



TLM Daily Devotions

February 2016



Examine my heart and my mind. Test me Lord and try me!

"Examine my heart and my mind. Test me Lord and try me." Psalm 26 New International Version

Today I opened the weekly prayer-letter distributed by Leprazending Nederland. I read through the letter and met with Ramalakshmi, Chit Htoo Aung, Ganga Rao, Gerarda, Christina, Zin Mar Theint. In addition I learned about specific needs in DR Congo and Bangladesh.

This has always been a characteristic of The Leprosy Mission:

- we pray for persons; even if we are not able to pronounce their names well;
- we pray for countries across the globe; TLM went global before the modern economy did.

Reading the prayer-letter I was reminded to Psalm 26, the prayer of David. I read that Psalm this morning: *"Examine my heart and my mind"!*

We do not adhere to a religious system, stick to rules and laws pushed on us by a remote God or by one of the prophets. We are invited to relate with a God who is interested in our heart and mind, our hopes and fears, our concerns and thoughts, no matter how mixed up our thoughts may be. And as He is, we are asked to be interested in the mind and the heart of our God, our Father and Creator.

We are not employed by an NGO to reach targets and set more clever indicators. We are invited to be deeply interested in the feelings and the thoughts of our fellow human beings who are in contact with our Mission. If Rama is in pain, we want to know and we feel with her. If Gerarda has a desire to learn and to serve, we support her in our prayer.

I have loved the friendship in TLM, the community of people who care and who pray for each other and for people we have never met with.

As much as we are interested in others, we want God to look into our heart and thoughts to help us, to meet with us when we are confused and hurt, to deliver us and lead us to Gods love and joy and peace.

In recent weeks I visited our hospital a few times. We lost a friend and I've spent much time with him during his last 4 weeks. We went in and out of hospital together. I have been spending the night with him when he was in pain in his bedroom. It was amazing to see the love and care of others towards him. Especially also the love of his brother touched my heart. While he was dying his pastor prayed and read the Word of God and spoke softly to him.

I pray that within the hospitals of the Mission, during home visits and in all those meetings, which seem to be necessary when we work together, we will continue to demonstrate that characteristic of the Mission: the prayer for individuals, the interest in the well-being of people like Ramalakshmi or Ganga Rao. And I pray that we invite our loving, caring God to look into our heart and mind and to touch us in our deepest desires and needs.

Piet Both

TLM staff, from 1991 till 2015. I started as Medical Advisor for TLM Africa and have been based in The Netherlands. It has been a privilege to work with so many TLM colleagues especially in African countries, Bangladesh and Nepal.



Count your blessings....

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.” Num 6:24

When I was a little girl, we were often visited by missionaries from various parts of the world in our church but also in my home. Once it was a missionary who taught me a song in English, which I have often returned to at different times in my life. It was the song Count your blessings.

Recently I had the opportunity to make a trip to India with a group from Sweden who wanted to see the Leprosy Mission's work. We travelled to Chattisgarh, where we visited projects supported from The Leprosy Mission Sweden. We wanted to see the work, meet the people who are working there and those who receive help. We were impressed by what we saw. It was not the buildings where the activities were held which were magnificent, but the warmth and compassion that we felt among the personnel we met. Most of us who were there had the experience of working in a hospital in our part of the world. The immediate reaction was "this is so different." How is it possible to work with limited resources in a situation where the needs appear to be much greater than the resources. Our guide who was one of the doctors at one of the hospitals was asked how it was that she and her husband felt comfortable working there. There are certainly larger hospitals with more resources that can attract. The answer came quickly without reflection The Blessing!

During the days that followed the song I learned began to sing in my heart. At the same time I asked myself what is a blessing? According to Wikipedia it says: "To be blessed " means 'to be favored by God'. It is not just a feeling; it is a state. It will be a strength to each day to know that whatever I encounter however it looks, God is on my side. Moses was told by God to tell Aaron how his blessing was going to follow the Israelites.

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”

That blessing is for us. It is the Lord's promise in our lives every day, how ever it looks.

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

Refrain Count your blessings, name them one by one, Count your blessings, see what God hath done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,
And you will keep singing as the days go by.

Refrain

When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold;
Count your many blessings.

Wealth can never buy Your reward in heaven, nor your home on high.

Refrain

Eva Fryxell

Chair of TLM Sweden since 2004. Before that I was member of the board for some years. I got my first experience of leprosy as a missionary in Tanzania in 1971 to 1985.



What happened to all the Christmas decorations?

Ephesians 6:13-18

At the International Office we have decorations to brighten up the first and second floors of our building as Christmas approaches. In the UK, many people do the same thing in their homes. But in 2015 we hardly put up any of the decorations. Why? It seems that there was a lot of pressure on, and we were all so busy in the last weeks of the year that somehow we never got around to pulling out the boxes of decorations and putting them up. That's sad! Why did we let it happen?

As a team we had our 2-day 'annual learning' this month. We met away from the office and talked about some of the things we had learned in 2015, and the changes that would be coming our way this year. One of the topics was resilience – being able to 'bounce back' and to press on when things are difficult. It was good to talk about that because in The Leprosy Mission, we expect a lot of one another. There isn't much let-up, we don't like to say 'no', in fact we willingly take on extra tasks that will make things better for other people. We can get disappointed when we are misunderstood or when our work doesn't seem to be valued. And sometimes it's hard to see how things can ever change. When all these things accumulate, they wear us out. We get tense and serious. We forget about the fun. We don't put up the decorations.

How do we change that situation? We thought about how God encourages us in Ephesians 6:13-18 through the equipment he provides. In the Message translation, slightly adapted, it says:

Take all the help you can get, all the equipment God has issued, so that when it's all over you'll still be on your feet. The things you need are truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation. These are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is absolutely indispensable. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing struggle. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.

Two things stand out for me. One is the image of faith as a shield. Roman soldiers sometimes stood in a row with their shields touching – a very solid defence. Standing next to my colleagues has been a constant encouragement for me in tough times. The other is that, when we feel under attack or stress or pressure, we need to pray for one another. In my office, our afternoon prayer time is an essential part of our work day together. To pray together each day as a team is a God-ordained way to 'keep our spirits up'.

And we made sure we had some fun. A few team-building games, plenty of laughter, eating and sharing together, doing personality profiles – we just enjoyed being among friends. We agreed that we need to make time for short pauses together to 'breathe', to lighten up the working week or month, to make sure we're keeping each other's spirits up. I think we'll make sure that the Christmas decorations come out in good time next year!

Geoff Warne

General Director, TLM International - New Zealander based in London - 35 years with The Leprosy Mission



Who have lived wisely and well will shine brilliantly

Daniel 12:3

Message: " Men and women who have lived wisely and well will shine brilliantly, like the cloudless, star-strewn night skies. And those who put others on the right path to life will grow like stars forever."

Before I join TLM Sudan in 2001, I was working as medical officer in one of the teaching hospital in Khartoum; as general practitioner working in the department of paediatrics, I was skilled in dealing with children. By then, I did not have any practical knowledge regarding leprosy and its managements a part from the basic which I have had during medical schools.

My first encounter with a TLMer was in my local church where I used to be one of the team who help in the our Church by providing translation for those are missionaries who visits our Church and would like to understand the service as it was in Arabic. Through them I have learn that TLM was looking for a programme manager to work in Darfur, looking at the Job description, was not encourage to apply as the requirement were beyond my reach, out of the ten requirement, I found I do have only two!

I did received some encouragement to apply and be interviewed, only, one person has seen beyond my person in the interview panel has seen beyond my limitations and gave me the chance to be part of the family.

We are living in era of scientific explosion, where knowledge is changing very rapidly if you do not keep yourself up to date then you will discovered that you have been left behind.

God in his infinite wisdom has a better plan for genetic transformation through his Son Jesus Christ, where those who has accepted him as their Lord and saviour will undergo genetic transformation through the help of the Holy Spirit so that we can all be transform into his image.

This change will require new set of skills, and knowledge and wisdom, which can only be obtain through divine intervention and I was encourage to see when you seek the Lord with all your hear he will grant you wisdom and the require skills. Daniel has learn this secrete so he set himself apart by not defiling himself or conforming to world standard. However, he sought him who can only grant him the wisdom, knowledge and skill that has set him as an example for me and for all men and women who are serving in systems, which have agenda, which stand against Jesus kingdom agenda.

I would like to remind myself and the rest of us that our skills, and knowledge will have no use if we do not use them to lead people, to have meaningful relationship with our Saviour Jesus so that we can shine when he return to earth during his second coming.

I have seen the hand of God restoring those affected by leprosy both men and women be turn on right path, of acceptance, fruitfulness and joy. Every day is a new day with an immense challenge to us in this fast-changing era. Where knowledge and evident are changes every fast

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



For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:11

It's nearly 10 years since I left TLMI. During my 13 years as General Director I visited many countries and countless projects. As time passes the memories are starting to fade, but there are several project visits which are still very clear, and one was my last trip to Vizianagaram Platinum Vocational Training Centre In Andhra Pradesh, India. Part of my work involved attending various leprosy conferences, and it was quite common for the organisers to provide a convenient bag or briefcase to carry the papers - often thick files of them. My favourite bag was a slim one with a handle at the top and also a zip at the top so it was easy to undo when tucked down by my feet.

When I arrived at Vizianagaram on what was turned out to be my final visit I had this bag with me. Mr. Prasad the Superintendent at that time suggested I leave the bag with my coat in his office while he showed me around. So we did the usual tour of the workshops and classrooms, and met students training in several trades, like electrician and motor mechanic – but also the latest addition which was bag making – mostly holdalls of various sizes.

The tour must have taken over an hour, then back in Prasad's office I was talking with him and other senior staff when an instructor and some students came in. They were returning my black bag (I'd not even noticed it was gone) and presented me with a duplicate which had been wonderfully made in soft leather. I was absolutely delighted with such a gift, and also very surprised that they had made this in such short time and with such good results. I continue to regularly use the bag to this very day.

It's such a joy to see people who have suffered from the stigma and physical problems of leprosy learning new skills and putting them to good use. So often their friends and even families have distanced themselves and made them feel they have nothing to offer, and no future in life. But this passage from Jeremiah shows us that God will have none of it. He has plans for each one of us: they are for our good, and they bring us hope.

Sometimes we find ourselves wondering what plans God has for us over the weeks and months to come. Of course we will only find out as we move through them, but the important thing to remember is that God has set out a future of hope for us, so we can walk through this year in hope and not in fear.

Trevor Durston

General Director 1993 – 2006

Now retired and working as a volunteer Area Representative in the UK



On earth as is it in heaven, The Body of Christ

God has blessed each one of us with specific gifts and we are promised that each church will have all it needs to accomplish God's will for it. I believe that TLM is also God's church, and we have been given all the gifts required to accomplish His plan for us at this time. And of course as we read in **2 Corinthians 12,9** His grace is sufficient for us. We have all we need in Christ.

Whichever way you look at TLM, many nations, many people, implementers, fundraisers, prayer warriors, donors, none of us can achieve what God has planned for us without an understanding that it is only in complementing each other's gifts that enables us to move mountains. Sometimes when you are at the coal face of God's kingdom's work it is difficult to appreciate the impact you are having on the lives affected by leprosy. When we have the time though to stand back and appreciate all God is doing through the leprosy mission you understand that lives are being transformed across the world.

I recently attended a course at my church on spiritual gifts and as each gift was described I found myself drawing a line through it knowing that it was not my gift. At first I was disheartened at how few gifts I felt I had, but after much contemplation I have seen this as a real blessing. No more do I need to waste time and energy on those areas where God has blessed others, but instead I feel free to focus on those gifts where I do feel that God has blessed me knowing that those areas where I am weak are in abundance in my church and leprosy mission family. We can be confident that we do not need to exhaust ourselves trying to change the world, but in focusing on our own specific calling we are part of the body of Christ, with all other parts beautifully complementing what we do with Christ as our Head. His grace is sufficient in our weakness, and together we are building God's kingdom here on earth.

This can and does only happen because we recognise that Christ is Lord, and we are all privileged to play a part in His plan. God endows us with the gifts to complement each other in achieving His vision for a broken world. All scripture is God breathed and when we read about the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12 we can be sure that it was always a part of his plan for each one of us to be part of His body.

Thank you Father God for including us in your wonderful mission, and giving us the gifts to fulfil the first 2 commandments. We love you Lord with all of our heart, all of our soul and all of our mind, and we love our neighbours as ourselves, those affected by leprosy. This mission spans 141 years and as the baton passes from one generation to the next God reveals more of his vision for this family. I pray that we will remain humble, and never forget that each one of us plays an essential part in the life of The Leprosy mission. Thank you for allowing us to serve you in this way.

To God be the glory.

Amen

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.



Become a child

Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Ps 131,2 But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.

To answer the disciples who questioned him, Jesus called a "little child" and placed him in their midst. That is what the disciples who hope to grow in holiness must become. In the Kingdom, Jesus is unquestionably "the greatest" because he made himself the smallest and he retained nothing for himself, not even the rank that equaled to God, and he made himself a man, open paths of life. The only Son of God, begotten of the Father before the world came down to Nazareth, between Mary and Joseph, to "*grow in wisdom and grace in the sight of God and men*" (Luke 2: 52).

Today, Jesus puts before our eyes a little child, the one we have become; one that reveals our deepest identity. We are all called to become the beloved son of the Father. "*The Holy Spirit himself claims with our spirit that we are children of God.*" God, in his goodness and wants. That is why it is necessary for us to become like little children, we must address the availability of God who gives himself eternally by availability capable of receiving this divine gift in every moment.

This provision of heart is not a state, it is a walk, learning; we are as a child of God in a way of we always trying to become one. We become child of God only on keeping our eyes fixed on Christ, our model and our way. We must learn to seek the joy of our Father in Heaven. Our only goal, our only concern, our only reward is to make the joy of our Father. This is called the gift of self. It is also entering in the divine life. The greatness of the son of the kingdom is to be the "heirs of God," those who receive from him the ability to give everything for love. So, free of ourselves, the unified heart, we understand the greatness of God's children, we discover the divine Child and treasures of simplicity and grace.

Pascal Machefer

country leader, Leprosy Mission France



Obedience, Faith and Provision

1 Kings 17

Israel, the northern kingdom did not have God-fearing kings for a long time. They lived a godless life and led their people to idols. A few priests from the tribe of Levi were left and most of them went to Judah. The priests that were appointed were corrupt and inefficient. Because there was no priest or king that could bring God's word, God called prophets to save Israel from total spiritual and moral decay. In the next three hundred years God would use them to encourage Israel to return to Him. Elijah was the first of a row of prophets that God sent to His people.

In these days King Ahab made his people believe that Baal brought rain and abundant harvest. So when Elijah came to the king and told him that a couple of years no rain would fall, he was shocked. He had a large number of Baal priests but they could not bring rain. Courageous Elijah confronted Ahab that he was leading his nation into sin. He showed him the Power that was much larger than any idol: The GOD of Israel. When sin and false teaching were at a peak God answered with **words and action**.

God also withdrew the word and blessing of His prophet and led Elijah to the Kerith Ravine east of the Jordan river. There he cared for his servant in a way that surpasses our comprehension. Ravens (impure birds) brought provisions to Elijah to sustain him. God can provide in a way beyond our imagination. (The name Elijah means: Faith and Provision)

When the provision stopped at Kerith God already had the women from Zarephath lined up to care for his servant. The woman will use her last resources: 'Only one more meal and we will surely die'.

The prophet interrupts her actions and asks for water and bread. She tries to convince him that as surely as Elijah's God lives she doesn't have enough bread. She must have recognised Elijah as a man of God. Elijah promises that the flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the Lord will give rain again. Doubt must have flooded her mind. Could she trust him? It sounded so impossible! She takes a decision to obey. She prepares him the bread and the moment she takes a step of faith, she experiences the miracle of God's provision. Enough flour and oil for their daily needs. We learn:

- The prophet and the woman are keeping with the words of the Lord spoken.
- God's providence continues from Kerith to Zarephath and for the rest of Elijah's life.
- The Lord lays His glory on simple people that listen to His voice.
- Obedience – Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added...
- Flour and oil multiply when it is used, not when it is stored up.
- God opens His door to us and invites us to have a meal with Him (Rev 3:20).
- Investing in God has the best profit. Those that trust in God will not be ashamed in the days of hardship.

Let's welcome God into our offices and programs that we run in The Leprosy Mission. He is a faithful God. Has he not provided for us until this day? May God bless you abundantly as you walk in His ways.

Nico Zwemstra

TLM Netherlands. This year I will celebrate 10 years with the Leprosy Mission in The Netherlands and before I worked in the business world.



Acts 9:1-19

In January, my church celebrates the conversion of St Paul (Saul). In my mind it has the air of a cowboy film, with Paul on his horse galloping into town to make the arrests. What is certain is that Paul was determined to wipe out Christianity. It didn't fit with his belief model, or all that he had been taught. It outraged him.

The only answer was to wipe it from the face of the earth. Does that fanaticism and anger sound familiar?

The only answer was for the Lord to intervene. He spoke personally to Paul saying, "Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?" Jesus aligns himself with His followers. It was Him who was being persecuted. Paul's answer is interesting. He obviously knew that the voice belonged to someone of importance, therefore he called him Lord, but as yet he didn't know who Jesus was. Paul's mind was closed tight. The Lord had to open it so that he could see the truth. He did that by making Paul blind. He robbed him of the resources that he would have used to argue his case; that is, the Torah or the law. I think Jesus didn't want him going back to the old arguments. He wanted him to pray and meditate and to think things through. I wonder if his viewing of the stoning of Stephen and Stephen's sermon came back into his mind and gave him food for thought.

The other character in this story is Ananias. I love him and his reaction. It is so real. "Lord, you must be mad. This fellow is the one who is killing us and you want me to go and speak to him?" So the Lord explains that Paul is going to be a special person in the kingdom. Ananias doesn't need asking twice. Off he goes to visit Paul and he reaches out to him in love right from the beginning. "Brother Saul" Ananias says. Isn't that great? Whatever his fears and doubts Ananias was there reaching out in love to help Paul find his way to Jesus. He lays hands on Paul and Paul can see once more. Then I'm sure Ananias introduced him to the other disciples in Damascus. I wonder what Paul felt as he realised that he was accepted, loved and forgiven not only by Jesus but also by His people.

Here is a challenge for us, to love those who persecute us and pray for those who would do us harm. Paul was full of anger and disgust and that led him to persecute and kill. With Jesus in his life and full of the Holy Spirit he became full of love and forgiveness too and was able to write that wonderful hymn in Corinthians 13. That kind of love is supernatural. When we find it impossible to love, if we ask God, He will love through us.

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.



Word and Deed

Reading James 2: 14-26

The first genuinely international gathering held by the Leprosy Mission was way back in 1976, not long after Eddie Askew became International Director. It was a very special gathering of TLM leaders from around the world and in many ways set the pattern for the future direction for this global mission.

Significantly, the theme for that initial conference was '**Word and Deed**' because it not only summed up what we had been doing since 1874 but it also underpinned the biblical rationale for the ministry of this special work.

In James chapter 2 we have, what is regarded by some biblical scholars, as a divergent view of the means of salvation.....suggesting that faith alone is simply not enough. This vigorous discussion has continued unabated ever since, with some believers holding that faith, and faith alone, is all that is needed, whilst others are content to let their 'good deeds' speak for them.

However, James is simply stressing that faith **must** be endorsed by what we do and he quotes Abraham & Rahab as examples of '**faith in action**' Abraham's faith was so strong that he was willing to offer up his precious son "and his faith was made complete by what he did".

I recall many years ago visiting a mission worker who told me "I don't need to say anything at all about my faith.....what I do is enough". I thought it was wrong then and I still do! There comes a time when we need to verbally share what Jesus means to us.....carefully yes, sensitively yes and with respect for others, but to remain permanently silent is not an option. In order to come to an understanding of what Christ has done for them, people need **hear** about Jesus and his great love.

On the other hand to meet Christians who **ONLY** talk....and not back up what they say by the way they live or in their care for others is equally unbalanced.

Perhaps the best example we have is Jesus himself. In Luke Chapter 5 we have the story of the man who was paralyzed and carried to Jesus on a mat and because of the crowd, lowered through the roof. The first response by Jesus to this act of faith was to tell him that his sins were forgiven.

That caused a stir and Jesus knew it....so he responded by saying "*Which is easier to say, your sins are forgiven or to say get up and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, he said to the paralyzed man "I tell you get up, pick up your mat and go home".*

The need for physical and spiritual healing were so integrated.....that Jesus used one to emphasise the other. The ministry of TLM throughout the world is one of *Faith in Action* and we have the wonderful privilege of sharing what Jesus means to us.....by what we do and what we say. Let us take every opportunity to do so.

Ken Martin

Chairman The Leprosy Mission International. I joined The Leprosy Mission on the 1st July 1978 and the Queensland Secretary (now director) and served in that role until 1 September 1980 when I became the National Director for TLM in Australia. I was appointed when the then serving National Director, Bill Edgar, moved to London as Communications Director under Eddie Askew. I was Australian National Director for 10 years and in October 1990 was appointed to the International Office as Director for Support and Development. I was in that role until May 1996 when I returned to Australia and became the National Director for Interserve, who shared an office with TLM. In 2001 I was elected to the newly formed International Board and was on the board for the maximum 8 years and completed my term in 2009. After a short break I elected as Vice was Chairman and rejoined the board in that capacity and in 2013 was elected Chairman.



Fellowship

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ... All the believers were together and had everything in common." Acts 2:42-47

Since joining TLM, I've realised that some of the best moments I've experienced have been when we have met as a Global Fellowship, and when I've had the privilege of visiting some of the artisans and projects that TLM supports. It has long since occurred to me that perhaps the reason for this is that these are the moments when I've experienced a deep sense of 'fellowship'. A distinctive image etched in my mind is the TLM Global Fellowship time of worship and Communion in Lane End Conference Centre, Sept 2013, where it I truly felt it was a reflection of the Kingdom of God worshipping Him so lustily that we almost raised the roof- in a unique multinational, multi-cultural, multilingual way.

Fellowship is such a precious thing but the Bible reminds us that it is not just that special sense of togetherness that comes during times of worship. It is so humbling to remember that, firstly, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3), and that this is what makes us Christian. The verses from Acts 2 remind us fellowship is also the habitual sharing, the constant giving to and receiving from each other. It is our fellowship with God which enables us to have fellowship with other Christians, and our fellowship with other Christians leads to fellowship with God.

How empowering it is to know that we are not left to our own devices to create an environment of fellowship. Acts 2:42-47 describes a community of faith that operates in the power of God's Spirit. The virtues of justice, worship, and mutuality are being achieved by extraordinary people; they are signs of the Holy Spirit at work within a community of people who understand themselves as united in purpose and identity.

So, as we continue to grow as The Leprosy Mission Global Fellowship, my prayer is that we grow in Fellowship

- with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
- with each other as a community of faith,
- with those we serve: people affected by leprosy and our supporters.

Let's also rejoice and give thanks for the gift of Fellowship. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights,..." James 1:17

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the grace He has given you be the grace that you share with others.

Jo-Anne Thomson 4 years leading The Leprosy Mission Trading ; formerly Head of Trading with global commercial retailers and it is a blessing to 'do commerce' for a Christian organisation! www.tlmtrading.com



Naaman

2 Kings 5

One scarcely dares to write another piece on Naaman for the Leprosy Mission! Nevertheless, this rich story is susceptible to a range of applications. Nobody can be certain that Biblical sufferers from the disease called *tzaraath* had leprosy at all. Hansen was not to discover the Leprosy bacillus until 1873. Although human remains from long before the time of Naaman show irrefutable evidence of the presence of leprosy, the Hebrew Word was used for a number of diseases. Nevertheless, the story of Naaman is beautifully constructed.

Naaman, the great victorious general, had what seemed to be a disease of the skin (precious little was known about nerves in the ninth century BCE). If the disease were real leprosy the outlook was bad and Naaman's household would have been afraid as well. It included a young Jewish girl captured in a raid. Naaman might have been in charge of the raid. The girl could, and did, give her opinion and Naaman's wife listened. In Israel there was a prophet in Samaria who could cure the disease. So, the great general, who owed obedience to the king, told his master. The King said « go » and sent an appropriate letter to the King of Israel, who feared that the powerful Syrian army might be used against him.

The reaction of Elisha to Naaman's arrival is interesting. He sent for Naaman (more or less) and Naaman went to Elisha's house. Despite his retinue, Naaman did not get in. The prophet simply sent him to wash seven times in the Jordan, which was not like the great rivers of Syria or Damascus. Naaman's dignity was affronted. Howbeit, his wife had listened to the abducted girl. Naaman's subordinates told the prophet to do as he was told. They said it courteously, but the gist is « don't be so silly and proud. »

Naaman was cured although there was no rifampicin. So he returned to Elisha with a suitable gift for services rendered and a request for earth to worship Jahweh when he got home. Why ? We are monotheists and we say that there is only one God of all the earth. At the time of Elisha and Naaman a lot of other people were henotheists. They worship the deity of their nation on their nation's soil. Naaman needs the earth to worship God in Damascus.

He also asks for pardon when he goes with the King to « bow down » to Rimmon the god of Syria. At this key moment in humanity's understanding of God, Naaman discovers one God of all the earth. Because he is « not quite there, » he thinks that he needs the soil. Monotheism was a great discovery - an early theology.

Finally notice the compassionate people. The captured slave girl advises her mistress and likes her master enough to advise him. Elisha is silent when Naaman regrets having to bow down in the house of Rimmon. Spiritual insight seeks the truth « that passes all understanding. » Elisha and the girl were Jews. Their compassion enabled Naaman to take a new path.

The moral is : share the unconditional love of God in deed and, where appropriate, in word as well: always with respect and with knowledge different traditions. Know when to be quiet. Be a spiritual guide but not a prescriptive or aggressive one.

Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed, kindle in the hearts of all people the true love of peace, and guide with Your pure and peaceable wisdom those who make decisions for the nations of the earth; that in tranquility Your kingdom may go forward, till the earth be filled with the knowledge of Your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord : Amen (Book of Common Prayer)

James Barnett

is an Anglican priest. He was involved in syllabus development and theological education in secondary schools and in preparing men and women for Christian ministry. He was Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative at the European Institutions and currently represents the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School at the Council of Europe. With his wife Elisabeth, he is secretary of the Mission Lèpre France.



“To be made whole and holy by his love”

Devotional thoughts from Ephesians 1 and 2

This morning I was reading Ephesians 1 and 2, and the different terminology used in The Messenger brought home afresh the truths of our privileges in Christ . I reflected on different phrases. “to be made whole and holy by his love” “it is in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for” “He created each of us by Christ to join him in the good work he does”.

But then I came to Chapter 2 verse 19, and my mind was drawn back to McKean museum where I often provide a background introduction to the situation for leprosy sufferers at the beginning of the 20th century. As a part of our historical display we have two of the old wooden cottages from the early settlement. As visitors view these simple dwellings with modern eyes, I pass on what the early residents told me 40 years ago. After being rejected from their home communities and wandering as unwanted homeless exiles for a long, long time, many leprosy sufferers found their way to the outskirts of Chiangmai, and began to camp on the muddy river bank under the limited shelter of the bridge by day, slipping out in the evening after the market closed to scavenge for food scraps. Then came the free invitation to live in a new settlement. For these folk the small two rows of small cottages were heaven, providing shelter, security, dignity, privacy. In the evening people came out and sat on their small porch and began to notice and communicate with others on the neighbouring porch, or the one opposite. Community and friendships were formed. A new sense of belonging grew.

So, the words from Ephesians 2:19 in The Messenger stood out to me in a new way today. “You are no longer wandering exiles. The kingdom of faith is now your home country”. How true, and how precious! “He treated us as equals, and so made us equals”.

And, as we come together with folks from divergent backgrounds and experiences here, we see the reality of Paul’s picture in the next verses. “He is using us all -irrespective of how we got here- in what he is building....A temple in which God is quite at home”

Heather Smith

TLM cross-cultural worker 1969-1999.

Deputy Director

McKean Rehabilitation Center



Meditation on prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

In a newsletter from a friend I recently read this meditation with a relational angle on the Lords Prayer. It spoke to my heart and I want to share this slightly adapted version with you all.

The Lord's Prayer only has 68 words, but words shape our identity. They give us purpose and call us forth to live at a higher level, not consumed by greed or selfishness. It reminds us of our own imperfection but gives us keys to restoration. All along, what is built in us is a tenacity of spirit to run the race until the end, all the while presenting our praise and adoration to the one we may call Father.

#1. Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name...

This is a radical, counter cultural invitation to unravel the myth that we are just random and do not matter. We are created to be loved and called into this friendship with our Creator, who is our Father. For the one who has found this new identity, there is a resilience of spirit to not succumb to the bewitching influences of our society. We matter to Him and that gives us purpose.

#2. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...

This reality gives us the courage to live in an imperfect world, knowing that the world is not as it was meant to be but that the Father is at work to redeem, transform and establish His rule.

This prayer invites us to engage in the world around us, with all of its brokenness and dysfunction, as carriers of His justice and peace to those places most in need.

#3. Give us this day our daily bread...

This is a prayer to teach us contentment, which is the most subversive virtue of all. This goes against the grain of society which continually entices us to want more. It helps to restrain our greed and teaches us the grace of gratitude for either the 'dry bread and water' days or the moments when 'the table overflows'.

#4. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us...

This prayer teaches us to live with our own imperfections; and with those of others. We need to face our own sin and shortcomings, and as we are forgiven by the Father, we acquire grace to extend forgiveness to others.

This prayer opens the way to reconciliation. We are not meant to feud or live in hostility or rivalry together. Our greatest happiness comes from relationships, especially relationships that have been restored. This road is paved with humility and the debt has been paid for us on the cross.

#5. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil....

This prayer builds resilience in the human spirit as this prepares us for the 'bad days'. We remind ourselves, that we do not live in a 'Disney-like-world' but in one where we get sick, violence and difficulties come and where challenging things happen for no explainable reason. Despite this, we live in this fragmented world with the confidence of God's love, goodness and help even in the midst of the dark and complex moments we may face. Faith, our voluntary trust in a loving Father, is for those moments of walking through the 'valley of the shadow' but also for the season when we are relaxing in the 'green pastures' of provision. There are many moments when we do not have clear cut answers or explanations, but we can always be assured that He is Immanuel, God with us.

#6. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen...

This prayer reminds us of how the story will end and how life is to be lived in the meanwhile. Our hearts learn to soar when praise becomes our vocabulary. We reconnect with our 'original design' when we acknowledge and delight in our Creator, our Source, our loving Father. We are beings with a higher calling, purpose and destiny. We live our lives to the fullest when we live to His praise and glory and not to satisfy our small, petty desires. (Inspired by a letter to the diocese of Sheffield)



In all things God works for the good...

Romans 8, 28

I joined a Mission Hospital right after I was out of Medical College. And I did with certain preconceived expectations as to what it should be like. After three months I wanted to quit due to many reasons that made sense to me those days. (That's because things did not happen as I expected) Before I finally took that step, I met another doctor (who was also working in a Mission Hospital in South India) with whom I shared about it. After our conversation he told me, "This Mission Hospitals were built for people like us (Christian doctors) to work, if we do not, than who will?". That was the first thing I learnt, that in spite of our faith and commitment, God works in ways that is different from ours. (The winner is on who sees and accepts it)

Well that one statement made me change my concept. I have worked in three different organizations and have experienced almost the same struggles, challenges, the joy and fulfillment. I still grumble, criticizes many issues, get discouraged because I am a fallen human but He is good, faithful and loving because he is our God and Father. It's when I continue to make Him my God and Father and I remain His son than the joy and fulfillment in serving Him will always be there.

When I joined Mission Hospital in 1993, someone asked me –why I joined? I did not have the reason because I did not receive any divine or extra ordinary directions. I just knew God and wanted to follow Him, as simple as I could. In the midst of all my plans, doing and achievements I should not lose that focus.

CS Lewis in his book "Mere Christianity" wrote...a ship has to know three things when it goes to the sea - how to keep itself floating on the water, how to keep against colliding another ship, but the most important thing it should know is

Why it is there on the sea in the first place? That is the question I keep asking myself....as long as I have the right answer I will continue to enjoy serving Him, in spite of all the daily struggles, I face as Medical Doctor.

Famkima Darlong

Ophthalmologist at The Leprosy Mission Home and Hospital, Purulia, INDIA

Hobby: Listening and Singing Songs and a bit of Cooking.

Married to Joydeepa and has a daughter Abigail.



“A man with Leprosy”

“... Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man” Mark 1 v 41 NIV

In 2005 I went to visit my friend Dr Ruth Butlin, working in a TLM Hospital in the rural north of Bangladesh. During this time I was able to see first-hand the work undertaken by TLM to help families affected by the disease and its consequences. I went on community visits meeting patients in their home situations, and during one such visit met a lady recovered from the leprosy but left with badly deformed hands. I was overcome by the look of amazement on her face when I went beside her and took her hand in mine as we said goodbye. A simple act, an insignificant gesture, but it meant so much to her - that I was not afraid of the disease nor of touching her. At this point I realised personally how much leprosy impacts on people psychologically as well as physically.

How much more amazed must the man with leprosy have been when Jesus, filled with compassion at his condition, reached out His hand and touched him.

This set me thinking subsequently of how often a simple act of kindness, or a loving action, means so much to people we have contact with in our daily lives. At the time we are not aware that we have given pleasure or helped someone in their time of need. Sometimes we are busy or pushed for time but stopping to write a little note, make a 'phone call or stop and chat when meeting in the street, means such a lot to the recipient. Let us endeavour to reach out to others who are not so blessed as we are and in doing so we will be blessed ourselves.

“Let there be love shared among us, let there be love in our eyes;

May now your love sweep this nation, cause us, O Lord, to arise;

Give us a fresh understanding of brotherly love that is real;

Let there be love shared among us, let there be love.”

Dear Lord, thank you for the opportunities you give us, for showing Your love to those with whom we have contact. Amen

Pat Adlam

is a long term supporter of TLM, who has visited the field work on different occasions in Maharashtra, Nepal, West Bengal and Bangladesh, as well as spending 3months as a volunteer at DBLM hospital in Nilphamari



The pillow of feathers

Proverbs 21, 23: " the one who guards his mouth and his tongue protects his soul of the fears. "

" No grandpa. Kept silent. You told me that I could sleep at your home. We will do what we have said! Moreover, it is you who have just told me the story of the pillow of feathers. "When a word was released, we cannot get back it any more! " I was very surprised to notice that the morality of the story of the pillow had very well been got by my grandson Timothé, 6 years old. He knew how to apply it advisedly! I thus deliver you this parable in case you would like to tell it in your turn to your children or grandchildren. Or why not, to learn from it for yourself as I have just made it.

A man is taken back in his consciousness because of hurtful remarks which he uttered to his neighbour. He regrets bitterly his words and does not know how to make repair. He visits the wise person of the village, and exposes him his sadness and his remorse. "What may I make to redeem myself?" He asks. Go back home ", orders him the wise person. Fill a pillow of feathers and come back to see me." The next day, our man returns with a pillow in his hands. "I followed your instructions, what about now? " You see this tower? " Answer the wise person. " Rise to its summit, opens your pillow and release all the feathers which are inside. "

Perplexed but avid to comply up to the end with the requirements of the wise person, the man runs. Arrived at the top of the tower, he opens his pillow and lets escape all the feathers which are taken away by the wind. He comes down again and appears in front of the wise person. " I made for what you asked me. Is there still anything that I have to make? " "Yes" said the wise man. " Go and bring me back all the feathers." " But it is impossible " implore the man. " Never I can get back all the feathers. They were spread out to the four winds! " " It's the same with the words which we pronounce ", answers him the wise person. " We can never all get back them. Then, in the future, take good care of what you say! "

In fact, I would also have been able to tell you the same things in one sentence, that I pull out of the book of Proverbs in the chapter 21 verse 23: *" the one who guards his mouth and his tongue protects his soul of the fears. "*

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.



'The messages of touch'

Luke 4:40, 5:13, 18:15.

I have a Leprosy Mission poster which I often use in talks for children. It illustrates some of the hazards of living with leprosy-affected hands. The poster shows a hammer and a nail, a match and a hot drink in a cup; there is a pair of boxing gloves, a screwdriver and a picture of a 'tug of war'. (Rope burns!) The children give their answers as to why each of these might be a danger for anaesthetic hands... and so the talk goes on.

But also shown on the poster is something that might come as a surprise. It is a teddy bear, the kind of soft toy that children (and many adults!) love... something to feel, to cuddle, from which to gain comfort, feelings of smoothness, softness, symbols of gentleness; *someone* (in a child's thinking) to give and receive tenderness.

Lack of feeling means more than the dangers of knives or nails, burns or blisters! Anaesthetic hands not only fail to convey the warnings of pain, they also no longer convey the joy of pleasurable sensations, - the soft fur of the teddy-bear, or, more to the point, the tender touch of a loved-one's hair or a grandchild's cheek, the reassuring squeeze of the hand... I'm sure you can think of more examples.

So much loving communication is tactile, so much in relationships is conveyed *physically*, beyond words. Tenderness, reassurance, consolation, and so on, are felt as much as spoken, perhaps more. How many words can be summed up in a loving touch? How much meaning there is in a message felt rather than heard!

I am sure that is one of the reasons we speak of the 'touch' of God as something tender, loving, parental. It often features in our hymns and songs. For Isaiah (6:7) and Jeremiah (1:9), the touch of God on their lips was an enabling, gentle, calming, symbolic gesture. There are several examples of the touch of Jesus in the gospels, -with both healing power and symbolic message. With a touch of his hand Jesus gives healing (Luke 4:4), he confers cleansing (5:13), he blesses (18:15). For that man with leprosy in Luke 5 the touch meant much beyond healing: it meant he was *touchable*, not unclean or repellent; and the touch conferred cleansing, it symbolised that he was accepted, valued, blessed... by *God*. The meanings and messages of touch are so many.

For those with the anaesthetic effects of leprosy, to be unable to *feel* so much of the emotional spectrum of touch, and enjoy so many of its unspoken messages, is a whole cruel area of deprivation. So for those with unfeeling limbs, to reach out, like Jesus, and *demonstrate* tenderness with our hands (as well as voice, eyes, and in any other way we can) is all the more meaningful and valuable. In this, more than perhaps in any other way, we are the hands of Christ.

David Beazley

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.



Hope

2 Kings 5

Why is it that when an answer to a problem is easy we overlook it, believing, even wanting, the solution to be more difficult? Consider this. You have worked hard and are now at the top of your game in whatever job or career you have chosen. You are highly regarded by your peers and very importantly by your boss. Things are going very well. But you have a secret. The secret is that you have a degenerative disease that can be hidden for now, but will soon become apparent and probably wreck your elevated status.

That is what happened to a man called Naaman. You can read his story in the Bible, look for the book of 2 Kings chapter 5. Naaman had quite literally risen through the ranks. He was now the head of a successful army. His king held him in very high regard. But Naaman contracted leprosy, still one of the most feared and stigmatising diseases in the world. Unlike today when organisations like The Leprosy Mission offer a cure to people who have the disease, for Naaman there was no known cure.

Eventually the symptoms of his leprosy became so obvious, and public, that he had to seek a solution.

For Naaman that solution came from an unlikely source, his wife's house-maid. She knew of a prophet back home who could help and told her mistress who in turn told her husband.

Desperate he went in search of the prophet. When he found him, the instructions to be cured offended Naaman, it sounded too easy. Just go wash seven times in the local river. Naaman was angry, he thought he would have to do something challenging to receive his cure, not just wash seven times in what was quite frankly a low grade river by the standards of the great rivers Naaman was used to.

Fortunately his servants spoke to him and persuaded him to at least try. He did and was cured. The solution to his life-changing problem was easy.

The good news of Jesus Christ is often rejected by people because the solution to the problem of sin and having a relationship with God sounds too easy.

But the Bible says "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life". Freedom from the consequences of sin is a free gift. Just like Naaman, I came to a point in my life where I wanted a solution to my problem with sin. A friend told me all I needed to do was, "believe in Jesus Christ and accept Him as Saviour". My response, like that of Naaman, was it sounds too easy. When I did take that step, as Naaman took his, the direction of my life turned around.

Peter Walker

National Director of TLM England & Wales (since March 2011)



“Ships are guided by a small rudder ... so also is the tongue.”

From James 3: 4&5

If you're looking for me on a Saturday morning, you'll find me sailing the waters of False Bay. Cape summers mean onshore winds, so launching my boat involves dragging it across the beach and pushing it into the waves, steadying it in the onslaught of the “Cape Doctor”, as the prevailing wind is known.

To set sail, I nudge the boat off the wind, scramble aboard, harden the sail and push the rudders down - at which point, a wave lifts my boat, the rudders lose their 'bite', the boat veers into the wind and I tumble ignominiously to shore. For the amusement of the holiday makers, this process is repeated several times until I escape the barrier of breakers, rejoicing in the freedom of deeper waters.

“Surely there's a better way to build a boat?” I ask as the waves break over me.

I suppose the onlookers are saying “Surely there's a better way to sail?” Can't say I blame them.

St James understood the need to balance the power of the wind in the sails with the grip of the rudders in the water. Nations which mastered that art ruled the world.

As believers, great power has been granted to us, but James warns us of the need to bring it under control. Onboard my boat, there is an unmistakable instant when the rudders find their grip and I know I have control of the boat. It's always a joyful moment. So too the believer should find joy in bringing the “restless evil” of the tongue under control.

It's a process requiring practice and commitment. Without it, a Godly life is not possible: “these things ought not to be so.”

Do we grow despondent when we see a lack of Godly growth? James says ungodliness is fuelled by the tongue. “Bridling” it is a daily discipline. I know many people who have accomplished this. It's a delight to be in their presence, working with them and learning from them.

I've been sailing for more years than I care to remember and the secrets of rudders, sails and wind still elude me at times. The secrets of taming the tongue may also escape us, even many years after our conversion.

If so, let's make this our prayer: “Gracious Lord, may only fresh water ever pour forth from my spring”.
[James 3:11]

Peter Laubscher Country Leader, Southern Africa. Peter and Elizabeth Laubscher have worked with the Leprosy Mission since 1981. They are blessed with three children. Peter cruises the waters of False Bay when he's not trying to polish scratches out of telescope mirrors.



Prejudice - "Don't spit"

".....I have become all things to all men" 1 Corinthians 9:22

We all know that spitting can spread disease and is considered vulgar in most societies (except perhaps by some football players). In some parts of various European cities you can some times still see old signs "no spitting allowed".

I had spent some time with a nomadic extended family of "bushmen" in the Kalahari to establish relationships and try to get permission from their chief to share the good news of salvation through Christ.

The interpreter informed me that the leader was ready to share his decision. With great anticipation the whole community (about 80 people) gathered around the chief. He was small (+/- 1.5 metres) old and very wrinkled. His weather-beaten face expressed calm and wisdom.

He beckoned me to come and stand in front of him then he loudly cleared his throat. Suddenly he bent slightly forward and spat at my feet.

While I did not react outwardly, inwardly I was surprised, confused and angry. What had I done to cause him to humiliate me like that?

After a prolonged moment of awkward silence, the interpreter asked me : "Aren't you going to thank the chief?"

"What for?"

"In our culture, saliva is the symbol of life, when you cannot spit any more you die. By spitting at your feet, the chief declared his willingness and that of the whole community to be placed under your authority - at your feet."

I thanked him profusely and the next few days were spent sharing the gospel. The Spirit worked in power and many "spat at the feet of Jesus" ... accepting Him, His love, life and placing their lives under His authority.

Prayer "Lord give me understanding, discernment and, above all, love that I may not be a prisoner of my prejudice."

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.



Seek for Living Water

"If you knew . . . who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water...the woman said, 'you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep.'" (John 4:10-11, NIV)

While the woman of Samaria and I have many differences, we have one thing in common. I, too, find myself from time to time seeking water from a deep well that can only give temporary satisfaction. In the busyness of ministry, the weariness of activities, meeting deadlines, appointments, attending religious meetings and the excitement of taking opportunities, I sometimes wake up and realize, "I am so dry and thirsty." And completely exhausted physically and spiritually.

Invariably, when I examine myself, the reason for the dryness of spirit can be traced to one thing. I'm not drinking freely of the Water of Life. Because I am not spending quality time in His presence; I'm neglecting my Bible study. I'm rushing through my prayer time. I'm not listening to the voice of the Lord because I'm just too busy to be still.

How do I carve out quiet interludes to confess my sins and read and meditate and pray and listen and just drink Him in? This is what is required of us as leader if we want to have a refreshed and fully satisfied life.

Jesus Christ made it clear to Marta when she was busy with serving food while Mary her sister was sitting at the Lord's feet listening to what Jesus is saying; 'Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her' (Luke 10:38-42 NIV).

Thank You, dear God, for still giving us today, Living Water from the Well that never goes dry; may you grant us desires to seek to drink from it and let no activities of life distract us from drinking always from the living water.

Bunmi Oluloto

TLM Country Leader Niger & 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.



Do you think that Jesus could make a mistake?

Mark 8:22-26

'Probably not', we say, after all he was the Son of God.

Although we might say 'yes', because Jesus was also truly human he could make a mistake - however does that somehow diminish him as the Son of God?

If we say 'no' then what is the reason for Jesus to repeat the action?

Jesus' question to the man 'can you see anything' *may* suggest that he was lacking in faith as it is not a question that Jesus puts to others that he healed. However, Jesus persisted and repeated the process and the man was able to declare that he could see clearly even at a distance.

The story is so rich in detail we can hardly doubt it happened however Mark makes no further comment. I wonder what understanding Mark may be wanting his readers to get? What is clear is that Jesus healed the man. Full stop.

There is no talk of sin forgiven or faith making him well. Jesus simply restored his sight. At first he couldn't quite see and then he saw clearly. And Jesus did it for him.

Sometimes we say we are not able to see (understand) something the first time. But when understanding comes we see the point clearly.

When people encounter Jesus they sometimes don't quite understand who and what he is.

They think 'Oh yes he was a good man, a fine teacher'.

It is only when we take a second look that we can see Jesus clearly for who he is - the Son of God.

I suggest this because in the very next paragraph of the gospel Mark records Jesus asking 'who do people say that I am?'

The answers reveal some very hazy thinking, but then the crystal clear recognition of who Jesus is by Peter. 'You are the Messiah!'

This, I would suggest, is Mark's point in telling us this story of Jesus healing the blind man. Not to raise difficult questions that have no answer, but rather to bring us to the point that Peter arrives at - to clearly see who Jesus is.

Jesus is both human and divine and he makes no mistakes. He is entirely purposeful in all he does even if we can't understand it.

So when you look at Jesus is your vision hazy or do you see clearly who he is?

May we all come to a clear understanding that Jesus is the Messiah, who ushers in the day when the deaf shall hear and the blind see and the lame walk and the poor hear good news.

Let us, with our eyes fixed on Jesus, go on to serve him as Saviour and Lord.

Alex Packett is an Anglican minister in the Diocese of Melbourne, Australia.

Alex with Pam worked with TLM in PNG, Tanzania and Australia 1970 -1992.

Pam is currently a member of TLMI Board, and Pam and Alex work with a local TLM support group.



TOMORROW BEGINS TODAY!

Your future lies in the seed you sow today! Your today started yesterday!

Joshua 3:5

Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you."

We all know the importance of planning

- If you fail to plan, you've just planned to fail!

Your tomorrow begins today!

Matthew 6:34

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

There is a huge difference between worrying, planning & preparing!

- Planning can keep you out of trouble
- Worrying keeps you tethered to yesterday or trapped in the future before it has happened
- Preparing advances you forward

The First Step To A Successful Tomorrow Is:

"Consecrate yourself" - it means

- To set apart as sacred
- I'd like to say: Be submitted to God, set apart to His ways and the direction of His indwelling Holy Spirit.

Get Rid Of Excess Baggage.

Excess baggage could be made up by some of the following that can hold us back from achieving God's best for our spiritually:

- Fear: It paralyses our faith.
- Anger: It ruins relationships, even with God
- Un-forgiveness: if we live with un-forgiveness, It makes it difficult for God to forgive us.

Matthew 6:11-15

Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

- Lying, laziness, crooked ways, cheating... Any practices that are unbiblical
- Grumbling: It attracts destroying angels!

Philippians 2:14-15

Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation."

- Sickness: It's very restrictive and debilitating in life. Do all you need to do to get well!
- Habits: Any habit that eats away at your time with God needs to be changed!
- Get rid of them today or else they will affect your tomorrow!

Dan Izzett

Zimbabwe. Retired pastor. I was diagnosed with lepromatous leprosy in 1972. Served on TLMI board for eight years and on the Zimbabwe board for 15 years. I now serve on the ALM board and do advocacy for them.



Ideas for a “Spring-clean”

Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you! Joshua 3,5

Spend some time praying for yourself.

Cleanse your mind with the blood of Jesus.

Ask God to expose wrong in your life.

Wrong: attitudes, speech, attractions to the world...

- o It's better to be right with God & out with man!

Consecrate - leave the stuff of the world behind!

☺ Tomorrow Has To Begin Today In Your Home.

Whatever you do at home today will bloom in your life tomorrow.

Dangerous bits of baggage to take from your home with you today into tomorrow are:

- Un-forgiveness
- Anger
- Intimidation & demanding attitude.
- Lack of self-control.

The way you leave (home) is the way you arrive at your destination

Tomorrow Will Begin Today In Your Attitude Towards Bible Reading & Prayer.

Build on “The Rock”, the principles of God they are found in prayer and study of the Bible.

Tomorrow Has To Begin Today In Your Church.

Your church is not your world, but it plays a very important role in your spiritual well being

- A Church is affected by its weakest member
- Build them up!

Tomorrow Has To Begin Today With You Deciding To Get On With Living.

Go out there and be part of the solution to life & not part of the problem!

The ravages, the hard things of life, will cause you to:

- Focus, speak, believe and act in the negative
- Will cause you withdraw, pull back

God has a plan & purpose for you! Joshua told the people:

Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you! Joshua 3,5

- Get Rid Of Excess Baggage
- Tomorrow Has To Begin Today In Your Home.
- Tomorrow Will Begin Today In Your Attitude Towards Bible Reading & Prayer
- Tomorrow Has To Begin Today In Your Church.
- Tomorrow Has To Begin Today With You Deciding To Get On With Living

Dan Izzett

Zimbabwe. Retired pastor. I was diagnosed with lepromatous leprosy in 1972. Served on TLMI board for eight years and on the Zimbabwe board for 15 years. I now serve on the ALM board and do advocacy for them.



Forget the Former Things

'Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!' (Isaiah 43:17-18 NIV)

These days I live in the world of memory loss where profound cognitive impairment has robbed a loved one of the ability to remember much. The repetitious questions of earlier years have given way to seeming oblivion. An expressionless face indicates an emptiness of thought. There was a time when we did all we could to prevent the relentless advance of the illness; it seemed easier to live in the past, let alone dwell on the past. But now there seems to be nothing at all. The memory bank is empty.

We elders are encouraged to cultivate memory. We stimulate memory with sudoku and crossword puzzles. And then communication with those living with dementia includes an often deliberate recall of events long past with statements like: 'I remember how we walked along the beach holding hands'. That may provoke a smile and a sense of wellbeing. We have crossed a bridge into the world of the other by stirring a pleasant memory.

Surely the God who gave us memory would want us to preserve it, so why then this instruction to the nation of Israel? They've been reminded of national victories, of triumph over the Egyptians. But now they are in the desert, the wilderness of life. And there God promises He will do 'a new thing'. He deals with the present.

Some of the past is probably best forgotten. But most deserves to be remembered.

TLM is rightly proud of its history and accomplishments, from Wellesley Bailey to Trevor Durston and Geoff Warne. But His promise applies here too. He wants to do a new thing now.

I could feel proud of what my wife, Margaret, and I have done in Christ's name over decades. But now we face a new phase of life. There is unwelcome decline, but God's promise applies to us too. He will do a new thing with us now.

The person affected by leprosy may long for the days before infection with mycobacterium leprae. But the promise applies there too. 'I will do a new thing.'

We wonder quite what that will be. God may depend on some of us to fulfil his purpose. But generally we just have to wait patiently for him to show us what it is he will do. Even seemingly small things can be important.

Dr Paul du Plessis

After a lifetime of service with The Salvation Army, 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. In recent years Margaret's illness, with resulting dementia, has been the focus of attention.



A New Community

*May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
(2 Corinthians 13:14)*

When we arrived at the Chikankata Mission in southern Zambia in 1968 it was to join a team of workers assembled from many part of the world to serve with national staff. Some were engaged in the secondary school, others the general hospital, a few assigned to the Leprosy Settlement and its associated programmes. 'Development' was the name of the game in the 70s. All had come with the express purpose of serving the people of Zambia in the name of Christ but also with the hope of building his church.

It was a fellowship strengthened by socialising together, by serving together, and by worshipping together. The Friday night prayer meeting, concluding with light refreshments was one of the highlights of the week. Another was the Sunday evening service for 'senior staff'. Inevitably that would conclude with 'the grace' ... of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God. We knew together the fellowship of the Holy Spirit even if we steered clear of trying to define exactly what that meant.

Of course there were tensions as differences of approach and of opinion had to be understood, ironed out and accepted. But in spite of that, a rich sense of fellowship developed and endures, albeit at a distance, nearly 50 years later. And it is that deep sense of community which most remember above all else of their term of international service.

More recently my wife, Margaret's admission to a south London nursing home has brought us into another kind of community. The unit comprises eight other residents and their families, together with the administrative, nursing and care staff. The residents may be at varying stages of the dementia that has precipitated the admission, but we're essentially all here to be served.

Here is our new community. Socialising is done over a cup of coffee in the lounge or just chatting on the corridor, but we get to know each other. There's no weekly prayer meeting or worship service. But here too is a fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Small wonder then, that we can use the words of benediction in 'the grace' as we say goodbye, or that we can write a few lines when we return home:

*Silent hands stretch forward hungrily
With a damaged mind trembling
In anticipation of what was
In a life given and gone,
While another shuffles with perceptible tread
In hypoglycaemic hope,
Waiting to snap up the bread of life
That is cake baked in a brand new oven;
Coffee slurped from an angled chalice,
Its sweetness exceeding that of wine
Yet spilt as blood, shed,
Un-wiped and left to dry;
Our means of salvation revealed,
Expressed in the simplicity of love.*

The fellowship of suffering can build a community as strong, if not stronger than the fellowship of service. Both can be bridge-building experiences.

Dr Paul du Plessis After a lifetime of service with The Salvation Army, 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. In recent years Margaret's illness, with resulting dementia, has been the focus of attention.



Of Men and of Angels

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. (1 Corinthians 13:1 NIV)

Some months of study of the Tonga language at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the late 1960s were followed by working with a tutor on arrival at Chikankata in Zambia. Added to this, I prayed for 'the gift of tongues', hoping this would help my communication skills. It did, and some degree of fluency emerged, especially with what I called 'medical Tonga'. I quickly realised that body language and tone of voice were communicating as much as my words. Did I convey the diagnosis of leprosy with a relaxed face and perhaps a gentle smile that conveyed a sense of empathy and hope, or was it rather with a somewhat rejecting frown of despair?

I needed to rely on a series of translators. They became the bridge of understanding. Their attitudes, and mine, were crucial to an effective relationship with the patient. Respect had to reign. The apostle Paul might have called it love.

In recent years, as we've lived in the world of dementia, there have been fresh communication challenges. Speech became affected. Not only did that cause problems with expression but also in understanding. New rules had to be understood and put into practice. No questions, no disagreement; always regard the other as right. That's easier said than done. Once again the tone of voice and body language became even more important. The emotion behind the words counted as much as their meaning.

With advance of the illness speech seemed to disappear altogether, but even then the occasional pearl might emerge. Is this the language of angels?

But for some coherent speech disintegrates into a meaningless series of sounds. The gibberish that results could well sound like a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal: in Shakespeare's words, 'full of sound of fury, signifying nothing'. But is this too the language of angels, so how should we respond to that?

The holding of a hand or the stroking of a forearm may be the best means of expression. But sometimes it helps to respond with the echo of a word picked up in careful listening. But that must always and only be on the foundation of respect. And if accompanied by a smile there may be acceptance of that attitude which the apostle extols as a virtue -- love.

Dr Paul du Plessis

After a lifetime of service with The Salvation Army, 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 TLM. In recent years Margaret's illness, with resulting dementia, has been the focus of attention.



Acceptance and Contentment

I have learned the secret of being content ...I can do all this through him who gives me strength.
(Philippians 4:12-13 NIV)

During my years of study and decades of medical practice the emphasis was usually on preventing, eradicating, modifying or correcting disease. The aim was to get the person better and to restore the sense of well-being that is central to the WHO definition of health. The aim was perfection and getting things right. We could be satisfied with nothing but the best.

Leprosy was once a sentence to a living death as disability, deformity and social isolation became a way of life. But that is no longer the case. Multi-drug therapy and timely interventions to deal with the complications of the disease make the world of difference, even if it leaves some of its legacy. But many diseases remain incurable. With dementia, drug therapy may halt progress briefly, but otherwise it's a relentless disintegration of personality and cognitive functions.

A Bible text hung on the wall of our home for many years: *'I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.'* That encapsulated a positive approach to life. Margaret claimed it was one of her favourite scripture verses. So when she needed to be admitted to a nursing home for full time care we placed it in her room. But as the disease continued the words seemed to mock us. We all seemed impotent in the face of its progress.

In verses 11 and 12 of the same chapter Paul wrote about being content, whatever the circumstances. That became our prayer. Acceptance and adaptation became the bridge to contentment. This is more than a fatalistic resignation to what is, but rather a restful and respectful acceptance of the all-encompassing love of God, shared with us even in ultimate weakness. That has led to contentment.

Paul seems to have anticipated recent debate around redefinition of 'health'. Some suggest the implied perfection of the current definition should be modified with some reference to adaptation. A new definition might read something like this: 'Health is a dynamic state of physical, mental and spiritual well-being, in which we are adapted to, and cope with our present condition.'

Should the Philippian text about doing all things through Christ be removed? We've decided to leave it in place. Even Paul had to learn that it takes strength to be content.

Dr Paul du Plessis

After a lifetime of service with The Salvation Army, 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 TLM. In recent years Margaret's illness, with resulting dementia, has been the focus of attention.



Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Alex Packett	23 February		Numeri 6,24	2 February
Bunmi Oluloto Dr	22 February		Joshua 3,5-24	24 and 25 Febr
Dan Izzett	24-25 February		1 Kings 17	8 February
David Beazley	18 February		2 Kings 5	12 and 19 Febr
Eric Chollet	17 February		Psalms 26	1 February
Eva Fryxell	2 February		Psalms 131,21	7 February
Famkima Darlong	15 February		Proverbs 21,23	17 February
Geoff Warne	3 February		Isaiah 43,17-18	26 February
Heather Smith	13 February		Jeremiah 29,11	5 February
Henno Couprie	14 February		Daniel 12,3	4 February
James Barnett	12 February		Matthew 6,9-13	14 February
Jo-Anne Thomson	11 February		Matthew 18,1	7 February
June Nash	9 February		Mark 1,41	16 February
Ken Martin	10 February		Mark 8,22-26	23 February
Nico Zwemstra	8 February		Luke 4,40	18 February
Pascal Machefer	7 February		John 4,10-11	22 February
Pat Adlam	16 February		Acts 2,42-47	11 February
Paul du Plessis Dr	26-29 February		Acts 9,1-19	9 February
Peter Laubscher	20 February		Romans 8,28	15 February
Peter Waddup	6 February		1 Cor 9,22	21 February
Peter Walker	19 February		1 Cor 13,1	28 February
Piet Both	1 February		2 Cor 12,9	6 February
Silvano Perotti	21 February		2 Cor 13,14	27 February
Trevor Durston	5 February		Ephesians 1 and 2	13 February
Yousif Deng	4 February		Ephesians 6,13-18	3 February
			Philippians 4,12-13	29 February
			James 2,14-26	10 February
			James 3,4-5	20 February

The Bridge - TLM Daily Devotions

Published by the Spiritual Ministry MAWG

Editor: Marta Risko - Theological lector: Allan Ekstedt - Grammar proof: Christine Osman, June Nash, Mo Lewis