



TLM Daily Devotions

April 2016





Thirsty? A flowing fountain that gives eternal life

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again. ¹⁴ But no one who drinks the water I give will ever be thirsty again. The water I give is like a flowing fountain that gives eternal life." John 4:13

Recently I went on a spiritual retreat - always an excitement for me.

I meditated on this thirst Jesus was referring to. Reading more chapters of the Gospel of John took me back to 1:4 "In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind". I realised the thirst is for our Creator and my life needs to be filled by Himself. He is the Owner of my life; His light will enlighten my life because he made me the person I am and his image in me is an expression of Himself.

It then (once more) dawned on me that often I'm completely unaware of this thirst. It seems the thirst is so deep that it is mostly overwhelmed by the daily rush, work, and more work. I was reminded that I often feel dissatisfied and missing something in my life which I can't pinpoint. Is that perhaps because I'm out of touch with my deepest longing and thirst? Am I too busy to understand and care for the needs of my own heart?

Psalm 63 came to mind: *You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you.*

David talks about the longing for God Himself, a person, The Person that will fulfil my whole heart and my whole life – a flowing fountain that gives LIFE.

One commentary on the book of John suggests that Jesus also refers to the longing in God's heart to be this fountain in our lives. He made us unique creatures, he wants to be alive in our innermost being and have friendship with us at that level. His hunger and thirst is to do the will of the Father (John 4: 32,34), which implies more and more people being so connected with him that 'they will never thirst again'.

I sat by the little stream running through the retreat centre and drank from its water – as a reminder of the 'flowing fountain of eternal life': Father God you connect with us in our deepest heart and feast with us for eternity.



You have been my refuge

Psalm 61 (NIV) - For the director of music. With stringed instruments. Of David.

1 Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. 2 From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. 3 For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. 4 I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings.

5 For you, God, have heard my vows; you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.

In our Leprosy Mission Country Office we go through our risk register to see what has changed and what we need to prepare for and avoid. It is usually a good reflective process to do in the group and a good reminder of all that could go wrong, how likely it is and how it would impact us. It is also a good measure of our vulnerabilities even of our insecurities and fears.

We are very sensitive to this process as some of our more serious risk factors have become a reality over the years. Some years back the rental rates in town shot up on the wave of an economic boom in town. It came at a time when our own funding were being cut due to economic slowdowns elsewhere. We were forced to move our office from a spacious 3 bedroom apartment to a one room space at a Bible school. We put up some dividers and adapted to the new location. One night after we have been there for only 4 months, I received an urgent call late at night. The office was on fire! We were not prepared for this at all, and clearly the local fire department was not prepared for a fire either... By the end of the night the whole office was burned down and I went home tired, very dirty and somewhat distraught. Was God against us? What must we make of all this opposition?

In Psalm 61 we read that king David was also facing times of opposition and trouble, and he calls out for the Rock that is higher than he is, he that is the king, the highest in the land. We have many ways of handling our fears and insecurities. We try to build our own capacity or we look for others that are stronger than ourselves to lessen our exposure to risk. But circumstance always has a way of cutting us and our plans to size, and we have to admit that we are actually extremely vulnerable in every way.

Fortunately it does not end there, for our God is also extremely big, far higher than we can imagine. To David it gave him the confidence to continue to protect and grow the heritage of those God had entrusted to him.

The reality of Gods enormous care also became evident to us, as God moved people to respond to our situation up to the point where we were able to rebuild the old burnt office space and even to build our own office! We were looking down, but God wanted us to look up, past our circumstances to the Rock that is higher than we (or our circumstances) are.

Arie de Kruijff – Country leader Mozambique.



Outside the camp

*As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He had to live alone, he must live outside the camp.
Leviticus 13.46*

This verse is part of a section about infectious skin diseases (not only about leprosy).

But today some people affected by leprosy have to live apart. They are rejected by their community, their family because of fear. People are afraid of leprosy they see as a curse, they are afraid of the way others look at them.

We can also find people who decide to stay aside because they think they are worthless, not as good as others or as good as they should be. They even don't accept to be helped.

If you are "outside the camp" you are not alone! Jesus is there. He is able to understand what you feel, he will join you in what you live.

Jesus decided to lay down his life. He died on the cross where *he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53.4)*.

Jesus suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.

Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come (Hebrews 13.12-14).

As we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus, we are invited to join him outside the camp!?

Through Jesus we all have access to the Father by one Spirit (Ephesians 2.18). There is no camp anymore reserved for some people.

The letter of Hebrews was first written for Jewish Christians who were persecuted, rejected by Jews who didn't believe in Jesus. "Going to Jesus outside the camp" could remind them that the sacrifice of Jesus is greater than the sacrificial system. And even they have to suffer they have made the good choice in following Jesus, this verse comfort them.

Are we ready to follow Jesus whatever consequences?

Are we ready to leave our false assurances and move towards the city of God?

All that we have here is temporary, only our relationship with God will last. Our true home is not here, but in the presence of God.

Let us come back to the verse in Leviticus:

We all are sinners, unclean and away from God, alone. To be in communion with him and with others, we have to go to the cross to be forgiven.

Thank you, Lord Jesus that I can meet you outside the camp.



Believe, that's it!

Isaiah 25:4 You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat.

Isaiah 12:2 Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation

During one of my trips to Bangladesh, I was confronted with suffering in its most diverse forms:

- The physical suffering due to disease such as leprosy, or by accidents, or by domestic burns which are very frequent among young girls in this country
- The suffering due to extreme poverty met in the Shanty town of Dhaka
- The psychological suffering undergone by girls who have been abused or excluded from society

You who read this, you are certainly also confronted with suffering. Each of us bears our own sorrows. Like King David, maybe you shout to God: *"Why are you hiding your face? Why do you forget our sorrows or poverty or oppression? Get up to help us!"*

If you do this, you have the right. God is not an insensitive God. He sees, He understand our sufferings. He brought them to the cross in Jesus-Christ so that one day they will be swallowed up for ever. God wants to fill us with His hope so that we can continue on our road nevertheless.

I discovered, a while ago, in an old Bible a paper which had been sent to me by a friend. She sent me this verse from *Isaiah 35: "The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will be burst into bloom."* Then she adds: To believe it is what?

- Where the strength of the nature is destroyed, to see reborn the flower
- Where there is a deluge of flood, to see the rainbow
- Where there is a discord, to see the reconciliation
- Where there is a disappointment, to see the dawn of a new day
- Where there was nothingness, to see God at work

Believe that's it!

Eric Chollet

I'm retired since three years. I used to work with TLM Switzerland for 32 years. During that time, I have had the privilege to stand in different committees (e.g. executive committee - directorate) with TLMI, which has been very rewarding. All along these years of service, I have met a lot of wonderful and dedicated people. May God continue to bless the mission for His glory.



Bless the Lord, O my soul

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all you iniquities, who heals all your diseases...

Psalm 103:1,2,3

I want to praise God the life of my Mother who went to be with the Lord at 5.00 pm on 5th April 2015.

I am who I am today is because of my Mother. We lived in a Tea Estate in Sri Lanka where the health facilities were scarce; one Doctor was taking care of area covering three to four Estates. It takes hours for the Doctor to arrive when called. My Father used to suffer from Asthma, many times he would become breathless and his lips would slowly turn to blue (sign of lack of Oxygen, next step is death if Oxygen was not given) My Mother used to kneel beside him and just pray ; and My Father gets well instantly. As a child I have seen this happening many times.

On one such occasion, at the age of eight, I prayed that if I am given a chance to become a Doctor, I would serve in a needy place.

I never knew that God the Father who heard my cry would make me become a Doctor and lead me to serve in the field of leprosy from day I of my passing Medical College till this day for 30 years.

I am alive today because of my parents: I was down with unexplainable high fever with swellings all over my body just before I entered my Medical College. The fever left me with skin and bone, because I could not retain any food or water for one whole week. Doctors in Christian Medical College wanted me to get admitted in the Hospital for further Investigations. Prayers were mobilised for my life, people who visited me did not enter my room thinking it could be any infectious deadly disease that I was suffering from. My Mother was woken up in her sleep by an Angel asking her to pray. My parents laid their hands on me and prayed. At that instance, my fever left me and the swellings disappeared. I was totally healed.

We have a great and mighty Heavenly Father knows us from the time we are formed in the womb, carries us through the times and leads us to fulfil His purpose for our life in His time. We only need to learn to trust Him with all of our hearts and yield to His will.

Dr.Helen Roberts

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Handling conflict I.

Nehemiah 5 - Part 1

In this chapter of Nehemiah the community is starting to self-destruct because of some festering grievances. The workers now face a new enemy who is harder to conquer than the previous ones. The timing could not have been worse because the walls are almost done! Nehemiah has to put down his hard hat and turn his attention from the construction of the wall to the walls that were being put up between his workers. While their external enemies helped to rally the people, internal conflict threatened to divide and destroy them.

TLM's Global Fellowship is almost 5 years old, and we have made great strides in being a role model of Christian fellowship, but there are dangers we need to be aware of to ensure our fellowship is not weakened.

What we read in Nehemiah is a classic example of internal conflict that threatens to destroy all the good work that has gone before. So here are some principles to ponder in handling conflict:

1. Relational problems are inevitable and we can't ignore them. Even though it's painful and it may seem easier to avoid or deny relational ruptures, we must face conflict head-on. If we don't, we'll pay, because it will go underground, grow deep roots, and bear bitter fruits. Someone put it this way: "The first price you pay is always the cheapest." It's painful to stop strife but it will only get more difficult the longer you wait.

2. We must take the initiative to restore relationships whether we want to or not. Don't wait for the other person to come to you. You need to go to them. Be tenacious about this one. If you've been hurt, go and talk it out as Jesus commanded in Matthew 18. If you've hurt someone else, go and confess what you did according to what Jesus said in Matthew 5.

3. God's reputation is at stake when we have conflict. In John 17:23, Jesus prayed that lost people would know God's heart of love when brothers and sisters in Christ are brought together in complete unity. Let's be like Nehemiah and walk in the fear of God to not only avoid the reproach of unbelievers, but to also make God attractive to those who need Him, and we can do that by living in loving community with each other.

I came across something called, "How to Turn a Disagreement Into a Feud." I wonder how many of us have done these things? I know I have:

- * Avoid conflict so that your feelings build up and then you explode.
- * Be vague and general when you share your concerns so the other person cannot do anything practical to change the situation.
- * Assume you know all the facts and that you are totally right.
- * Avoid possible solutions and go for total victory and unconditional surrender.

If we are aware of the dangers, then our Global Fellowship will continue to flourish.



Handling conflict II.

Nehemiah 5 - Part 2

In yesterday's devotion we thought about the dangers of internal conflict as well as the principles of handling a conflict situation.

Perhaps these dangers can best be summed up with the following story:

In an old monastery in Germany, I'm told you can see two racks of ancient deer antlers permanently interlocked. Apparently the animals had been fighting fiercely, and their horns became so tangled that they could not be disengaged. As a result, both of them died of hunger.

And principles can be a bit theoretical, so let me offer these practical suggestions to stop strife, - these come right out of Nehemiah 5.

1. Make sure it's a moral issue. Nehemiah was very angry because of the injustice he saw in verse 6. If you've been wronged and sinned against, your anger is justified. On the other hand, if you're upset at someone just because they've done something that you don't like, and it's not a moral issue, then give them some space and give some grace.
2. Think before speaking. If you've been sinned against, take some time to ponder what was done and how you feel about it. That's exactly what Nehemiah did in the first part of verse 7. Anger is a gift from God that motivates us to action but it can just as easily backfire if we just let things fly out of our mouths.
3. Meet face-to-face. Someone has said: "Confrontation is caring enough about another person to get the conflict on the table and talk about it." Just as Jesus commanded in Matthew 18, we are to be direct with the people we have strife with. Nehemiah went right to the source in verse 8 and confronted the people with what they had done wrong.
4. Seek Resolution. Our goal in stopping strife or confronting conflict should always be resolution and restoration of the relationship. We shouldn't be set on proving ourselves right and the other person as wrong. If we allow strife and discord to go on, kingdom work will come to a standstill.

May we continue to grow as a Global Fellowship and in so doing, attract others to the life giving power of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman

John 4: 1- 30 In John chapter 4 there is a significant learning for us on how Jesus treated the people he met during his life here on earth. This is a Bible text I have been reading again and again. It always had something more to say to me!

Jesus was tired and thirsty and it was about noon. Jesus had to go through Samaria on his way back to Galilee and there, in a town called Sychar, he found a well. It was Jacob's well, and Jesus sat down. A Samaritan woman came to draw water and, to her big surprise, Jesus asked her to give him some water. The woman was so surprised that Jesus, obviously a Jew, talked to her, a woman, and not just that. She was a Samaritan woman! Most likely, nothing like that had ever happened to her before!

Jesus was not limited or bound by the traditions in society. The first rule he broke was that he spoke to a woman. At that time a Jew did not usually speak to a woman in public. All the important things in the society were decided by men and religious issues were certainly not discussed with a woman.

The second rule Jesus broke was that he spoke with someone coming from Samaria. Jews did not associate with Samaritans at that time and nor would they use the same cups and bowls as the Samaritans. But Jesus acted in a different way! He asked this Samaritan to give him water!

The third thing was that he took the opportunity to tell her about God; explained to her about a well that would never become dry; answered her question about the right place for worship and ended up by confirming to her that He is the Messiah. This was a dialogue with a woman on theological issues at the highest level!

This woman had lived a sad, and probably a bad, life. She had been married five times and the man she lived with now was not her husband. Was she despised by society because of this? Was this the reason that she came at noon to the well instead of with the other women in the morning? Jesus knew her situation and was very clear and open with her about this way of living. However, instead of treating her like an outcast, he treated her with respect and love in such a way that she went into the town and told the people: *"Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did!"*

Jesus crossed several social barriers that day. A social, an ethnic and a religious barrier. He did this for a person who needed to get the Living water; to get THE well inside her that would always lead her in the right way and give her joy and satisfaction in her life. This well is not like any other; it is a well that comes from God Himself and will last forever.

This text encourages us to cross the fences of traditions and other things that hinder us from seeing a person in need of God's love. It also encourages us to continue to demand dignity, equality and care for the leprosy affected people who have suffered from several social barriers all their life!



The Good Shepherd

Psalm 23

Some days and situations are really hard, and we don't feel we have the resources needed.

Maria had a terminal illness and was receiving palliative care in our hospital. She lost power of speech and most power of movement and became unable to communicate. But we sensed her comprehension was still good. We know how to care for her body, but how can we meet the needs of her mind and spirit? One morning while praying I was asking God how I could help Maria today. The picture of a carving came to mind. I hunted it up, and took it in to show her. It is the form of the shepherd, with a little lamb lying held in his arms. I said "Maria, I think God wants to remind you today, this is you, and this is where you are." I placed the carving on her bedside table within eye range.

Later I was very moved to hear that just previously another friend had read from Maria's daily devotional booklet to her. The gist was that when we are carrying a burden too heavy for us, God will carry us. And when we feel we are burden to others, it is God who will carry us. The assurance that this was not just a nice reading but in fact God speaking to her personally was confirmed by the arrival of the carving. If those were indeed her inner burdens, what a gift from a gracious Father. No wonder her eyes had teared up. Mine did too.

What a precious loving God we have. He knows the unspoken needs and fears and weights heavy on our hearts. He wants us to know He understands, cares, and He loves us. And in our poor efforts to serve Him He is graciously able to use each of us to contribute to His work in others' lives the world, as we remember to seek Him.

Prayer: Lord, what do I need to pray, and say and do today, to play my part in your plan?

Heather Smith

Deputy Director McKean Rehabilitation Center, Thailand



The Act of Waiting

"I will stand.... and watch ...to see what He will say to me.....the vision is yet for an appointed time; ...though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Habakkuk 2:1-4

The most difficult task or act that I struggle with as a leader is the act of waiting, especially when it seems the waiting is endless and there is no assurance of getting result or knowing why or what is causing the delay. We live in a world where everything is so fast and we are so task/result oriented; waiting seems to have no space at all in our busy life.

In West Africa where I am based, it can be frustrating to; wait for the internet to download emails and documents; to wait for my wife and kids when getting ready for church or going to an event; to wait for my team to complete the report when the deadline is close, to wait for a meeting that starts late or seems to have no finish end in time as people make speeches/songs or pastor reaching long sermon in foreign language that I have no clue what is being said; to wait for the taxi man who parks his car in the middle of the road to pick passengers; to wait at the airport for a connecting flight that was delayed for hours with no explanation or reason given for the delay, to wait for rain to fall after many months of experiencing hot, dusty and dry weather or to wait for the food my wife is cooking that seems to take too long to be ready when I am hungry. Much more it can be very challenging and sometime we (Loveth and I) felt discouraged after many years of prayers with no answer for husband for some of our lovely and beautiful sisters who are still single, or for those who are married but have no kids or some close relatives and friends who did not know the Lord.

Waiting time is humanly frustrating and if care is not taken we lose, courage, confidence, despair, become irritated and much more we lose hope. Many have even lost trust in the ability of God coming through on their situation and backslide into the world.

I believe the act of waiting is the period where we go through the process of being refined by God to bring out His nature in our life; if only we can wait and not fret; the glory of the Lord will surely be revealed in us, patients which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and godly character will be produced in us and God's vision (His intended purpose and plan for our life) will be revealed; we can then master how to walk with Him and fulfill His counsel and be fully transformed to His likeness.

Even though it tarry let us wait; for it will surely come. Our God who has promised is faithful and will surely bring it to pass; 'Therefore do not cast away your confidence....for you are in need of endurance so that after you have done the will of God you may receive the promise' (Hebrew 10:24, 35-36 NKJV)

In the period of every waiting; may God give us the spirit of self-control and patient that we may be made worthy to receive what He has promised.

Bunmi Oluloto is The Leprosy Mission Country Leader for Niger and Chad. He is a Nigerian and has been working with the Leprosy Mission for over 20 years. He is married to Loveth Oluloto and they have 3 children namely; Blessing, Favour and Goodness.



Keep praising!

“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” Psalm 150

Are you a ‘wave your hands in the air’ or a ‘sit on your hands’ style of worshiper? When Leprosy Mission staff and volunteers come together to worship, you notice how different we are. For example, our staff and volunteer team in Scotland is diverse: Baptist, Brethren, Catholic, Church of Scotland, Episcopal, Independent, United Free ... Individual styles of worship may differ, but we are united by our Christian faith and commitment to seeing leprosy defeated and lives transformed.

Today, I want to talk to you about worship. Worship or praise are two words we often use in Church settings, but what do they mean? The dictionary tells us that praise takes 2 steps: think and show.

Think - you must think something is really great. Show - you must show your praise

Outside of Church and The Leprosy Mission, there are many ways we show praise. You like going to concerts and hearing someone sing. When a singer sings a well-known song, you clap or give them a round of applause.

You like to read. When you really like a book, you cannot put it down as you enjoy it so much. When you pass on a book, you are recommending it.

You go to a museum or art gallery. When you see a painting or an object you really like, you stop and admire it. When we’re around people, the noisier we tend to be in our appreciation and the more we can express ourselves. But no one way of praising is better than another.

If people and things are worth praising because of their skill or their creativity, how much more is God, the Creator of everything? We don’t scream and shout when we see a beautiful sunset, or applaud a bird singing, but we may pause to appreciate them.

The Bible is full of ways people have praised God, especially the book of Psalms. In Psalm 150, people praise God with music and dancing - like cheering at a football match. In Psalm 8, David praises God as he gazes at the stars - like pausing to admire a painting. In Psalm 78, they see the great things God has done and want to tell everyone about them - like recommending a good book.

How we praise depends on who we are, what we appreciate, whether we are alone or with a group of people. Praise makes you feel good and draws you closer to the person you are praising; it creates a relationship between you. Praising God draws you closer to Him and prepares for the Holy Spirit to enter your Heart.

Go on, try praising God. Praise him for things you see in the natural world, people you appreciate, things He has done. Praise silently or in words or song. Whatever you do, keep praising!



The baggage we carry

John 9, 1-9

Jesus commanded the disciples to heal and preach. Both these activities go hand in hand. Jesus emphasized this again and again. Physical healing can never be complete without spiritual healing.

He gives power to heal, and the preaching has to go hand in hand. Physical change has to happen along with the change of the soul in this earthly life.

Vs 3 He told them : *take nothing for the journey – no staff , no bag , no bread , no money ,no extra shirt.* That's a tall order, and difficult to comprehend . Settle down , settle well ! We have been advised time and again. But Jesus says : Take nothing . Travel light , travel fast . The more we have , the more we are weighted down. Our baggage slows us , hinders us, settles us , attaches us. We called to be detached ...to materialistic circumstances. Responsibility of the gospel messenger is to preach the truth.

And the good news isthe message preached will not go in vain. Herod tried to kill the truth by beheading John. But the Truth did not die. It perplexed him . Whether the message is accepted or not is not important . The reality is that it will penetrate even the hardest heart.

We , who are The TLMiteshave this mandate ...Heal and Preach. Let us carry minimum baggage. And not worry about the harvest . God is at work though us.

Joydepa Darlong Dr

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Gospel Manifesto

Luke 4:14-21

It is interesting to look at the start of Jesus ministry and His manifesto. It is a familiar passage to us. I think you could say it is the Leprosy Mission's manifesto as well.

It starts with the Spirit of the Lord. Mother Teresa once said that the need is not the call. Those are such wise words and I find them a comfort now that I am disabled and less able to do things. The point is that we need to listen to the Holy Spirit and His leading so that we do the things he wants us to do. We also need to let Him empower us and not try to do it in our own strength.

"Proclaim good news to the poor"- I don't believe that's speaking rather I think it is showing and caring. It is interesting that it is not a general proclaiming of good news but it is to the poor, the ones that need to hear the good news. That good news can be nothing other than that they are loved and cared for by Almighty God. That really is what the Leprosy Mission is all about, of course, but there are also poor around us, wherever we are, and we need to show that good news to them too.

Then there is the proclamation of freedom and of sight. I reckon that this is both literal and figurative. It seems to me that there are many blind people in the world today who either can't see what is going on or don't want to. Others are prisoners, maybe criminal but also imprisoned by their desires, or their circumstances and they feel that they will never get out. Yet we know with God there is such great freedom. I think of the many people with leprosy that I have seen who you might have thought were prisoners of disability and poverty and yet whose smile and gratefulness to God belies the circumstances that surround them. There was a pastor in Papua New Guinea who had leprosy and he chose to proclaim the gospel to his enemy tribe because of the freedom that he had in Christ. Isn't that amazing? It's a challenge for me to proclaim my freedom to others and to make sure that I am not blind but rather see with my Father's eyes.

Lastly we need to help the oppressed and there are plenty of those too. Wouldn't it be great to lift people's spirits by sharing with them that God loves them, that they have found favour with God? To me that's what Easter is all about. Now to listen to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to empower me to share in the manifesto.

June Nash

I have worked for the Leprosy Mission for 35 years. At first I was on the mission field in Papua New Guinea and then Ethiopia. In the beginning I did leprosy control but then moved into the training of health workers. It was a privilege to serve overseas with TLM for 20 years. I returned to be part of the team in Brentford, firstly as global training adviser, then HR Director and lastly as Knowledge Management Director. I am now retired but being a part of the Leprosy Mission never really leaves you. I continue to hold the work in my heart through prayer and visits to Brentford.



Behind the Scenes

“Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with all the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.” Rev8:3 –6

The book of Revelation is a complex book, full of symbolism and prophetic vision, but these little verses caught my attention for their description of what happens to “the prayers of the saints”. The symbolic description is of our prayers being mixed with incense and offered on the altar before God’s throne. The smoke of the incense and the prayers of the saints rise up before God, and then – look what happens as a result! Fire from God’s altar is hurled on the earth: the Power of God, sent to earth.

With this little picture from “behind the scenes”, I used to love to read Psalm 18, while sitting on my verandah in Purulia, during the dark and violent storms that not infrequently occurred during the month of May before the monsoon came. Psalm 18 is one of my favourites, because it lets us express directly “I love you, O Lord, my strength”. The writer then goes on to express the rock-like reliability of our Lord, even when we are tested to severe distress, feeling trapped and overwhelmed, to the point of death. The writer describes God’s response to our cry for help, and doesn’t it sound just like what happens when our prayers ascend to God’s altar, and fire from His altar is hurled on the earth?!

“In my distress, I called to the Lord....from his temple he heard my voice....the earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the earth shook....he parted the heavens and came down;” (v6a,7a,9a).

Verses 9 and 11 talk about “dark clouds” being under the Lord’s feet, and how “He made darkness his covering”. Indeed, many in times of deep struggle wonder why they still feel darkness around them, even though they have called on the Light of the World. We see in this psalm that this in no way indicates the Lord’s absence. Our Rock, our Fortress and our Deliverer is on His way, and will not be thwarted! “He drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me....from my foes, who were too strong for me.” This is also the faith we can have regarding how the Lord ministers to those whom we pray for, and entrust to His care, wherever they are and whatever their circumstances.

The writer of this psalm testifies to the Grace of God in taking the initiative to “keep my lamp burning” (v28), to “arm me with strength and make my way perfect” (v32), and to “give me His shield of victory” (v35). When the Lord calls us to become part of His great Purpose in this world, He most certainly provides all the resources we need, to follow Him.

Next time you find yourself in a thunderstorm, try, if you can, to sit down (in shelter!) with your Bible and read through Psalm 18. You will find it a great encouragement. *“Therefore I will praise you among the nations, O Lord!” (v49).*

Kirsteen Dutton (née Thompson)

I am British, (but feel more Indian, having been born in Bihar and schooled in Tamil Nadu!), and I worked as an ophthalmic surgeon in Purulia (with regular visits to Bankura, Saldoha and Muzaffarpur) with TLM from 1993 - 1998. I was on the TLM Scotland Board of trustees from 2006 - 2013, and still maintain informal links with TLM Scotland. I also keep in touch with TLM Purulia, as I have a god daughter there - an orphan brought to the hospital when she was 8 years old, and who now has her own little family. My current role is as an NHS consultant ophthalmic surgeon here in the West of Scotland and I am on the board of trustees of a small Indian church in Glasgow city centre.



A Bridge Repaired

'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son' (Luke 15 18-19 NIV)

Taking disciplinary action against a colleague is never easy, but the evidence was clear. He had misused his position to benefit himself in a way unworthy of a Christian leader. The son in the parable at least got his share by asking. This man didn't. He just took it. He was called to give account of himself, but the upshot of the enquiry was to inform him that he would be transferred to a position of much less authority.

That was too much for him to bear and he immediately reacted with unbridled anger and venom. We kept our calm, informing him that we were giving him another chance to prove his worth.

He took up the new appointment grudgingly, but continued to use any opportunity to vent disagreement and anger. Anonymous letters started to arrive. They were horrid to read, with anything from continuing vitriol to death threats. I suspected the source, but could never prove it. They hurt, but the safest was to disregard them altogether. However eventually I decided to take one of the envelopes and in my best handwriting wrote on it. I placed it under the glass on my desk so that anyone seated on the other side could read the words: *'You are forgiven.'* It may not have made much difference to those who read it, but it made a difference to me.

Matters came to a head during an executive conference. Once again he chose to be disruptive and antagonistic. I was in the chair and addressed him calmly. 'I note what you're saying, but choose not to reply. Please come and see me in my room at 6pm this evening'.

I had a senior colleague with me. He arrived and immediately knelt before me and, with tears, quoted those words from the parable: *'I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'*

I cannot read that part of the story without remembering that event.

Next day there was plenty of comment. 'What happened?' I was asked. 'He's different.' 'O, you'll need to ask him,' was my reply.

It was one experience though which I learned the costly love of church discipline, the importance of forgiveness, and the joy of restoration and reconciliation.

Paul du Plessis Dr

After a lifetime of service with The Salvation Army, including India, South African born Dr Paul du Plessis and his wife, Margaret, have retired in the UK. Paul has had a number of honorary roles with TLM dating back to his work at TLM Field Representative for TLM for Zambia in the 1970s. He is a former vice-president of TLMI.



Forgiveness and reconciliation

Letter of Paul to Philemon

Forgiveness and reconciliation are very critical part of Christian life.

It is important for an accountant to reconcile the bank accounts regularly for accurate book keeping. If the accounts and the bank balances do not reconcile on regular basis, then the account keeping will be inaccurate and out of control, leading to a great financial lose.

This principle also applies to our daily Christian life and relationships with other people, on the teaching of Christ on forgiveness. The teaching of Jesus, not to hold bitterness & grudges against people. The Lord 's Prayer very strongly states that we must forgive people who trespass against us. Let us learn from the teaching of New Testament on this matter of forgiveness and reconciliation.

I am sure that like me, many Christian must be asking why the letter of Philemon was included in the Bible. This is the smallest among others and very personal letter of Paul. The fact is that this letter of Paul to Philemon sets the best and very practical example for us on forgiveness and reconciliation, on the relationship with people who have done wrong to us.

To forgive and reconcile, at times is hard and difficult for everyone as the pain becomes bitter and very likely to be more from people to whom we love most. However, this is not impossible. Paul has asked his faithful & respected friend Philemon to forgive his old servant Onesimus, who must have done great damage or hurt in past to Philemon.

Let us see a practical situation on this issue of a loving Christian couple. The husband informs his wife that an important guest will be visiting their house soon. The wife starts preparing to welcome the guest, arranging the best linen & crockery, with the best food. A day prior to the guest coming, husband informs his wife that the guest coming to their house is one of her aunts, who had earlier misbehaved and insulted her, and spread false statements and rumors. The wife was very angry and hurt by the aunt's behavior and still hasn't forgiven her with grudges against her. It was tough for his wife to accept to welcome her aunt. As believers, the couple in daily life made sure to implement teaching of Jesus Christ.

The letter of Paul to Philemon does not tell clearly state that Philemon finally forgave his old servant Onesimus. Still, Philemon must have surely forgiven him and accepted him in his family as before. The letter of Philemon teaches how Paul has requested and given good arguments to Philemon, how and why he must forgive and accept his old servant Onesimus. Likewise, the couple as good Christian also decided to forgive her aunt of things from the past. They happily welcomed her warmly in their home and accepted her.

God has forgiven our sins and reconciled with all mankind. This teaches us great lesson that as Christian we are not to hold grudges and bitterness of past of people's wrong doing. We have to forgive, forget, pray and reconcile with everyone around us. Let us all forgive that was past, ask for forgiveness if we have hurt anyone, reconcile in the present and be a blessing for rest of our lives. Let our life become a testimony.



Where are you going?

John 14:1-6

The city of Lubango, Angola, is built on a plateau. Although the days can be very hot in summer, the altitude ensures that the evenings are pleasantly cool.

The golden orange glow of the setting sun on the surrounding hills convinced me that it was a good time to go for a walk.

The streets were packed with children playing, men and women returning from work, some bargaining for food, fruits and vegetables from street vendors, others chatting ... a kaleidoscope of colour and a cacophony of sounds.

As I looked different from the other people, I attracted a fair amount of attention. Soon a group of university students surrounded me, greeted me and accompanied me on my walk. After a while they stopped me and one of them asked :

"Old man, (a sign of respect) where are you going?"

"Everywhere and nowhere, I am just going for a walk and admiring the sunset" I responded.

For a while they accompanied me in silence, then, once again, a few stood in front of me, forced me to stop and one said :

"If you don't know where you are going, how will you know when you have arrived?"

A question that led into a lengthy discussion about the meaning of life.

All of us, at some stage in life, have to deal with the question "Where am I going?" "Do I really want to go there?" "Am I sure of getting there?" "Why?" "What is life all about anyway?"

Paul, whose life had been transformed by a personal encounter with Christ, knew exactly where he was going and could state *"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."* *Philippians 1:21.*

It is wonderful to know that all of us can have the same assurance.

Silvano Perotti

Secretary for Europe then Deputy International Director and Director for Support and Development TLMI
Born in Italy - retired in Switzerland.
Worked with TLMI until 1990.



Cultivate Every Opportunity to work with Him

'Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make most of every Opportunity' Colossians 4:5 (NIV)

'Use your heads as you live and work among outsiders. Do not miss a trick. Make the most of every opportunity'. As a TLMer, you may find that your calendar is almost full of commitments and tasks.

You will find yourself sometimes wanting to hide under the covers to avoid the tasks or people you must face or patients who have been coming every time to our clinics with chronic wounds that refuse or resist to heal themselves. Maybe you are wishing you had a few appointments to run off to, instead of spending one more day at home caring for the children or bound in by health issues.

You will find yourself sometimes working in a strange culture, working with people who have different beliefs than yours. Moreover, sometimes you may find yourself desperately wanting to learn a new language to enable you communicate without being misunderstood.

My fellow TLMer, no matter what your day looks like, no matter the responsibilities facing you, there is purpose for you to be there today. You are not an accident. Your life is not for nothing. God's invitation stands for you, so will you say yes to make the most of every opportunity as you join Him in His work for you today?

Whether you are busy with implementing your project or faced with meeting a donor deadline, or you are stuck in your situation with prayer as your only way out, God invites you to make the most of every opportunity by intentionally using your time to the best of your ability.

In other words, He is calling you and me to live in such a way that we see this moment as a gift from Him, and choose to use it well—that means our goal is not to be better than someone else, but to be the best that we can in light of our circumstances.

So my fellow TLMer, what does it look like to make the most of this day that God has given you?

Questions for personal reflection

- What opportunities are before you today?
- How can you approach those opportunities, and the ones you cannot even conceive of, in such a way as to join God in His work?
- What responsibilities are you dreading, and what would it look like to give them to God?

Father, Open my eyes so that I can see what you are doing in my life, or the lives of my colleagues around me and in my work place, enable me to grab the opportunity which you have provided, help me with necessary skills and wisdom to do it best so that the whole glory will be yours. In Jesus' glorious name.

Dr. Yousif Deng (medical doctor) A South Sudanese, now work as country leader for Sudan and South Sudan. Based in Juba, CES South Sudan. I have been with TLM since 2001 and up to now.



Be satisfied with what you have

Be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." Hebr 13:5 New Living Translation

Be satisfied with what you have. That verse should lead us away from our big worries and petty concerns, jealousy that eats me up inside and envy which destroys relationships. What we have already is of much greater importance than money or any good or good luck we wish to have or would like to own. We have all the rich promises, God's own commitment to those who put their trust in Him: "I will never fail you".

Today I visited an 86 year old lady, a former Matron of the Hospital I served in Ghana. She has survived a dramatic condition, has lost weight and hair, but is recovering remarkably. She told me what happened when she asked a group of 26 girls in Ghana: "what are your dreams?" These girls had migrated to the capital, ending up on the filthy streets of a suburb, a place referred to as Sodom and Gomorrah.

When she asked the question they were seated around a fire in the night. The first girl replied: I dream about an apple. The Matron did not know that there were apples for sale in Accra. The second one dreamed about ice-cream. A next one dreamed about a chicken leg, one for her and her alone. The fourth smiled and answered: cooked eggs. The next evening there were 26 apples. After finishing these, the ice-cream seller rang his bell (invited by the Matron to do so at the right time). The next evening there were 26 chicken-legs. The girl who had dreamed about this ate her chicken while dancing and shouting for joy.

This friend of us, the Matron, had gone back to Accra year after year to live with these girls for long periods at a time and train them. She did this after she had served in Mission hospitals till she had reached the age of 65. After 65 she did not want to fail the girls and did not want them to feel abandoned. And satisfied they were with the answer to their dreams. These are small dreams in the eyes of many among us. These were big dreams for girls picked up from the side of the road in order to be trained for a future by a Church.

"Be satisfied with what you have" is a call addressing us all, the rich and the poor and all who want to become rich and all who are afraid to become poor. Oxfam has told us that the 85 richest people are as wealthy as the poorest half of the world. The report will not tell us that they own half of the joy and happiness of this world. I would not expect so. Will any of these richest people ever dance and shout for joy with a chicken leg in his or her hand? The story of my former Matron, our family friend, is a humbling story for me too. I live in this western world and we were able to sell and buy a house in order to move and live close to our children. This simple sentence tells you how many reasons and more we have to be happy and satisfied with what we have. But the author of Hebrews did not say to me: be satisfied because you own a house and you are a patriarch in a family. He calls me to be satisfied because God Himself has said: I will never fail you. To be satisfied because of God Himself. There is lifelong learning in being satisfied.

Dr Piet Both

former TLM staff, from 1991 till 2015; I started as Medical Advisor for TLM Africa and have been based in The Netherlands. I am retired and have worked 24+ year for TLM in different capacities. I have found it a privilege to work with so many TLM colleagues especially in African countries, Bangladesh and Nepal. Other highlights have been to work with people who had organised themselves in organisations like ENAPAL, IDEA etc. I am married with Margriet and we are blessed with 5 children and a 5th grandchild is expected in January.



'Do not be afraid; I will help you.'

Sometimes we can find ourselves in situations which stretch us to the limit, and this has happened to me more than once in my life. In such times I have had very different experiences of God's presence – or sometimes it seems - his absence. But the time I describe here is the one which sticks out in my memory as a real touch of God's grace, for which I was very thankful at the time and have been ever since. I share it hopefully to encourage, but I fully understand that such experiences are not guaranteed – we cannot squeeze God into a formula!

I had just started my second three year term as a mission partner in Nepal serving in a town called Butwal with the United Mission to Nepal (long before my TLM days). During my first three year term I had been much overstretched in my work, and really struggled. But now I returned to a different job – to the post of Project Director – which as the title suggests had a lot of responsibility. Fortunately for me, the previous director was still around when I arrived back in Butwal, and we overlapped for a few days so he could do a proper hand over.

We worked hard together as he introduced me to the 40 or so staff I was responsible for, and as he went through all the files and other information he thought I needed to know about. The time passed all too quickly, and I was very nervous when he said "OK that's it – you're on your own now." and left. I do confess I felt very much on my own with the heavy weight of all this responsibility on my shoulders.

It was the end of the working day and I sat at his desk – now my desk. The desk top was completely clear except for a Bible which he had left for me to use – one which he had used regularly and in which he had highlighted many passages in yellow.

I don't usually open the Bible at random too look for inspiration, so I'm not sure what prompted me to do so on this occasion. I think I didn't really know where to start – whether in the new job or where to find a comforting Bible passage! The Bible opened at Isaiah chapter 41, and the passage highlighted by my friend the previous director was verse 13 – *I am the LORD your God; I strengthen you and tell you, 'Do not be afraid; I will help you.'*

It was a touch of pure grace. In that moment I knew I need not be afraid; I knew that I would never be alone in this job (leadership in any form can be a lonely task), and I knew that God would help me. The struggles of my first three years in Nepal were now behind me and this was a new chapter.

Looking back on those years I really did experience God's help – especially in the gifted people he sent to work with me. God does not guarantee such experiences of his grace – but when they come they are a great blessing and so very welcome.

Trevor Durston

General Director 1993 – 2006 Now retired and working as a volunteer Area Representative in the UK



“For as I worship you, You lead me to that place, To that place of divine exchange”

Psalm 40 v 8: I delight to do your will, Oh my God, Your law is written on my heart.

Psalm 119 v 2: How blessed who observe his testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart

There is much written in the Bible about the heart, and in the parable of the seeds we see that the reason that some people’s journey with God is cut short is because of their hard hearts. We can all memorise scripture, to be quoted at the appropriate time, but it is important to ask God to write his ways on our hearts. It is also important to spend time with the Lord to protect our hearts.

Being a true servant of God comes out of a desire for God to write his ways on our hearts. Service should never feel like a burden and when it does it is time to spend time with the Lord so that our hearts may be filled with the Holy Spirit. I often remind myself of the story of Mary and Martha, and how when I first read it, I felt that it was so unfair. But of course it is a lovely reminder that with God all things are possible and that we are not to act in our own strength but to lean on God in everything we do.

As I was reading the bridge devotions on the 18th February it talked of the messages of touch and it took me back to India and Ethiopia where I had been blessed as I held the hands of people who were suffering with leprosy. It was during a lunchtime prayer walk with these lovely memories that I suddenly felt very upset. This experience of holding hands, that for me had been very special, was, of course, not the same for the people affected by leprosy.

Whilst I felt the physical blessing of companionship through touch, the feeling for them as a result of their anaesthetic hands must have been more remote because what they could see was happening was not made real through their sense of touch. I do not hear clear words from God but I know like many of us he does write his thoughts and desires for my life on my heart, and I suddenly felt that God was trying to tell me something. I felt that he was saying that in reaching out to these wonderful people in our roles with the Leprosy Mission we are not just touching their hands in greeting. No, through service with the leprosy mission we are touching their hearts, and in return our hearts are being touched and filled too. There is a beautiful song called divine exchange and the chorus has the following words

For as I worship you, You lead me to that place, To that place of divine exchange

This of course talks of the divine exchange between ourselves and our Father but I have sensed a divine exchange in my brief visits to India and Ethiopia and we must never forget that in all we do our motive is to reach out and touch hearts for Jesus. How do we do this? What should our motivation be? In 1 Corinthians 13 v 13 Paul says *“and now these 3 remain, faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love”*. Jesus loves us so much, and for those of us involved in the work of the Leprosy Mission this love is to overflow from our hearts so that through a Holy Spirit inspired divine exchange we can touch the hearts of people affected by leprosy.

Peter Waddup – I am the Managing Director of a specialist joinery manufacturer in the UK called Scotts of Thrapston Ltd, a qualified accountant, and very honoured to be the Chairman of TLM England and Wales on a voluntary basis, and so of course a member of this wonderful global family.



The Great Teacher

John 13: 12-17, 31-35

Do you remember a specific teacher from your school days? It might be someone awful – unkind, impatient, poor at the job. I hope it was in fact someone you remember with affection and respect. Someone who encouraged you to do your best, who was patient when you did not understand first time, who not only told you how to do things, but demonstrated it.

As well as being our Lord, Jesus is our Teacher. The gospels are full of examples of his teaching techniques. He taught the crowds in the memorable couplets of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 3-10), and in the parables, drew eternal meanings from the series of lively stories that sound as if they came off the front page of the Galilee Gazette.

When he was with his disciples, Jesus was more personal in his teaching – in the tutorial room rather than the classroom. The story of the footwashing is an example of his teaching, demonstrating the lesson for the disciples to learn from. It is closely linked with the Last Supper when Jesus taught the disciples to remember him through the bread and wine.

I find it really difficult to find examples in modern life that are equivalent to the humiliation of Jesus in washing the disciples' feet. It was a task considered so degrading that it could not even be asked of a Jewish slave. It was a task, certainly, that none of the disciples had considered undertaking for their Lord, or for their fellow followers. The twelve must have been stunned by Jesus's action, not really sure what he was doing. It was embarrassing – like having a bed bath, or intimate personal care when you're not really ill. They had the dust of the road on their feet, but did not have lesions that needed soaking, scraping and dressing. What was he doing?

If we say we want to develop a 'servant attitude' as Christians, we need to notice how we react when people do treat us like a servant. Do we get irritated when we are taken for granted? If we are asked to do something below our normal status how do we feel? Are we willing to take on more lowly tasks in church or do we feel we should always be 'at the front'?

Jesus explained that just as he had washed their feet, so they should wash one another's feet, and he goes on to say that they should love one another. The Son of Man is glorified, a new command is given and his love shown by his followers would be the foundation of the Christian church, a witness to the wider world.

When Paul Brand was a young orthopaedic surgeon teaching at CMC Vellore, he commented that a student examining a patient used the same mannerism as Paul's professor in London. All the other students laughed and said "but that's how you do it, Sir". We learn by example. Are we willing to learn from the example of our Teacher, Jesus?

Paul and Niki Jakeman

served as TLM missionaries from 1979-1994, successively in Mongar, Lhuntse and Thimphu (Bhutan) and then in Singapore. They returned to the UK and worked in the east end of London for ten years, moving to Wiltshire where they continued medicine and midwifery for another decade. They have both recently retired.



“Take Heart Child”

There are two stories in Matthew that have caught my attention recently. In the first, when Jesus see the faith of the friends of a paralysed man (who in Mark is lowered through the roof) He says to the man *“Take heart son, your sins are forgiven” (Matt 9:2)*. After some discussion with the teachers of the law, Jesus heals the man, he gets up, takes his mat and goes home.

Not long after that, when Jesus turns to the woman who has been bleeding for many years when she touches the edge of His cloak He says *“Take heart daughter, your faith has healed you” (Matt 9:22)*. And she is healed.

While telling these stories usually focuses on the faith of the person or the friends and Jesus’ ability to heal and/or forgive sins (and I am interested in how these two are inter-changeable in Matt 9:4-6, but that would be a long discussion), today I just want to focus on how Jesus addresses each of these distressed people individually as His child with the simple encouragement “Take heart child”. And with his attention and presence each receives a major improvement in their circumstances.

This is something The Leprosy Mission does so well; encouraging the suffering, ostracised and disabled to know they are children of God and to be encouraged by and experience at a very personal level His love, inclusion, compassion and healing power (whether miraculous or by medical care).

And it is for you too. Know today that you are a loved child of God and “take heart” no matter what your circumstances. Sit quietly for a while and hear Jesus’ words to you “Take heart my child, your problem will not last, your situation will improve, things will get better”. And know that when you embody this message in your work with people affected by leprosy you are showing them Jesus.

Susan Maiava

TLMNZ Board member and former TLMI Board member.



“Surely not I, Lord?”

Mark 14:17-20

Something new struck me recently reading the familiar words of the Last Supper. The disciples were gathered not knowing, of course, that it would be their *last* supper with Jesus. Their confidence had been eroded over recent weeks by Jesus’ predictions of his death, of ‘seeing him no more’, and there had been some unnerving conversations on the journey to Jerusalem.

So when they gathered, in the rather tense atmosphere of that supper, it must have struck at their hearts when Jesus suddenly said, *“one of you will betray me”*. Not one of the wider group of followers, but *“one who is eating with me ... one of the Twelve, one (rather more intimately) who dips his bread into the bowl with me.”*

I wonder whether it caused these twelve men to re-examine their inner selves in the long silent seconds that must have followed, each saying inwardly, “Could it be me? Have I lost confidence in Jesus, -in the strength of my commitment to him? Might something happen tonight that will rob me of courage and love and loyalty, and cause me in panic to betray him?” Mark doesn’t mention Judas at this point, but he says that *“one by one they said to him ‘surely not I, Lord’”* ... All twelve... ‘Surely not I, Lord?’ ... ‘Is it me, Lord?’

Do you ever, like me, wonder how you would handle persecution, threats, or even torture to myself or those I love, because of my faith in Jesus? When I hear what some sisters and brothers in Christ are suffering, I think I wouldn’t cope. Perhaps I would betray or deny my Lord to save my loved ones, or my livelihood, -or my own skin. Many in Jesus’ time were secret believers (like Joseph of Arimathea, John 19:38), and no doubt many have to be secret believers today, -and many choose to be; -but to *deny* him, to *betray* him? (“Would I, Lord?”)

My thoughts about these verses from Mark then led me on. Many in our TLM family live and work in places where it is better to be discrete over matters of faith, not least for the sake of those affected by leprosy who would be uncared for if TLM were not there. By God’s grace I live in an area where there is no immediate threat of the vile persecutions many suffer, to force me perhaps to betray or deny my Lord. But there are other forces here: the insidious, faith-sapping effects of secularism, which marginalises and derides faith in God; and the force of materialism, which denies the need for God. We live with the trend to ‘sanitise’ thought, to qualify freedom of speech, to ‘censor’ Christian faith and expression in the name of equality, rights, avoidance of prejudice and discrimination, or some other human priority.

So I look inwardly, as those disciples must have done in that upper room, and ask whether the cultural context in which I live may gradually dull me into, effectively, betraying or denying my Lord. It is a risk, I believe, not just for a Christian, but for a Christian organisation which seeks to gain favour and support in God-averse societies. “Surely not us, Lord?”

May God comfort and resource you, as he has promised, for all that you face in his love and service.

David Beazley began involvement with The Leprosy Mission in 1992 when he came as Minister to a Church near the International Office in Brentford. He acted as an informal ‘chaplain’ to the Office, and served on the International General Council for some years. At the same time he became a member of TLM England and Wales Board, serving as Chairman for six years and on various committees. He now pastors a Church in South-West England part time, freeing time for TLM as a volunteer speaker and continuing on the E&W Board. He chairs the Spiritual Ministry MAWG, and is also able to serve TLM by leading retreat days and other such things as opportunity allows.



Jesus walked along with them

Luke 24: 13ff

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, *Jesus himself came up and walked along with them*; but they were kept from recognising him.

On Friday 30th July 1976, my husband, baby son and I were finally on the first flight of the morning with MAF. We were leaving Mendi in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea where we had been working with The Leprosy Mission for a number of years,. To be honest we were quite anxious about the future. We had plans for the immediate future but then what.....

The MAF pilot prepared to pray as is the normal practice before a flight. This pilot also had a small calendar of bible verses and promises attached to his cockpit. And so we read "Jesus himself drew near and went with them". The thought was "Jesus never sends a man ahead alone. Everyday paths He has trodden and glorified and will walk anew with each of us".

What a comfort at that moment! And what a gracious God to go ahead of us and prepare those words for us that morning!! Jesus himself would walk with us!

Yet this thought can be a comfort at any moment and at any time. You are never alone, and Jesus won't send you on alone. He has been there before you. He has trodden and glorified any path you may take. And He will walk with you. It may be a tough and difficult path, or it may be an easy one. Jesus himself will walk with you.

Now, 40 years later, it is still true that Jesus himself walks beside me. Jesus has even trodden and glorified the path to death and been there. And He will walk this path anew with each of us.

Thank you Lord that you never ask us to go anywhere or do anything that is new to you. You know where I am at this moment and where this path leads, because you have already been here. Thank you that I can be confident that – even if it may not feel like it – you are walking with me. May you glorify this time and this path however hard. Thank you.

Pam Packett is Australian and has been involved with The Leprosy Mission for over 40 years in various capacities – she is currently on the TLMI Board and helps lead a local TLM support group.



“Stones of remembrance”

Joshua 4: 1-7

At the end of every year, my senior colleagues in the Operations team and I reflect on the goodness of God to us and our work in the past year. We celebrate His faithfulness to us and each of these events becomes a memorial of remembrance for us.

The Israelites under Joshua entered the promised land crossing the Jordan in a most miraculous way. Before they got busy preparing to take possession of the land God had given to them, they were encouraged by God to step back, reflect and remember. They were asked to take twelve stones from the dried bed of the river Jordan and set up as a memorial to remember the miraculous crossing. Although God worked a miracle in allowing the people to cross the Jordan on dry ground, Joshua knew that only those who saw and experienced the incident would remember it. Joshua wanted to communicate God's greatness to the children of Israel yet to be born. These “stones of remembrance” became a memorial to recast the vision and recount His victories.

Each of us has experienced the amazing awesomeness of God both in our personal and professional lives and should set up our own stones of remembrance of God's goodness and faithfulness so that future generations are blessed by them.

Dr Sunil Anand

Executive Director, The Leprosy Mission Trust India
Delhi, India.
Been with TLM for the past 32 years.



Secret to Content any and every Situation

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what is to be in need, and in know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." Philippians 4:11-12

The above two verses are coming from someone who was, not very long ago, haunting the Christians or believers to death. What is so powerful that changes his full life and thoughts on Christianity and engaged himself in Building Churches of early days. I believe that will be revealed towards the end of this note.

As we look towards the world around us, the materialism that has so much power and influence in our lives. If we explore in the nature, how killer plants attracts the insects with their beauty/color. The flowers are so attractive, that the insects could not resist them. 1 John 2:16 justifies that the lust of flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are behind the cause of our downfall and it also says these are not from God but from the world. As we focus on the developing world, what we often find in the name of "development" that how many new supermarkets, shopping malls have been built and they have enormous attractive offers to bring the attention of the people. We often cannot resist ourselves like the insects.

Remember the Satan offered the things to Jesus testing Him are with Food, Fame and Power. He has not much change its position rather changed its strategy. He has brought the materialized world in the name of open market economy. People are so desperate to change their personal gadgets or devices just to make sure they have the latest one even their own device is working perfectly. People don't often realize that they have surrendered to the lust that the materialized world is offering. What it gives them often – the elements that destruct them from religion, destroy moral values, families and eventually takes lives. I am sure there are many instance in our life where a particular event was much more important than attending Churches, prayer fellowship or reading the words of God.

Why this particular verse encouraged me so much that it instigates the strength to fight against the temptation of materialized world. Paul, very clearly highlight these in his letter to the first age churches as he predicted the strength of materialization. He put himself as an example in verse 12, his own experience of a lifestyle with wealth and power. The learning and challenge for us how to lead a life when we have enough to live and when we do not have enough. It is much tougher situation of the first rather than the second. Both the situation will require a lifestyle where God is centre of our life. What is the secret Paul talked about - reflects to me "A Christ centered life". It is all about practicing Christianity for 24/7.

Those of us are in the field of leprosy, we know with how little often a person had to live. They often lost so much from their life, that they welcome death in their life. Even though they look for light losing their family, friends dignity.

I believe our challenge today to fight against the temptation of materialism. That will only possible when we practice Christianity as a lifestyle. I will like to focus our attention towards the verse 13 (*I can do everything through Him who gives me strength*) that to me is the key to echo in the other verses. Let us turn to Him who can give us the strength for us to say *"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want"*. God bless you.

Salomon S. Halder Country Leader The Leprosy Mission Bangladesh



Love Legacies

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6: 5-10

Recently, my 17 year old daughter had a very important interview, and I really wanted to pray for her. I decided to open the Bible and pray upon whatever ‘jumped off’ the page. It was the above verses that struck me. God’s message to me was that I should be focussing on whether I was doing all I could to help my children have a relationship with Jesus, and praying for this, rather than that the interview should go well-what a salutary reminder! This then led me to give thanks for the people who did this for me throughout their lives.

Between the ages of 2 and 5 years I went to live with my beloved Grandmother in Guyana, whilst my parents coped with two younger children and too little space in England. Although my Grandmother had a very tough life, she had such a strong and evident faith. She worked tirelessly from before dawn ‘til late into the night singing the most wonderful hymns whilst doing her many chores and tasks, and looking after a multi-generational household. Although she was considered ‘poor’ by conventional standards, she always insisted that she was rich in blessings from God. She constantly showed God her thankfulness by singing hymns that mean so much to me now: ‘What a Friend we have in Jesus’, ‘How Great Thou Art’ and, especially, ‘Blessed Assurance’ because of the lyrics ‘*praising my Saviour all the day long*’. She was the most amazing witness of Saint Paul’s words: *Give thanks in all circumstances*

When my Grandmother was dying, in 2006, she said she was ‘ready to be with Jesus’, and was so certain that this was where she was going. This deepened my faith but also made me yearn to have the unshakeable, mature faith of my Grandmother.

I feel truly blessed that I saw my Mother’s faith grow to a level I can only aspire to. She died in 2014 from stomach cancer, and yet during the diagnosis and treatment she remained prayerful, thankful, and only asked for prayers, nothing more. She was confident that, whatever the outcome, ‘God is in charge’ and that everything was ‘in divine order’.

God has frequently intervened to draw me close to Him, and keep me growing in my faith. A quite remarkable intervention was providing a Scottish Minister’s son to be my husband! This meant I was also provided with the wonderful Christian witness of my Father-in-law, who served as a Minister for over 60 years, bringing countless people to faith. He also conducted our wedding, so God really challenged me to make sure I could say my vows both before my Father in Heaven and my Father-in-law!

My challenge now is how can I be a constant and faithful witness not just to my children, but to everyone I interact with? One of the many privileges of working for The Leprosy Mission is that it is part of our job description to do that every day!



That you may know the righteous acts of the LORD

*'Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD'
Micah 6:5*

When Micah speaks the word of the Lord to the people of Israel, the message tells the Israelites to remember a journey. This journey from Shittim to Gilgal brought the people across the Jordan River and into the promised land. During the flood season, the ark of the covenant was walked into the river, and the Lord caused the river water to stop up stream, allowing the whole Israelite nation, including their 40,000 strong army, to cross on dry land.

A memorial to this miraculous crossing was constructed at Gilgal, using 12 stones carried from the middle of the Jordan River. This memorial was to show all people that the hand of the Lord is powerful, and that they might always fear the Lord. Amorite and Canaanite kings melted in fear and lost their courage to fight (Joshua 5:1) when they heard about this miraculous river crossing.

Micah does not tell the Israelites to remember the subsequent victory in Jericho, but the way God showed his power in the river crossing. In light of God's power and righteous acts, Micah goes on to state 'What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God'. (Micah 6:8)

It turns out that we also easily forget how powerful God is and how He has worked in our lives. If we need fresh motivation to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly we too can remember a journey.

We were once lost and now we are found. We have moved from death to life, from darkness to light. Jesus stands in the GAP for you and me, by his mighty power he holds back the flood waters that separate us from God. He has made a way for us to be saved. Having made the journey, let us always remember the righteous acts of the Lord that have brought us to our eternal home. Let's remember the price Jesus paid on the cross and the power displayed in His resurrection and life, and let's act justly, love mercy and walk humbly as our Lord desires.

Lord, thank you that you have made a way from me to be saved. Help me to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly in the light of your power and righteous acts. Amen



Listening and Doing

James 1,17-18 and 26-27

I found an interesting tweet that I retweeted: Someone said: "Sometimes I would like to ask God why He allows poverty, suffering and injustice when He could do something about it." Then another person asks: "Then why don't you ask Him?" And then the first one says: "I'm afraid He would ask me the same question!"

God the Creator of heaven and earth made everything perfect! He is the Inventor of life, eternal life, as I always call it: Quality life! After everyday of creation He saw it was good. And after creating man in His own spitting image on the sixth day He saw it was very good!

But after a while in what was (meant to be) eternal life, and fullness of great and joyful relationship with our Creator-God, something goes terribly wrong: Man chooses the one forbidden fruit and fear, guilt and shame fills Adam and Eve's lives! And God brings the first sacrifice to cloth them. But more sin, the destructive virus, comes into human life: fear, guilt and shame, but also hatred, sickness, war, death starts to be part of our lives.

And Jesus Christ came and showed us the way, the purpose and meaning of life as it was meant to be! And He was even prepared to undergo suffering and rejection, even unto death! What a God!! Dying The Way the Truth and the Life Dying..... For my anger, my jealousy, my rejecting, my condemning. He, the Son of God, the Son of LIFE became sin (2 Cor. 5:21) and died! The Son of the Godhead died to liberate all human beings in every era!

And with this offering of love He transformed my life as He wants to transform every life of every human being! And liberating us from sin He created the possibility to again come into His glory! We were in his heart always, but sin separated Him from us and us from Him! But now again He invites us to know Him, to receive fullness of life and to start to share his love and his life!

Psalm 145:8 and 9 says: ...8 The LORD is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. 9 The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works.

- ❖ How is the Creator an inspiring example for us in His goodness?
- ❖ Being inspired: what change can we - working for TLM anywhere - make to people around us whether close or far away, healthy or sick, loved or rejected?
- ❖ What does Gods' zealous goodness and neverending love mean for our ministry: transforming lives?

A (foolish) prayer: *"May God bless you with a restless **discomfort** about easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart. May God bless you with holy **anger** at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace among all people. May God bless you with the gift of **tears** to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy. May God bless you with enough **foolishness** to believe that you really can make a difference in this world, so that you are able, with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done."*



Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Erna Möller	1 April		Lev 13,46	3 April
Anne-Claude Jonah	3 April		Deut 6,5-10	28 April
Arie de Kruijff Dr	2 April		Joshua 4,1-7	26 April
Bunmi Oluloto Dr	10 April		Psalms 23	9 April
David Beazley	24 April		Psalms 40,8	21 April
Eric Chollet	4 April		Psalms 61,1-5	2 April
Gert Visscher	30 April		Psalms 103,1-3	5 April
Gordon Brown	6 April		Psalms 119,2	21 April
Gordon Brown	7 April		Psalms 150	11 April
Gunnel Ericson	8 April		Isaiah 12,2	4 April
Heather Smith	9 April		Isaiah 25,4	4 April
Helen Roberts Dr	5 April		Isaiah 41,13	20 April
Jamie McIntosh	11 April		Nehemiah 5	6 and 7 April
Jo-Anne Thomson	28 April		Micah 6,5	29 April
Joydeepa Darlong Dr	12 April		Habakkuk 2,1-4	10 April
June Nash	13 April		Matthew 9,22	23 April
Kirsteen Dutton Dr	14 April		Mark 14,17-20	24 April
Niki Jakeman	22 April		Luke 4,14-21	13 April
Pam Packett	25 April		Luke 15,18-19	15 April
Paul du Plessis Dr	15 April		Luke 24,13 ff	25 April
Paul Jakeman Dr	22 April		John 4,1-30	8 April
Peter Waddup	21 April		John 4,13	1 April
Piet Both Dr	19 April		John 9,1-9	12 April
Pradeep Failbus	16 April		John 13,12-35	22 April
Salamon S. Halder	27 April		John 14,1-6	17 April
Sarah Failbus	16 April		Philippians 4,11-12	27 April
Silvano Perotti	17 April		Colossians 4,5	18 April
Sunil Anand Dr	26 April		Philemon	16 April
Susan Maiava Dr	23 April		Hebr 13,5	19 April
Tim Reed	29 April		James 1,17-18 and 26-27	30 April
Trevor Durston	20 April		Rev 8,3-6	14 April
Yousif Deng Dr	18 April			