story of Natalie's trip and time spent in the Philippines and her and her team's efforts with the "rugby" street boys of the area.

I was encouraged by her story and also noted that the realities of the area were well displayed by her writing. I was also encouraged by the fact that not everything went perfectly planned. Let me clarify a little. Her story is real. She struggled, not every one of the boys had a perfect outcome. And to me that is encouraging in the face of spiritual discouragement. Even when we do our best and with the Lord's help, people still have to make a choice. And while it was sad that not all the boys made the right choices, it just shows that we are humans and that we can't ever expect the perfect outcome. I hope I just made sense.

Otherwise, this book is highly recommended and I feel blessed that Natalie was able to share her stories with us.

R. says

Overall, this book certainly held my attention.

I took off one star because, 1) there were a couple places that for me were rather awkward (since I'm a girl), 2) there were some punctuation errors, typos, etc., and the style was at times difficult to follow, and 3) the boys seemed to run together.

Also, towards the beginning, Ms. Vellacott seemed more concerned with getting the rugby boys off the streets and off of drug which is an admirable goal but not addressing the real problem--sin.

However, that changed in the last 1/3 of the book, and it became clear that this was not her main concern.

This book encouraged me to show more compassion to the "invisible" children.

I love what she says in the epilogue: "Constantly remind them that it is God who loves them and that that is the reason for your concern. Don't expect dramatic change straight away, but, be patient, persevere, and pray. Don't try and do everything, or you will end up doing nothing. Just do something."

I recommend this book to all Christians concerned in making a difference for Christ in the lives of children. I was given a copy of this book in exchange for my honest opinion.

Audrey says

The author shares her experiences of trying to help the street boys in the Philippines. At first she came by missionary ship and later returned on her own. I was impressed with her dedication to the work. Most people would have considered those boys a lost cause but she persevered and learned to really love and care for them. Most importantly she shared the gospel story with them.
