



# **TLM Daily Devotions**

**June 2016**





Anew... a month has gone... This experience reminds us on our being breakable, temporal and weak. The beautiful prayer below written by Helen Walton from TLM England and Wales reminds us on the Eternal. Let us fix our eyes upon Him and submit ourselves day by day to His Word, infinite source of blessings!

*“Lord I pray now as we look into your word, you will help us to receive it as it is, your living word bringing us transformation, light, encouragement, hope, direction, help, strategy, skill, ability, equipping, power to do your will, your way.*

*So Lord send your Holy Spirit upon us that we don't just receive this as just being information but a revelation that we then work out in our lives that there is application for each of us here.*

*We submit ourselves to your word, your day and say yes in advance as you speak to us as your servants.*

*We want to act upon your word and we give you permission to challenge us, to change us, to give us courage to go with a bigger vision.*

*Help us Lord to believe all of these promises that are in Christ Jesus for us all. Amen.”*

Many thanks to each author of this set for interpreting God's Word!

Thanks to Mo and Christine for the grammar proof and to Allan for the theological one!

Blessed reading!

Marta Riskó



## Eagle

*Like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. Deuteronomy 32.11*

In his song less before he died, Moses spoke about an eagle and this is not the first time.

I guess he observed and learned things about eagles during the time “he was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law”.

I’m not a specialist but I have read the particular way eagles learn to fly their eaglets.

There are many steps. First when the eagle estimates that it’s the right time, it begins to remove the feathers and the leaves from the nest. The place is no more comfortable.

Then the eagle attracts its young fluttering gently around them. It rises on their nest by beating wings and encourages them to imitate and take flight. In case this is not enough, the eagle pushes with its beak the eaglets until they fall into the void. This could seem cruel but it remains flying close to them to ensure their safety.

In the panic, the eaglet or starts moving and discovers by spreading the wings, the air that carries it; or it stops and plummets. When the eagle sees its little tired or frightened, it drops below, spreads its wings to catch it and carries it. It returns in height and releases until the eaglet flies by itself.

Before leaving, Moses reminds the people what God has done.

Like an eagle .... The Lord alone led him. (Deuteronomy 32.12a)

The Lord tells us:

"I know you, I know that it’s time for you to leave, to unfold your wings. Trust me, I will teach you to fly."

Although the eaglet is born with all the characteristics of an eagle, he will never become a “real” eagle remaining cloistered in its cozy nest.

God, sometimes, removes my leaves (human support) and expose me to the unknown with the aim to bring out the best of me. He wants that I leave my comfort zone to fly to my destiny. Am I ready? Or would I stay quietly in my cozy nest?

We are encouraged to follow Jesus ‘example, to do things he does. *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12.2)*

Let us spread the wings of faith by putting our trust in the Lord. In difficult times, we will see our faithful God expands his loving arms below us.

Thank you oh my Lord to *“carry me on eagle’s wings and bring me to yourself” (Exodus 19.4)*

**Anne-Claude Jonah**

With TLM since 2011. Leader for the French part of Switzerland.



## Transforming Solitude

*And the Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness – Mark 1:12*

I'm writing this meditation a little different (less words). I hope that is ok. Hopefully it will speak for itself.

Jesus in his life-on-the-go, punctuated ever so often, sitting in 'empty spaces' just being with his Father.

I learnt the term 'transforming solitude' from a South African writer Trevor Hudson. So in 2016 I committed to this – allowing God to bring solitude and transformation in me.

An understatement to say I'm on a learning curve. All these 'opposites' that I need to 'live into':

Less is more

Quiet is better

Fewer words are wiser

Smaller spaces are richer

Less busyness

Less stuff

Hurry, noise and crowds vs. Rest, refreshment and renewal.

While a few days retreat has its important place, finding quiet amidst the daily rush is another secret. The real transformation?

Next time I will share more of my learning.

**Erna Möller** is a social worker with TLM South Africa



## Christian Hospitality

*5 Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters,[a] even though they are strangers to you. 6 They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their way in a manner that honours God. 7 It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. 8 We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth. 3 John verses 5-8 (NIV)*

Over recent weeks we have hosted a number of people at our home in the north of Scotland, from family members to wonderful friends and it reminded me of the time when we lived in Paris for a few years. As well as family and friends, we hosted many people we had never met - people who were friends of friends.

Whether by special invitation or with a surprise knock, company arrives. With them comes the promise of soiled floors, extra laundry, dirty dishes, altered schedules, personal expense, and inconvenience. From sharing a meal to providing a bed, hospitality costs us: in time, energy, and money. But it also gives us an opportunity to reflect our true Christian values.

I remember saying to someone recently that our home was like a bomb site after hosting a family of 5 for a week! But it got me thinking....do we see people as inconveniences or as unique creations of a loving God? And which is more important to God, a person or a carpet?

Perhaps the most effective way to demonstrate God's values and Christ's love to others is to invite and welcome guests into our homes.

*Matthew 25 v 40 states, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."* The message of this verse is about serving where service is needed.

Our focus should be that we need to love every person and serve anyone we can. Such love for others glorifies God by reflecting our love for Him.

Meeting the needs of a stranger reminds us of the story of the Good Samaritan. He was the only one to show concern for the injured man. If we are to be faithful to the call of following Christ, we need to go out of our way to demonstrate our Christian hospitality.

### **Gordon Brown**

Scotland - 2008-2011 Vice Chair of TLM Scotland, 2011-2015 Honorary Treasurer of TLM International



## The parable of older son

*Luke 15, 11-32*

The older brother in the parable of prodigal son gives a good impression of his character to the reader, until the younger brother returns home and receives grand welcome by the father. The very true character and attitude of the eldest son comes out when the celebrations starts.

Even though Jesus through the character of elder brother was hinting towards the behavior of Pharisees but today, there is so much to learn from the attitude, thinking and behavior of older son in situations of family life, work place, church and friend circle etc.

The older brother in the parable thought that he should have been loved more than the younger because of his continued hard work and obedience. We may think that way too, but God is incredibly impartial. Those who have “been around” for a while often take themselves too seriously as Pharisees did. The parable is much like the one of the vineyard in which those who worked all day long were happy with the wage they received until they found out that somebody else who had worked for lesser hours received the same amount. In the same way, the father’s acceptance of the younger brother, despite his behavior, made angry and resentful to the older brother.

**Self righteousness:** It is important to learn that how easy it is to become self righteous, which is displeasing to God that also shows that how self righteous we are.

**Revealed sin:** This shows how conditions and circumstances reveals sin in us that we did not know was within us. We may think that we are very godly but until we face the situation that reveals to us what we are really like.

The older brother had **suppressing sin**, never knew that he had volcano inside him. He also has **surfacing sin** that came out during right circumstances. Then there was **surprise of sin** which we learn from our attitude and behavior like older brother.

**Jealousy:** The sin that the demonstrated in the behavior of elder brother is jealousy. This is the sin we will all deny until our dying day unless we are caught. It is embarrassing to admit that we are jealous.

Few Christians, sadly, often react this way. We need to be careful – this is a weakness that we all have. Many of us need to learn to guard against having an older brother mentally. God loves all of His children the same.

**Pradeep Failbus** Worked for 39 years and 29 years with TLM( most at Anandaban,Nepal) Now retired and settled at: Kathgodam, District Nainital Uttarakhand, India M - 8853551227



## ...as snakes and as doves...

*Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Matthew 10,16/b*

Wisdom and innocence, snakes and doves... How these two can be fitted together? Let us accept that Jesus is giving us a way forward for our lives through this! He knows what awaits His disciples. What dangers and serious situations they would face. He knows that the disciples would be sent as sheep among wolves. In John 17, 16: He said *"They are not of the world, even as I am not of it."* Jesus is vigilant when He warns and prepares His chosen ones to the greatest of the dangers.

Our life is filled with permanent struggles with the forces of evil. This is our way of living. The "children of this world" are cleverer in their ways than the "children of the Kingdom". But Jesus overcame the snake! He won full victory upon the cross! Only through Him and with Him can we overcome – our own strength is weak.

But Jesus points also to how we should behave: with the attitude of the dove. With meekness and a peaceful heart.

*Proverbs 1,7: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

*Proverbs 15,4: The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.*

*Matthew 3,16/b: „...he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.”*

*Matthew 5,5: Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

*Phil 4,5: (blessing on my confirmation) "Let your gentleness be evident to all!"*

*James 3,13: Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. A really good advice for u show to cope with the daily challenges: with wisdom and with humility.*

*Psalms 139,4-6: Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.*

This Psalm, specially dear to me: it introduces God's omnipresence, His embracing, merciful love, which is understandable, but realistic; it gives barriers, but provides with freedom, too. *„Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

The dove as symbol of covenant and peace is first told in the story of Noah. *When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.* Gen 8,12-13

In 2014, Delhi, amidst the national chairs' meeting a dove flew into the hall and sat for rest upon the opened door. Ken Martin chased it several times out. The dove came anew and anew back for rest in the cool hall, and we asked ourselves: the dove is symbol of peace. Should we chase peace out of the hall?... Or should we accept it as heavenly warning: let be peace among us! Pax vobis: peace be with you! Peace be with you all! Amen.

**Zoltán Kapi** - retired minister of the Lutheran Church of Hungary, former chair of the TLM Hungary board.



## Joseph's Story of Forced Migration 1. - Joseph excluded

### *Genesis 37: 23-28*

Let's begin by seeing that Joseph was a migrant, someone who crossed cultural boundaries. From a semi-nomadic shepherd boy in the desert, he became a viceroy in one of the most well-organised and sophisticated societies in the world. His sense of identity was severely challenged in the process. We may well ask how he managed. We will consider his development through five successive stages on five successive days. The Joseph story covers 14 chapters of Genesis (37-50) and my treatment of these chapters cannot be exhaustive. You are welcome to continue your own reflections on more detailed aspects of the narrative.

Joseph came from a large family. He had 11 brothers and an unknown number of sisters. His father had four wives. Well, two really, and two servant girls who had also borne him children (37:2). They lived in tents or they slept out in the open field. There was enough of everything but it was a simple life and a life that required physical strength and an ability to fend for yourself.

In that context, we read that Joseph was spoilt (37:3-4). His elderly father gave him more attention and favours than the others. Joseph was always being a good boy and if there were secrets to be kept, Joseph would give them away (37:2). And so there was jealousy between the brothers.

And so we read that one day his brothers in that tough society decide to take action and in a lonely spot they turn on him, beat him up and throw him in a pit. Later they sell him off as a slave to be taken to Egypt. It was a good compromise: his blood was not on their hands, yet they will never see him again.

Joseph had been his father's little boy and now he is robbed of his favours, of the security of his home, betrayed by his own brothers. No doubt the food was not very good. No doubt he was beaten. He probably walked to Egypt tied to a camel. It is difficult to underestimate the trauma this must have caused Joseph and the pain he carried in his heart as a result.

Joseph had an experience of overt, explicit, forceful exclusion. True, he had lacked social skills when he spoke about his dreams (37:5-11). As an adolescent of 17 years old he had been too full of himself, too ego-centric. And no one was willing to give him time to learn.

We often talk about people affected by Leprosy being excluded from family and community life; sometimes even driven out of their village. Exclusion occurs in many situations and takes many forms. Children in the playground will exclude children who are different. Gossip in the office tends to focus negatively on those who do not conform. You may have experience of not being accepted because of your Christian faith.

Let's just see that Jesus, like Joseph, was also excluded. He was persecuted by people who saw him as a competitor and a threat. He was sold by his own disciple for some pieces of silver. He was forcefully excluded and handed to the Roman soldiers to be taken away. Yet God used these acts of exclusion to bring about good. We will see later this week that God used Joseph to save his family from starvation and extinction. Similarly, with Jesus, God used our human acts of exclusion to bring about atonement, so that we could be included in his love.

**Johan Velema** headed TLM's Evaluation & Monitoring Service from 1999 to 2007, co-ordinating evaluations of projects and programmes and collecting statistical data from all centres. He did research & development work for TLM International from 2007 to 2011.





## Joseph's Story of Forced Migration 2. - Joseph seduced

### *Genesis 39:*

Joseph ends up in Egypt. A transition comparable to going from a village in South Sudan to New York City. And so the culture shock must have been total. He did not know the language. He did not know how to behave. And so he felt insecure and awkward. He was given menial tasks that did not require any skill. He was at the bottom of the hierarchy in that large household of the Egyptian military commander. But he was intelligent and, once he had recovered from the shock, he learned fast. He was 17 years old so his mind was flexible. He learned the language. He learned how to behave. And after some time he became actually good at his jobs and he got promoted. He was given more and more trust and he managed OK. He must have felt elation sometimes at his success. But inside there was the pain and the loss and the mourning. Gradually Joseph accepted his new situation.

But this new situation in this new culture also involved temptation. The commander was a busy man who was often away from home. His wife was wealthy and bored and probably felt neglected. And the moment comes when she sees Joseph as a potential sex partner. We read that Joseph was very beautiful, just like his mother (Rachel), his grandmother (Rebecca) and his great grandmother (Sara). The fact that this woman thinks of Joseph as someone she could have sex with was a sign that his integration in Egyptian society was well advanced. For her it was probably not such a big deal. She had high social status and knew how to get away with this.

But Joseph had a different background. He wanted to preserve his integrity. His answer was: How could I betray my master and sin against God? You see, contrary to the commander's wife, Joseph had a religion and moral standards. And he stuck to them.

We read that the temptation was a chronic thing. Again and again she bothered him. Where could he hide from her? He must have thought about this many times and he must have wondered if it was not easier to forget his God and his moral standards. It can be really difficult to be a person of integrity! But he always ended up concluding that all he could do was to stand firm and resist the temptation. As a foreigner and a slave, Joseph was much more vulnerable. If it came out he would lose everything. If it did not come out, she would one day get enough of him and then would need to discard him. Thinking about it, whatever he would choose, he would lose.

Poor Joseph! Always the good boy he ends up in jail. He loses his privileged position and he is thrown back down to the bottom of the pit.

Joseph's story concords with the experience of many migrants to the permissive society of the West. Anything is possible. Anything goes. Many temptations come their way. While they come with intentions of striving for success, they are often sorely disappointed and find themselves at the lowest ranks of society, vulnerable, unable to defend themselves. Others shut themselves off, not trusting anybody. A sound faith is a great help to stand firm and pursue your goals. However, Joseph's example shows that even God's children may hit rock bottom. It is easy to despair and give up. But Joseph's story also shows that through it all, God is there, supporting him and blessing him.

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## Joseph's Story of Forced Migration 3. - Joseph in Prison

### *Genesis 40: Joseph in Prison*

Joseph is put in jail and all the life that he had built up over the years is taken away from him. No one to obey him any longer, no one to give directions to. No interaction any longer with the great lords of Egypt who visited his household. No one asking him favours or advice any more. It is a kind of dying for Joseph, a sense of loss. He has no perspective of ever coming out of prison again. We know in retrospect that he spent 5 to 8 years there (37:2; 41:2,46).

As it turns out, his prison was operated by the regiment of which his boss was the commander. Since he was unlikely to go anywhere, he was put to work. And the prisoners were not your average criminal from the street. Oh no. These prisoners were the important, high-ranking people - VIPs. The ones who had intrigued and lost. Or the ones who simply had the bad luck to be at the wrong end of the stick in this corrupt society. Around a king's court there was always some intrigue going on somewhere. And Joseph serves these people. He listens to them. I'm sure there were many who were very pleased to tell it all – to spill their guts – now that they were put out of action. And Joseph gains a very interesting view on the Egyptian society; on what goes on at the court; on who is who in the world out there. We often say that what you see depends on your point of view. Joseph studied Egypt through a prison window. And he learned a lot.

And what is really striking when you think about it is that Joseph did not become bitter and negative and depressed. We see a Joseph who, against all odds, is spiritually healthy; who has grown in his relationship with God; who has learned to hear His voice through dreams; who is caring enough to ask about the well-being of his guests, the chief cupbearer to the king and the chief baker; who is confident enough to speak about his gifts and who is humble enough to say that his gifts are from God. That could all have been so different! And then history would have taken a different turn. Joseph is really very special in this. I believe herein lies the secret of his eventual success and his ability to live up to the expectations of the Pharaoh later. The prison had become his temple. He had invited God to be present in his very limited life and learned to walk with Him in that very insignificant position. And he had grown spiritually and been transformed. And later, when he was brought to power, he was ready and he had what it took to be effective in that position of vast responsibilities.

Joseph had bounced back from two successive traumatic experiences in his life – the rejection by his family and the deception of Potiphar's wife. No, the pain had not gone. But it did not block him or keep him from living his life according to God's principles. He had found a way of expressing his identity in that harsh environment. Through the years, he had found an inner strength that sustained him all along. He had learned the secret of an intimate fellowship with the Lord (Ps 25:14).

**Johan Velema** headed TLM's Evaluation & Monitoring Service from 1999 to 2007, co-ordinating evaluations of projects and programmes and collecting statistical data from all centres. He did research & development work for TLM International from 2007 to 2011.



## Joseph's Story of Forced Migration 4. - Joseph checks out his brothers

*Genesis 44:18 - 45:3*

We now make a jump in Joseph's story to a point where he had been vice president of Egypt for at least nine years (45:6). Joseph enjoyed a healthy family life with a wife and two sons (41:45, 41:50-52). His marriage had been a vindication for Joseph, who surrendered his sexuality to God by declining to sleep with his master's wife and had been given a beautiful, top class young woman as a life partner. She had helped him with many practical questions about his new life and his integration in Egyptian society was now complete.

Joseph also enjoyed a busy professional life. Building projects, duty travel, policy papers, trade negotiations, financial management... And he was effective too. Joseph got a lot done for the good of Egypt and its people. He had little time to think about his family back in Canaan (41:51). And then one day, totally unexpectedly, his brothers are brought before him bowing down with their faces to the ground (42:6). What a shock! How the roles are reversed now! How the dreams he had had as a boy are now being fulfilled! It is an emotional moment for Joseph as the memories of his life in the desert, which he had pushed away for so long, come flooding back. How should he deal with his brothers now? Take his revenge and destroy them? Remain anonymous and send them away? Or seek to reunite with his family again?

We see Joseph asking many questions about the situation of his family, about his father and his younger brother Benjamin – who had been closest to him and who had not been part of the conspiracy. Benjamin becomes the focus of all discussions between Joseph and his brothers and, later, between the brothers and their father, who does not want to let him travel to Egypt (42:36). When Benjamin finally does arrive in Egypt, Joseph constructs a situation where Benjamin is found guilty and the brothers are given freedom to leave him behind and go home (44:17). It is at this point that the brothers cannot pretend about the true state of their hearts any longer. Rather than choosing the easy way out and save themselves, they resist the powerful vice-president and choose their family bond. Judah even offers himself as a slave instead of his youngest brother (44:33)! In explaining his choice, he gives evidence that what they had done to Joseph had marked their family history (44:28). Already earlier, they had inadvertently shown to Joseph that what they had done to him was still weighing on their conscience (42:21-23).

It is this change of heart on the part of his brothers, that tips the balance for Joseph and that causes him to reveal his true identity to them. The intensity of his weeping (45:2) is a measure of the pain and grief he had bottled up over the 20+ years since he left home.

And so we see how God cares for Joseph and gives him the desire of his heart. He is able to see his father again. The family is reunited and there is resolution for the deep grief that Joseph had harboured for so many years. Joseph had put God first in his life and all other things were added unto him (Mt 6:33). And so we ourselves may also trust in the same God who loves us, knows us and answers us in his own good time.

**Johan Velema** headed TLM's Evaluation & Monitoring Service from 1999 to 2007, co-ordinating evaluations of projects and programmes and collecting statistical data from all centres. He did research & development work for TLM International from 2007 to 2011.



## Joseph's Story of Forced Migration 5. - Joseph forgives

*Genesis 50:15-21*

We are here on the last page of the book of Genesis. Joseph now was an accomplished man. He had been settled in his job of vice president of Egypt for about 20 years. The famine was over. He was some 50 years old and his father Jacob had just died. We see Joseph meeting his brothers and weeping. Another, final emotional moment as the story draws to a close<sup>1</sup>. The cause of his sorrow is the concern of his brothers that he, Joseph, might use his power to take revenge. Of course, the brothers were really half-brothers sharing the same father with Joseph but from different mothers. The father was the common bond. With Jacob dead and buried, what was to stop Joseph from driving them away and breaking up the family? What did he owe them? Nothing.

We may well ask why the brothers were so worried about this. Surely there had been a reconciliation at the time they had come to Egypt. So why were they still worried now, after all these years? Probably the brothers thought that Joseph was thinking exactly like them. That he would want to get even over the old jealousies that somehow were still there in their minds. They looked at Joseph and thought: "We are just herdsmen and look at him. Our impossible little brother at the top of the rank! An Egyptian no less!" Somehow there was still alienation between them. Also because Joseph had successfully integrated into Egypt society whereas they had remained as they were when they came to the land of Goshen.

When the brothers bow down once again before Joseph and declare themselves his slaves, Joseph breaks down and cries. I think Joseph is deeply disappointed that his brothers think like this. They do not understand that he, Joseph, is at peace with the life he has ended up having. He has fully accepted that all the loneliness of acculturation, all the pain of losing his family, all the rejection he had suffered and the betrayal and neglect were ultimately God's plan for his life but much more importantly, God's plan for his family, for his generation, for his lineage to be saved and continued. And he says: you harmed me, yes, but God turned it into something wonderfully good (50:20). He restates what he had said earlier (45:7-8): You did not send me to Egypt but God. It was the mission my life was to fulfil. That is enough for me. The pain is unimportant in the perspective of God's greater purpose and the joy of seeing that fulfilled. Joseph had really accepted this with his whole heart. His tears prove that Joseph had truly forgiven his brothers and had learned to love them again.

And so Joseph's story points to Jesus who "endured a cross and thought nothing of its shame because of the joy he knew would follow his suffering" (Heb 12:2, Phillips). Jesus owes us nothing, yet forgives us, preserves us and includes us in his family, restoring us to the Father.

**Johan Velema** headed TLM's Evaluation & Monitoring Service from 1999 to 2007, co-ordinating evaluations of projects and programmes and collecting statistical data from all centres. He did research & development work for TLM International from 2007 to 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the seventh time we see Joseph weeping: 42:24, 43:30, 45:2, 45:14-15, 46:29, 50:1, 50:17.



## And Persecution Also

*'Truly I tell you,' Jesus replied, 'no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields — along with persecutions — and in the age to come eternal life.'* (Mark 10:29-30 NIV)

There she stood, calm, serene and poised. We were at TLM's International Assembly in Delhi in November 1999. Gladys Staines had been invited to join us. Just ten months earlier she had lost her husband, Graham and two sons, Philip and Timothy, burnt to death by a gang while sleeping in his station wagon at Manoharpur in Odisha, India. The Staines connection with leprosy and TLM was clearly the basis for the invitation.

During my tenure as Salvation Army Secretary for South Asia at the turn of the century, opposition to Christians was increasing. I was frequently in touch with Christian leaders supporting those affected. This had ranged from breaking up Bible studies and destroying churches to beatings and kidnappings. The events challenged many aspects of our work, causing us to question not only our motivation but also our methods of Christian witness.

I had written to Gladys Staines at the time of the murders; here we met in person. She spoke with dignity, thanking us for our support. She mentioned forgiving the perpetrators, but asked us to pray that she remain faithful to that commitment. She stayed in India for several years after the attack, continuing the work her husband had started. That in itself gave proof of her commitment.

Later, in a statement during the trial of the accused, she said:

*The Lord God is always with me to guide me and help me to try to accomplish the work of Graham, but I sometimes wonder why Graham was killed and also what made his assassins to behave in such a brutal manner on the night of 22nd/23rd January 1999. It is far from my mind to punish the persons who were responsible for the death of my husband Graham and my two children. But it is my desire and hope that they would repent and would be reformed.*

Jesus was at pains to remind his disciples that persecution would be possible. That remains true for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christian. None would welcome persecution, whether of a relatively mild degree or paying the supreme sacrifice. But I, for one, would hope that should it come my way, I would be given the strength to endure. And if I were left behind, as Gladys Staines was, that I would be able to respond as she did -- with forgiveness. It seems to me that therein lies the greatest power of effective witness.

### 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 TLM.



## Mephibosheth

*“My bitter heart grows sweet  
When my small kitten,  
Caring not that I am blind,  
Is frisking at my feet”  
(from “Escaped as a bird”, published by TLM)*

When the club meets on a Tuesday evening in DBLM hospital, music is the shared joy. No-one notices who has bandaged hands, missing feet, unblinking eyes, or a collapsed nose. What matters is whether she or he can sing well or play a tune **or enjoy listening**. Anyone and everyone is welcome to come from the wards and join in. This is a wonderful thing. Outside the hospital, for anyone with visible effects of leprosy, that person’s *difference from others* is a prominent factor in almost any relationship, that *difference* can obscure his or her unique attributes and innate value.

David was someone who could see beyond a disability to a Person. I love the story of Mephibosheth because of this. When King David asked after Jonathan’s relatives wondering if any were still alive, Mephibosheth was named as “the man with crippled feet”- how sad that that was considered his main characteristic! David was not put off by this unfavourable introduction, he just wanted to know “where is the man?”

Was his disability the most important thing about him? Well, maybe he felt it was, because when he is presented with a warm welcome by David, he replies “What is your servant that you should notice a dead dog like me?” Does this betray a very low self-esteem, resulting from years of being told he was worthless, a burden, a nuisance? Was he clinically depressed? But David wisely ignores this self-derogatory remark and goes ahead with arrangements for help on his farm, comfortable accommodation, good food and company for this man whom he sees as “son of my friend”, not as “a cripple”! Unfortunately the writer of Second Samuel is still preoccupied with Mephibosheth being “different”: he concludes the chapter by repeating “... ..and he was crippled in both feet”. Let us be like David and accept a man for who he is & what he is worth. Or like the kitten who “cares not” that his master is blind.

**Dr. Cynthia Ruth Butlin, known as Ruth.** British (63). My service with TLM is as follows: 1981- 1982: sponsored by TLM for 1 academic year at All Nations Christian College in Hertfordshire, UK. 6 weeks of linguistics course. 1982- 1991: Medical officer at Richardson Leprosy Hospital Miraj, in India, under Dr PD Samson. 1991- 2001: medical superintendent at Anandaban Leprosy hospital in Nepal. March - June 2001: Furlough. June 2001- 2003: Superintendent Purulia leprosy hospital and homes, West Bengal in India. 2003- 2007: Medical advisor at DBLM (hospital and field programme), Nilphamari, Bangladesh (then ended my time as expatriate staff). 2007-now Voluntary speaker for TLMEW. 2013- now, skilled volunteer, sponsored by TLMEW, mainly working for DBLM hospital and rural health programmes in Bangladesh (also some work for TLMNepal)



## Meeting an inspiring peacebuilder. Part I.

### *2 Corinthians 4: 6-10*

Before joining the mission I interned at Coventry Cathedral with the reconciliation team. I had the honour of hosting Therese Mema Mapenzi from the Democratic Republic of Congo; winner of the 2014 Coventry International Prize for Peace and Reconciliation for her work with the listening rooms in Eastern DRC.

At times it was very difficult to listen to the stories she shared from her region where rape is used as a weapon of war. I heard stories of women, children and men who have suffered sexual violence in the midst of a violent conflict. At the prize giving we displayed a photo exhibition from CAFOD called 50 years 50 faces which contained a series of photos of women along with captions describing what had happened to them. Therese simply said she knew everyone one of these women and had heard their stories within the listening rooms programs.

For me I don't know how Therese copes with so much pain or how she keeps going. I think after just one day the stories would crush my spirit. But for Therese what gives her hope are the days when she sees a wife and her husband reconciled together again after what each have experienced during the conflict. It's when a mother has a heart change towards her child born out of rape, and when these often stigmatised children are able to go to school and have a different hope for their future.

For prayer and reflection:

When I think of Therese and the listening room project, I am reminded of 2 Corinthians 4:6-10 and how the hope and light of Jesus is transforming dark situations. I'm thankful that God keeps giving us the strength to keep persevering in difficult circumstances.

Transformation is also key word used within the mission. I invite you to pause for a moment and to give God thanks for the transformation He is doing in the lives we seek to serve. Let us also give God praise for those whom He calls to take on issues of injustice and provide a safe space for those affected by violence and discrimination. Let us also pray for the Church to continue to be a space where transformation and hope can flourish. Finally pray for people in your own areas who are in need of a God's touch to bring transformation today.

**Sara Kandiah** – Global Support Officer, TLM International, Brentford



## Meeting an inspiring peacebuilder. Part II. The Bullet Crosses.

*Isaiah 2:4b*

'Here are the bullets you wanted.' It felt strange to be handed a paper bag which contained 100 used bullet cartridges. I was surprised at how light they were. Then it hit me - in my hands I held a bag which more than likely contained bullets that had killed and wounded many.

These same bullets had been picked up by women in villages thousands of miles away in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Cleaned, cut and then made into bullet crosses to help support the work of the Listening Rooms. A project run by the Commission of Justice and Peace set up in response to the brutal escalation of sexual violence following violent conflict. The listening rooms are safe spaces for men, women and children to talk about their traumatic experiences with an aim for healing and hope to flourish.

As I write this I'm reminded of the verse in Isaiah where it says *'They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.'* *Isaiah 2:4b*

And this same story of transformation is what lies behind the bullet crosses as my friend Therese explains.

"DRC is a country known for its wealth of precious minerals and natural resources. But many of these same materials such as uranium, copper, and iron also go into the manufacturing of bullets and weapons, and sadly are also a source of exploitation, injustice and conflict within the DRC.

DRC has also experienced decades of civil war with fighting happening in villages across the country. The Justice and Peace Commission help bring hope and transformation to people's lives who have been affected by violence. Empty bullets are collected from villages after fighting has taken place and are used to make the bullet crosses. These crosses will hopefully make people ask the question, "Why can't we produce instruments of peace instead of instruments of war?" Along with the role of advocacy, these crosses are a symbol of hope and support for anyone who has been exploited and affected by the violence in the DRC. These bullet crosses also help finance the Listening Rooms project where women can talk about their own personal experiences of this violence in a safe space."

I keep my bullet cross by my bedside to remind me to pray for those who have been affected by violence and as a trigger to campaign around gender based violence.

**For prayer and reflection:** Reflect on Isaiah 2:4b and pray for peace in conflict areas that may be close to you physically or for countries experiencing violence that God has put on your heart. Ask God to raise up more peacebuilders and peacemakers in these areas and for progress in any ongoing peace talks.





## Forgiveness

*Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Psalm 32:1*

Forgiveness is the core of the gospel. I will highlight two dimensions of forgiveness. Jesus came with forgiveness for all sins, for all mankind. Jesus came in order to build a bridge back to God for all of us who lived in sin. He gave his life, He was made sin for us; As Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2Cor 5:21* This indescribable love builds the bridge between you and God! Through this you and I are forgiven! However, God expects that this forgiveness should define our life! Paul says in the same chapter: *And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 2Cor5:15*

**Forgive others.** What does it mean in my daily life to live for Jesus? One dimension of this is about ~~to learn~~ learning to forgive others, the people who did wrong against us. In the prayer he taught his disciples this is very clear. *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors! For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:12; 14.* From this text we understand that there is a clear connection between receiving forgiveness and giving forgiveness. To forgive someone who did wrong against me can sometimes be very difficult. According to this prayer, this is a condition in order to get forgiveness. Yes, this is tough! Impossible almost, and it will not happen without help from God and His love!

Once, a man in our church did a great wrong to my family. It was very difficult for me to forgive him but in my heart I knew that this was wrong. During this period I visited a seminar in South Africa where a woman from Kenya preached about forgiveness. God spoke to me through her. The woman encouraged all of the participants to write down the name of the person we had found impossible to forgive, and then ask Jesus Christ to give the strength and love we need in order to forgive. I did what that woman said and this very visible act before God helped me to be willing to forgive. Finally I could forgive.

There are situations in our lives where we are so hurt by somebody, that it seems it will take a lifetime to be able to forgive. The words on the cross will then help us: *"Forgive them Father! They don't know what they are doing."* *Luke 23:34.* Here In those words I can trust God's mercy, for me and for others.

**Confession.** Confession before God is a very significant part of forgiveness as well. As always it starts with myself. King David, who really did wrong when he took Uria's wife and sent Uria to die, experienced this in a very serious way. He said: *When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.* Then King David's life turns completely when he confessed his sins. *"Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord " and you forgave the ~~guilt~~ guilt of my sin. Ps 32:5.*

Confession is about willingness to put aside our pride. And that is not so easy! Very often, at least here in my country, we see very prominent persons deny their guilt until they are convinced – by others- about their guilt! I don't think that that is the way God asks us to go. Instead the Bible tells us to confess our sins before God. When I do so, I will experience that the burden of sin will go away. - We have been offered forgiveness from God through Jesus Christ. Let us ask Him that this divine forgiveness may characterize our lives, so others can see Him in our daily life!

**Gunnel Ericson** TLM Sweden, member of PRG, former national director



## "Strength - Authority"

*"I have given you authority ....." Luke 10:19*

For many people, RUGBY is the most barbaric, ridiculous game invented by man. Thirty mainly massive men chasing an oval ball that bounces in every direction. No sooner has one caught the ball that he is chased by 3 or 4 (or more) others and normally tackled and brought crashing to the ground. To add insult to injury often a host of players fall on him making it almost impossible to release the ball and causing his team to be penalised for "holding on".

The dictionary defines a "scrum" as "a set struggle between the forwards of both teams grappling in a compact mass with the ball on the ground in the middle". It is not unusual to see fists and tempers flying in the scrum.

My memories of personal involvement are various bruises and a broken collar-bone. I still enjoy watching a good game.

The men that push in the scrum weigh an average of 125 kgs each - mainly bone and muscle. They are big and incredibly strong. It is fascinating to see them being controlled, disciplined and sometimes sent off the field to the "sin bin" for bad behaviour by a skinny man half their size. His secret? He holds the whistle.

The players have strength.  
The referee has authority.

Regardless of how strong and powerful we may be, we are all controlled by some form of authority - good, bad, indifferent or all 3.

God's Word declares that : *"Christ is head over every power and authority" Colossians 2:10.* Jesus Himself declared *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me ..."* *Matthew 28:18* and in Luke 10:19 He states : *"I have given you authority ... to overcome all the power of the enemy ..."*

We "hold the whistle" - what use are we making of it?

### **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.



## “My father is the gardener”

As a fundraiser, my role involves a lot of speaking. This could be face-to-face, on the phone or in writing. When I speak to donors and funders, it's important to use words that they understand.

- This means avoiding technical words – instead of MDT, I might say leprosy medication.
- This means keeping things simple – I identify a problem and show how a supporter can solve it
- This means making a story relevant to the supporter – our older donors understand what it means to have reduced mobility or poor eyesight.

When Jesus spoke to people, he used words and stories that he knew people would understand. He made His stories relevant – using everyday images or everyday situations - to explain something.

*A good example of Jesus making His message relevant is John Chapter 15 verses 1 - 11*

(If possible, read the New International Version)

In this passage, Jesus made His message relevant by using the nature around Him. Making His message relevant, allowed him to explain His message and help the disciples remember it.

Older versions of the Bible use the phrase “my Father is the vine dresser”. The New International Version of the Bible updates this to say *“my Father is the Gardener”*.

In this Bible passage, God is described as the gardener. He waters and tends the plant, caring for it. He removes negative things in believers' lives so that the remaining branches produce even more fruit. He "prunes" branches to correct His people, shaping it in the way that encourages growth.

Jesus referred to another image: some Bibles call it deadwood, others call it dead sticks. These branches have lost their connection with the vine – the vine is the source of nourishment. The gardener has snapped them off and thrown these branches in a heap for burning. They have no useful function. A branch refers to someone who believes in God, deadwood refers to someone who does not believe in God.

2,000 years on, Jesus choice of gardening and nature images are still relevant. We can give thanks that as the Gardener, God loves us and cares for us, providing everything we need.

Let's come back to our work. Our challenge is how do we relate The Leprosy Mission and our cause to the communities where we live? Are our communications relevant to local people? Do we insist on using technical words? Do we overcomplicate things?

2000 years on, Jesus' message is still relevant. We must communicate The Leprosy Mission and our cause, making it relevant to donors and funders today.

**Jamie McIntosh**, Fundraising Manager, The Leprosy Mission Scotland



## God is mindful of us

*'When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place; what is mankind that you are mindful of them; human being that you care for them (Psalm 8 vs 3 – 4) (NIV)*

It always baffles me whenever I read Psalm 8; as I ponder on how great and powerful our God is in contrast to how weak and wretched we are and yet God chose to be mindful of us!

Every day we receives His grace and provision. Because He is mindful of us; he is concern about our welfare, our wellbeing and our security. What a wonderful Father and a caring God.

Again I see the evidence of God being mindful of person affected by Leprosy on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2016; when we celebrated the 60 anniversary of SIM Danja Leprosy hospital (TLM has been a partner of the hospital from inception). I am so encouraged by great testimonies of people whose lives has been transformed physically and spiritually by the services received at the mission hospital. Many people testified to how they were rejected by their community because of Leprosy and were at the point of despair, discourage and loss of hope but when they came to the hospital they received the love of God through the care of the missionaries and were made whole and some even became servant of God and pastoring churches while some other became evangelist; they got married and have children that are doing well in the Lord and society. This I consider as evidence of God being mindful on mankind by transforming hopeless lives and giving hope and great future to people.

In Jeremiah 29vs 11, God assured us of a great plan and future that He has prepared for us. With my years of working with the Leprosy Mission I have seen God confirming His words and promises and I am so privilege to be part of those whom God is mindful of.

My prayers today is that may we all experience His love and care as we seek Him with all our heart and as we serve Him in the Leprosy Mission. No matter what we are going through, lets us be encourage and be assured that 'God is mindful of us' and He will meet us at the point of our needs

**Bunmi Oluloto**

TLM Country Leader Niger & Chad



## On a Journey

**Luke 24 : 13 – 35** Who was Cleopas and who was his companion? - We don't know for sure. But we do know they were two very disappointed and disillusioned people, disciples of Jesus. They had been there when the women and then Peter and John had brought the news that Jesus was risen. Perhaps they had stayed for some of the discussion about what this all meant but still they sought a Messiah who would be an earthly king.

We join them on the road over the hills from Jerusalem walking into the bright golden glow of the sun. The road is dusty and twists along the brown hills that hide Emmaus from view. Long shadows undulate over the rocky ground. There are others on the road – all with their own thoughts and conversations - villagers driving their donkeys back from the market, merchants making for their night's camp.

Listen as they talk about Jesus and their expectations – the Messiah to rescue the Jews from the rule of the Romans and restore the Jews as God's people. Their world was in ruins. They were talking about all the events which we remember during Holy Week – the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the overthrow of the tables in the temple, the Passover supper, the arrest and trial of Jesus and then the crucifixion, the burial and the amazing story that Jesus was risen. So many things they talk about and so many questions they ask – if only..., why..., did it happen..., what now?

A third person joins them on the road – not unusual, but they don't seem really to look at him caught up in their own thoughts and grief. But, wait a minute, he doesn't know what they are talking about so they repeat it all. Still they don't see...and so He points out all the things predicted about the Messiah – why, oh why can they see who He is? Jesus simply gets alongside and quietly without fuss comforts them, entering in to their grief and despair. Perhaps we have reached Emmaus too soon for the penny to drop!

Yes they are home again tired, hungry, emotionally confused. They stop at the doorway, inviting the stranger in to have a rest and something to eat. A jug of water ready to refresh tired feet, a simple meal is prepared and laid on the table. You watch as the bread and the wine are set out and now ..... He lifts the bread and breaks it – suddenly their eyes are open wide and they at last recognise Jesus, but where has He gone? – vanished from their sight. In their joy, they jump up, the meal is left unfinished – they must return to Jerusalem and tell everyone about this. Maybe you spot them catching up the bread and some olives as they run out of the house. They are too excited to be tired, to think about the dangers on the road in the dark. This is the beginning of a new journey, not the rush back to Jerusalem but a new journey of faith, a new future.

But what has this journey meant to me, to you? Do we look for Jesus on the road we are on? Are we so caught up in our thoughts, our activities, our disappointments, or our joys to recognise Him? He IS there but we are slow to understand and to obey. We all walk amazing journeys with Jesus at our side to lead, to show the way to us. Think about how Jesus walks with you along your life's journey and give thanks to Him for the ways He has led you and for the times when He has opened your eyes and you have been so aware of His presence.

A blessing from a Nigerian Pastor: *"In your journeys to and fro, God direct you. In your happiness and pleasure, God bless you. In care, anxiety or trouble, God sustain you. In peril and in danger, God protect you."*



## Free the captives!

*<sup>1</sup>When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. <sup>2</sup>Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." <sup>3</sup>The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Psalm 126:1-3*

Let's begin with a question that you can ask one another / yourself: Can you remember a time when something has happened and you have said 'do you know, that is just too good to be true!'

Recently, in English football, something remarkable happened. Leicester City won the Premier League! To set some context, they had nearly been relegated from the league the year before. In the 132 year history of Leicester City, they have not spent as much on players as Manchester United have spent in the last 2 seasons. As the season began, bookmakers had them at 5000/1 to win the league.

To put it simply, they had no chance!

Psalm 126 talks of the Leicester City of the ancient world – Israel. Israel was a tiny nation, a pawn in the midst of superpowers, sandwiched between powerful, great nations, and placed into captivity, forced into slavery, while their beloved capital, Jerusalem, lay in ruins.

The first 3 verses of Psalm 126 document the amazement and joy of the people of Israel, as they are unexpectedly set free from their captivity, and given back their land, along with the city of Jerusalem.

I'm not sure if the news of Leicester City has reached you, but verse 2 tells us that the news of the freedom of Israel reached many nations, who all were amazed at what was happening. They were witnessing the seemingly impossible coming true.

Two things really strike me about this passage.

First, the joy and celebration that the people of Israel have at being set free, as they are given back their land. Let us follow their lead today and celebrate our freedom in Christ, and His goodness in our lives.

Second, God has made the impossible come to pass. He has listened to the cries for help from his people, and He has done something wonderful for them. This Psalm is a concrete reminder *that "with God all things are possible."* (Matthew 19:26)

What a great reminder and encouragement to us as we seek to "set the oppressed free" (Luke 4:18) who are suffering from the captivity that so often happens as a result of leprosy. But I must end with a warning. Despite all of this happiness, things are about to change. The second half of the Psalm, verse 4-6, tell an altogether different story. No peaking – consider this your cliff-hanger! We'll find out what happens next tomorrow!



## Free the Captives! Part 2

### *Psalm 126:4-6*

Picture the scene, you are typing on your computer, and you have nearly finished your very important document. You are very happy with it. You know that this will please your Country Leader/Chairperson, or maybe your Implementing Country partners/Supporting Country partners will think your great, or even, you might gain the praises of TLM International with this 'little beauty'! Then, all of a sudden, there is a power-cut. The screen goes blank, and your work is lost (you had forgotten to back it up).

Psalm 126 has that sort of feel to it. All is going so well in the first three verses, everyone is happy, celebrating God's deliverance, life is good, then verse 4 comes along, and pop, all the air is taken out of your balloon, and you are left crying out for help... *"Restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in the Negev."*

Between verses 3 and 4 something 'computer power-cut' like has happened – what exactly that is we are not told, but the Psalm all of a sudden shifts gear, much like the life of Hudson Taylor, the famous missionary to China, does.

In the late 1800's he was working hard, taking territory for the kingdom of God, when one day, while speaking at an event in Boston in 1900, he suffered a nervous breakdown. On stage, he kept repeating two lines over and over again: "You may trust the Lord too little but you can never trust him too much", and *"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" from 2 Timothy*

Diagnosed with exhaustion, the doctor sent him to London, to see some specialists, who then sent him to Switzerland to recover. It was there that he received the devastating news that 58 of his missionaries and 21 children had been massacred in the Boxer Revolution. He was powerless, he could do nothing, not even pray – yet he told his wife that he still trusted God, despite all that had happened.

Often, in our walk with God, we can experience something akin to what happened in Psalm 126, or the life of Hudson Taylor. We can be, in many ways, free, yet still long for freedom.

There is a raw honesty to this Psalm and this story. On the one hand, we are free. Christ has set us free from the power of sin which is death, and he has made us to be heirs with him. Yet, during the earthly journey we may feel very much like we are imprisoned by our circumstances – perhaps it is the country we live in, perhaps it is the people that we know, perhaps our health, perhaps our habits, which makes us feel more like captives, and slaves, than children of God.

Psalm 126, I think, is an invitation to the people of God to embrace the tension of the freedom which He offers to us, held against the captivity we encounter in the realities which come from living in this world.

It ends with some encouraging words, which remind us that our captivity is only for a season, that this God is faithful to those who seek him in the midst of their trials:

*Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.*



## **“Love one another. As I have loved you,”**

*John 13:34, 35*

How good are you as a lover? When people talk about your Church do they say “Oh that is the group that loves everyone”? As Christians, we are supposed to be known for our love. It is not just any love either, it is Jesus love. Our love should be Agape, selfless, self giving, loving before we are loved and giving our lives for those that we love. Mind boggling isn't it? As I get older I am getting more and more a grumpy old woman rather than a Jesus centred lover of people.

I am reminded of when I was in PNG. One of our patients called Tom was really difficult. He was very disabled, with ulcers, poor sight and claw hands. He was also never happy. Whatever we did for him was never enough. He always wanted more and demanded our attention. I would meet him at the hospital but he would also come to my house. Great missionary that I was, I used to sometimes ask the Lord to hide me from him! Then one day in desperation, I told the Lord that I simply could not love Tom.

Then the Lord said to me, “At last! I don't want you to love Tom with your poor love, but I want you to open your heart to allow me to love him through you.” Of course, I should have known that my pathetic love was not enough for Tom. What he needed was the “as I have loved you”. I said yes to the Lord and I can't explain it, or tell you what happened, except that my attitude was completely transformed. Instead of being annoyed by Tom, I realised he was trying to preserve his dignity and assert that he was worth something. The next time he came to my house, I even invited him in for a cup of tea. I don't know who was more surprised him or me.

Of course, I still couldn't give him all that he asked for and he was still difficult and demanding at times, but my heart was open to both the Lord and Tom. I wasn't in the way anymore, trying to do my best, or loving in my own strength but rather I was allowing the Lord to love through me. That I think is the meaning of this new commandment.

### **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.





## Let your light shine before men

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.  
Matthew 5:16 New King James Version (NKJV)*

When the author and Christian apologist C.S. Lewis wrote the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe he wrote a fantasy story for children, and said adult readers placed too much emphasis on the allegory in the story. Lewis wrote "The Narnian books are not as much allegory as supposal. Suppose there were a Narnian world and it, like ours, needed redemption. What kind of incarnation and Passion might Christ be supposed to undergo there?"<sup>1</sup> It is difficult for adults not to look for hidden meanings in the story. When the children return from Narnia and discover almost no time has passed since they entered the wardrobe, they ask the professor to explain. The professor believes their story but advises them not to talk to other people about it. He tells them they are not the only ones to have visited Narnia. He assures them one day they will meet some of the others, and when they do they will know them. Something for the children to ponder; when the time comes the light will shine out.

Rudi Stein established the shoe shop and the artificial limb centre in Purulia. Many of his assistants came from the beggar village outside the compound, and Rudi and his family took a great interest in the lives of these people. They raised money for the children's education and keenly supported all the self-help initiatives of the villagers. Rudi said he wanted the homes in Simonpur to be safe for him and his family to sleep there, and before he left India he was able to live in the village for a few nights. I have visited Simonpur many times over the years and at each visit I am amazed at the progress made by the villagers. The lives of the people living in Simonpur have been transformed, and it can no longer be described as a beggar village. When Rudi knew he was dying and he was surrounded by his family, he said he felt his life was like the candle in this hymn by Susan Bogert Warner.

*Jesus bids us shine with a pure, clear light,  
Like a little candle burning in the night.  
In this world of darkness, so let us shine  
You in your small corner, and I in mine.*

The catechism we learn as children stays with us, but when we are adults we understand more.

"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire." — Catherine of Siena

<sup>1</sup> James E. Higgins. "A Letter from C. S. Lewis". *The Horn Book Magazine*

**Rosemary Tootle** - Since retiring I have volunteered twice a week in the Leprosy Mission International Office in Brentford. In 1968 I went to Purulia as a VSO (volunteer) to upgrade the work of the laboratory. I am now looking forward to seeing the first automated analysers installed there.



## Our Hope

*Now these three remain: Faith, Hope and Love (1 Cor 13:13)*

I have been reading a book you may have heard of called “Surprised by Hope” by Tom Wright. His theme is the resurrection of Christ, His Lordship now and what this means for the future, especially with respect to His second coming when heaven will come down to earth. Then the Lord’s Prayer “May Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” will finally be fulfilled, and heaven and earth will be united as one renewed creation (The new heavens and new earth of Isaiah 65:17 and Rev 21:1).

I have been studying this because I confess it is a new topic to me: I was brought up on the “we will go to heaven when we die (and leave earth behind)” paradigm. So I have struggled with “well what’s the point then”. This new paradigm has changed my views on the value of our lives here and now on earth as I now know we anticipate His coming by our lives and actions; that we do not labour in vain (1 Cor 15: 58). Let me quote a passage from Wright’s book which describes the hope we have (pg 113):

“A future glimpse is provided in Isaiah 11:9. The prophet declares that ‘the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea’. As it stands this is a remarkable statement. How can the waters cover the sea? They *are* the sea. It looks as though God intends to flood the universe with himself; as though the universe, the entire cosmos, was designed as a receptacle for his love. We might even suggest ... that the world is beautiful, not just because it hauntingly reminds us of its creator, but because it is pointing forwards: it is designed to be filled, flooded, drenched in God; as a chalice is beautiful not least because of what we know it is designed to contain, or a violin is beautiful not least because we know the music of which it is capable”.

It is our job to **anticipate** this final renewal by how we live our lives of worship, love, peace, joy, integrity, beauty, creativity, justice, generosity and prayer, celebrating the resurrection of Christ as the start of everything new. To put it in just one word: Hope.

**Susan Maiava**

TLMNZ Board member and former TLMI Board member.



## Jesus wonderful parting gift to us

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).*

Imagine those who wait for Jesus promised gift were just ordinary men and women, many full of doubt, fear and frustration as many of them has failed their master. In their own strength, they were completely helpless to carry out the great task the Lord had entrusted to them

Imagine, you and I, being ask to wait and each one of us knows that waiting will be the last resort in this changing world were everything compete to take our attention and time.

“ Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift of my father promised..... in few days you will be baptized with Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4-5).

True to his words, God poured out on Jesus disciples the most powerful force the world has ever seen. The fire from heaven that has fell on the day of the Pentecost. It is the same power which raise Jesus from the grave, the same power which accompanied Jesus wherever he goes in now made available to them and to us.

The Holy Spirit begin his work on those disciple immediate transforming them into a might force. He begin to point us toward Jesus, bringing conviction of sin and guiding them into truth. He became our constant counsellor, teacher and comforter, just as Jesus said he would (John 14:15-27; 16:5-15).

Another amazing things about the Holy Spirit is that He enable us to represent Jesus even when we are weak or troubled. I recall when we were Sudan and our partner in ISRA (Islamic Relief Agency) were on our neck when they know that TLM is a Christian organisation. This has kept us on our toes, but to His glory he has strengthen us through his enabling Spirit and we were able to share our faith on one to one bases and the final result will be his!

God works his power in us for one primary purpose- to help us become effective witness for Jesus Christ.

So without the power of the Holy Spirit, we are no more able to proclaim Jesus Christ than those disciples when they first crowded together in the upper room. The good news is that the same power that turned them into mighty apostles can be ours too. Whether our mission is to our next door neighbour or to an unreached people group - affected by leprosy-, we need to be continually empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Let us ask God to fill us with boldness and passion and to provide opportunities to tell others about him!

*“Lord, you can use anything, so use me, and mould me. May your potter hand work in me so that I can be a vessel ready to be use by the Holy Spirit to glorify you in my work place as my saviour Jesus has done on earth”. Amen*

**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.



## Priorities

*“... act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6 : 6-8.*

Growing up in North India, at a rural mission hospital, we did not lack for anything we really needed, though our household would probably have been considered a bit spartan, by visitors from western countries. To this day, any sort of carpet feels, to me, like luxury, as do many other things taken for granted in the UK where I live now.

In my teens, during holidays at home, I became more conscious of the “clutter” in our house. Shelves with some of our childhood belongings, not touched for months (while we were away at boarding school), piles of journals or old letters, covered in dust and cobwebs, under tables or in corners – there did not seem to be a space around the edge of a room, that was clear – unless it was a doorway! In my grumpy teen age way, I felt it necessary to complain to my parents about the untidy state in which they kept the house, while some friends with a sense of humour gave them a wall plaque with these words : “Although you’ll find our house a mess, come in, sit down, converse. It doesn’t always look like this; some days it’s even worse!”

But I know for a fact that there are many people in that region, who are alive and healthy today, because they had a safe childbirth at the hospital where my parents worked, or a surgical procedure when they were ill, or life-saving treatment for malaria, Japanese B encephalitis or some other tropical illness. Scores of medical students gained valuable experience at the hospital while staying in our home. Paramedical workers who were to attend a leprosy training course, came and learnt English in our home in the evenings. Feeding programmes for malnourished children from the deprived “shoe maker community” near the market, happened on our verandah, or just in front of the house. The Mothers’ Union annual party, the hospital birthday celebration and staff Christmas parties took place at our house. And over the years, we had guests as diverse as the Archbishop of the Anglican church in Japan , a local Christian sadhu with a healing ministry, a retired English “bookie” (owner of a betting shop!) and his wife, travelling Asia in a camper van, and South Indian Jesuit trainees, as well as the aforementioned students. Seeds of the gospel were sown in many ways.

This then is the context in which Proverbs 14:4 became my favourite proverb. The translation that best expresses it goes like this: *“Where there are no oxen, the manger (or the stable) is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of the ox”*. In other words, no mess- no productivity. I have to confess - my parents’ wall plaque now hangs in my home! But the proverb applies to more than physical surroundings. It encourages us to remember our humanness in all that we do – there will be confusion, discord , inefficiencies, even errors where we are working hard, and stretching ourselves in the service of our Lord, for others. We could choose a much more orderly, less tiring or less “messy” existence, but it is likely that our lives would come to resemble more the proverbial clean stable, with little sign of “the strength of the ox”. There is a balance to be struck, however, as Jesus reminded Martha in Luke 10:31. The words of Micah, written so long ago, remain wise advice for us today.

### **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.



## We're forever changed

*'And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.'* 2 Corinthian 3:18 NIV

The latest worship album I purchased has a great song with a lyric that says:

'We go from glory to glory to glory. We'll never be the same, never be the same. You take us higher and higher and higher. We're forever changed, forever changed.'

God has a plan for each of our lives. He wants us to be transformed into his image.

We may often feel that this will finally all take place in heaven when our current weaknesses no longer hold us back. God doesn't see us that way. He now views us as those in Christ, so it is in the transforming power of His righteousness that we now stand. We are new creations and he wants us to grow deeper and deeper into the Lord's glory.

I want that transformation to impact my life every day. I need that transformation to empower me to make choices that hold me on the path of life, rather than roads to destruction. I depend on that transformation to bring joy and peace into my life. I give myself to that transformation as an act of worship. I long for that transformation to overflow into the lives of my family, neighbours, friends, even strangers.

At The Leprosy Mission we work to see 'Leprosy Defeated', and we also work to see 'Lives Transformed'. Just as we have a hope that brings transformation into our lives, we reach out with a hope that can transform the lives of people affected by leprosy. We work to bringing healing, care, acceptance, justice and opportunity where there was illness, stigma, rejection, injustice, and poverty.

Let's be thankful for the transforming work done in our own lives and press on with the work to bring transformation to people affected by leprosy. I can praise God with words affirming that I am 'forever changed', lets help people affected by leprosy to have the same song on their lips, that their lives are transformed and 'forever changed'.

**Prayer** *Lord, thank you for the transforming work you have done in my life. May that transformation overflow towards family, friends, neighbours and strangers. Empower the work of The Leprosy Mission to transform the lives of people affected by leprosy around the world. Amen*



## Rest

*Psalm 23: He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.*

How many of us would admit to defining our worth by a tick list of activities, jobs or achievements? (Or at least partly) I'll admit that in the face of adversity, when a crisis hits, something goes wrong, something unexpected even, my immediate response is to do lots, to be busy and stay busy until I get 'through'. It's my coping mechanism, my comfort, because surely then I'll have done enough to fix things, to get back on track as such.

But what I'm slowly, and I mean slowly, starting to learn is that I too often put my value in the work of my hands, rather than in the identity I have been given by my Father.

Our hard work is good, for it is a gift from God. But recently God has been speaking to me about rest: rest that is not just about our down time, our evenings or weekends, or times off, but about how we spend the every day moments. God calls us into a deep rest that fully restores.

For even when work is left undone, and we throw our hands up in despair one more time, it is then that our Father invites us to claim his redeeming love over any stress or anxieties we may be holding on to.

For it is not the work of your hands that defines you. God has already given you more worth than you could ever create or accumulate.

*Psalm 23 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

It is a Psalm that we are all so familiar with, but read it again and this time, take the time to stop and take pauses between the verses.

It speaks of... Rest. Peace. Stillness. Provision. Guidance. Comfort. Restoration. Assurance. Confidence. Security. Blessing. Anointing. Belonging.

We are not promised freedom from trouble, but we are promised comfort by a Shepherd with a watchful and compassionate eye. Nor are we promised an easy path, but we are promised rest and refreshment, goodness and mercy for the journey.

So let's pause and rest at the Good Shepherd's feet for a moment, knowing he has never stopped watching over us, his beloved children.



## Nehemiah 2:1-10

Nehemiah was a great leader. He was a successful servant to the king but God gave him the vision to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. God broke Nehemiah, he was burdened, he wept he mourned and fasted for the broken Jerusalem. Nehemiah saw a big need, he was given a big vision from an even bigger God!

*The bigger the NEED, the bigger the VISION, the bigger the TEAM, the bigger the ASKS along the way.*

Nehemiah, after prayer went before the king with a big ASK. He needed a 3 year sabbatical, documentation, provisions and a house! If we want to accomplish the big things God is asking us to do we are going to have to get better at the big asks. Let's not be afraid of a big ask when God has set his vision on our hearts.

Nehemiah was a man with a vision who met the man with the money, the man with the money, gave the man with the vision what he needed to get the work done. Something can only happen when the king provides the resources to fulfil the dream God has given Nehemiah.

I don't want to let my God given dreams sit on a shelf in heaven because I was too afraid to ask! Christian people want to hear of God's vision for His kingdom; they want to know how they can be part of it. They want to be part of God's action.

Nehemiah went before the king with a big ask and God provided. Let us not forget the times when God opened up the floodgates of heaven. When we rise up to the challenge God provides what we need. When God calls us we need courage and to be willing servants for the kingdom with a vision so big it seems impossible for us but with God we know all things are possible!

Having done the ASK Nehemiah sets off to fulfil the task ahead. Even though Nehemiah was very skilled, experienced and a great leader he also knew very well nothing great gets accomplished alone.

To fulfil a great plan he needed a great team. He needed to go from Me to WE, from Me to a TEAM. So he went about building a great team to make his dream a reality. If we apply the divine wisdom as found in the book of Nehemiah there is no telling what can be accomplished by a team with a big vision on fire for God and His kingdom!

Nehemiah saw Jerusalem in devastation but he also saw it restored to its glory. We see the devastation of those whose lives are crippled by leprosy but we also see a time when leprosy will be no longer!

Faith is the evidence of things unseen. I see total healing for those affected with leprosy and I see a world where leprosy is no longer. People of faith look at present and future. We see the problems then see the possibilities and start to work out the process, the preparation, the practicalities before achieving the plan.

Our long term vision at The Leprosy Mission, is to eradicate this dreadful disease. We are kingdom optimists who will dream big dreams! The God of heaven will give us success if we lean not on our understanding but lean into His presence then God will give us success.

**Helen Walton** - Community Development Manager - The Leprosy Mission England and Wales - Peterborough



**“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me!”**

*Matthew 25 : 40*

I just came back from the hospital to see Lao. He is sitting on his bed smiling, clean and feeling well. He still has a dressing on his right, amputated leg.

Lao came to us about a month ago. We had never seen him before. He has developed leprosy a long time ago and was treated. But apparently he had developed an ulcer, and that ulcer has become a terrible, ugly tumour... and this is how we saw him the day he came...

We persuaded him to stay for a few days in our compound (as the hospital was on strike) so as to get his foot clean from all the traditional medicine and the pus that covered the tumour. After two or three days his foot was clean and stopped smelling. After showing his sister (who is looking after him) how to dress the foot we took him home so as to attend the day that he could be operated.

Two weeks ago we called him. Lao's sister had faithfully dressed his foot and the foot had stayed relatively 'clean'... We then took him to see the anaesthetist and his surgeon and his foot was amputated.

And there he is, his burden (literally!) has been removed and he is sitting clean and 'lightly' in his bed. I spoke to his surgeon (a member of the TLM-Chad support group) who is proud of the result of his efforts (he removed the stitches today).

Soon he will be able to go home on crutches and move around. A few months later we will organise with a specialist centre a prosthesis and Lao will be able to walk on a 'normal' foot again.

'What you have done to one of your little brothers, you have done to Me'...

It is so easy to do our work for Him... Daily, as TLM, we are in contact with brothers and sisters affected by leprosy that are representing Him. Let's serve with love and dignity as He is presenting Himself daily to us...

### **Geeske Zijp**

nationality Dutch, with TLM since 1992. From 1992-1995 in Chad, from 1995 – 1997 in Zaire (former DRC), from 1998 – nowadays back in Chad and currently its programme manager.





## Authors in Alphabetical Order

## Textuarium

Anne-Claude Jonah	1 June		Gen 37,23-28	6 June
Bunmi Oluloto Dr	18 June		Gen 39	7 June
Christine Osman	19 June		Gen 40	8 June
Erna Möller	2 June		Gen 44, 18- 45,3	9 June
Geeske Zijp	30 June		Gen 50,15-21	10 June
Gordon Brown	3 June		2 Sam 9,1-13	12 June
Gunnel Ericson	15 June		Nehemiah 2,1-10	29 June
Helen Walton	29 June		Psalm 8,3-4	18 June
Imogen Tate	28 June		Psalm 23	28 June
Jamie McIntosh	17 June		Psalm 32,1	15 June
Johan Velema Dr	6,7,8,9,10 June		Psalm 126, 1-3	20 June
June Nash	22 June		Psalm 126, 4-6	21 June
Kirsteen Dutton Dr	26 June		Isaiah 2,4/b	14 June
Paul du Plessis Dr	11 June		Micah 6,6-8	26 June
Peter Hilton	20, 21 June		Matthew 5,16	23 June
Pradeep Failbus	4 June		Matthew 10,16/b	5 June
Rosemary Tootle	23 June		Matthew 26, 40	30 June
Ruth Butlin Dr	12 June		Mark 1,12	2 June
Sara Kandiah	13, 14 June		Mark 10,29-30	11 June
Silvano Perotti	16 June		Luke 10,19	16 June
Susan Maiava Dr	24 June		Luke 15, 11-32	4 June
Tim Reed	27 June		Luke 24,13-35	19 June

Yousif Deng Dr	25 June		John 13,34-35	22 June
Zoltán Kapi	5 June		John 15, 1-11	17 June
			Acts 1,8	25 June
			Acts 3,18	27 June
			2 Cor 4,6-10	13 June
			2 Cor 13,13	24 June
			3 John 5,8	3 June

**The Bridge** - TLM Daily Devotions

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