

Babar's New Tie

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New Life Theological Seminary's graduation was over for another year in Kotlakhpat, Lahore, Pakistan. Boisterous voices penetrated the screen windows of our small lounge where we were entertaining the guest speakers as proud parents, brothers, sisters, aunties, uncles, cousins and friends mingled with the graduates in the courtyard. A knock came at the door and it was opened to find one of the graduates, Babar Gill standing on the step, asking to come in.

Babar was unusual, in that he had the gift of tears. It is very uncommon in Pakistani culture for a man to be seen weeping except at funerals, but Babar cried easily and openly every time the Spirit of God moved on him. As he had made his speech during the graduation, he had wept without embarrassment.

Earlier that day Babar had told me, with great excitement, that he was wearing the first suit he'd ever owned, bought for him by his parents for this special day. He'd saved his pocket money for months to buy a new shirt to go with the suit. The best part, though, was his tie. Steve Willoughby had come to Pakistan for meetings and had brought with him a bag of ties to be given away to whomever we felt needed one. Allan had given each of our national board members a chance to select two, and the ones that were left were distributed to our Bible school students. Babar pulled his tie out from his jacket and told me, "Sister Shalm, before, this tie was around Brother Willoughby's neck, and now, it's around mine!" Such an honor for a young man from the village.

Babar stepped into the room where six or eight of our guests were sitting with us, and in his limited English shyly said, "I've come to say thank you for all the work you have done so that I could come to Bible School." As he spoke, I noticed he was checking his pockets, obviously looking for something but not able to find it. For a brief second a look of frustration clouded his face and then he reached up and un-knotted his tie, looping it over his head in a quick motion as he knelt in the center of the group.

With tears soaking the collar of his new shirt and the front of his first suit, Babar took his tie and used it to wipe the dust from each of our shoes as he repeated "Thank you, thank you, thank you."