

Signing Away

GEM missionary Terri Chapman willingly gave up her special skill, only to discover what God really had in store for her.

By Terri Chapman



Imagine the isolation of not being able to communicate verbally, especially if you're in a foreign country!

When my husband and I left the U.S. to answer God's call to join a church-planting team in Alkmaar, Holland, I assumed that I was giving up my 23-year career working with the deaf as a sign-language interpreter. Strangely, though, I was amazingly at peace about it.

For three years I focused on learning Dutch, the culture, and the regular ministry needs. Then, last

spring, I took a Dutch sign-language class and immediately began to see God opening doors for me. Just a few weeks into class, God brought my first Dutch deaf friend into my life. Tasja is a believer who, because of her deafness and physical isolation from other deaf people, is hungry for relationships. Soon, to my

complete amazement, God brought into my life two deaf Americans who live in Holland. The American Sign Language skills that I thought I had left in the States are now finding open doors for ministry halfway around the world!

Deaf people are often isolated in their own cultures. Those who live abroad are even more so. Recently I spent a day in Amsterdam, introducing my new American deaf friends to each other. The joy on their faces at being able to communicate in their own native language was incredible! My relationship with them is opening doors for me to share the Gospel with them as well.

I have now completed my second Dutch sign-language course and plan to take the third course in the spring. God has allowed me to develop contacts with people in deaf ministries all over Holland, and I am eager to see what role He has for me in that area. He took something that I willingly offered up to Him and is returning it to me to use in new ways.