



TLM Daily Devotions

March 2019





Intro to the month

The name and spiritual legacy of James Hudson Taylor (1832 – 1905) is well known and a reference for everyone having a heart for Jesus and His people.

Taylor founded the Christian missions organization called China Inland Mission. He had special burden for the evangelism of China. He would eventually spend much of his life ministering in China, influencing thousands of missionaries to follow the Great Commission by partnering with him in God's work.

Through a systematized evangelization plan, culturally appropriate dress, and a variety of avenues for reaching the Chinese, Taylor ministered in China trusting for God's provision and strength and died leaving an inspiring legacy to many. One of his famous sayings should be a permanent reminder for us, too, as mission:

"The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed."

If God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom 8,31)

Blessed obeying, happy reading!

Marta



Flower festival

The first Saturday in February is the annual flower parade in Chiang Mai. Each year it brings an amazing display of incredible beauty and vibrant colour and community cooperation.

For weeks beforehand the communities who are entering a float into the parade have been busy planning the design for their entry, preparing varied costumes, making foam bases on which to put the flowers and seeds, ordering supplies, finalizing orders for flowers and leaves. Seeds and rice can begin to be formed into designs or pictures. The evening before the flowers arrive and teams begin cutting stalks and sticking flower heads in to the foam bases, making them into arrangements all over the carts. Slowly the amazing designs, made in secret long before, become evident. Petals and nuts and seeds are turned into pictures of Thai life and culture. Leaves, carrots and onions and cabbages mix with roses and orchids forming glorious displays of life and colour. Peacocks with long tails made out of orchids adorn the sides. Huge seed covered elephants tower above fluffy flower covered rabbits. Arching floral bowers of stand over the throne for the beauty queen .

The community members taking part the procession complete their costumes, put flowers in the hair, practice their graceful umbrella dance one more time. The farmer whose tractor will pull the float polishes up his work vehicle to be a show piece for the day and his wife and friends decorate it with leaves ad roses. The former tricycle taxi drivers pump up tyres and wash their rusting old vehicles, and the families decorate them into carriages for children in traditional costumes . The children in school bands polish their instruments and add flowers to their costumes.

All are using the beautiful things God has given, and contribute what they themselves hold in hand, including ideas, skills, possessions, time, money, and their very selves. It is such an glorious example of communities cooperating together in unity of heart and purpose.

I am moved by it as a beautiful picture and encouragement of how we can be in the church. As Paul teaches in I Cor. 12., the gifts God has given each of us have a valued part. We may think ours is too old, rusty and outdated (a tricycle?), too small and dull (a seed?), too common and mundane (a cabbage?). But each contribution has a unique place in the overall picture which reveals the wonders of God.

Let's wholeheartedly offer whatever we have today, knowing that as we do this, together with others, we are valued participants in God's good plan, the design of which will one day be revealed in all its beauty.

I Cor 12: 12-27

**Psalm 105 – 1.**

¹ Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.

² Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.

³ Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

⁴ Look to the LORD and his strength;
seek his face always.

⁵ Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,
⁶ you his servants, the descendants of Abraham,
his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.

⁷ He is the LORD our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.

⁸ He remembers his covenant forever,
the promise he made, for a thousand generations,
⁹ the covenant he made with Abraham,
the oath he swore to Isaac.

¹⁰ He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant:

¹¹ "To you I will give the land of Canaan
as the portion you will inherit."

¹² When they were but few in number,
few indeed, and strangers in it,

¹³ they wandered from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another.

¹⁴ He allowed no one to oppress them;
for their sake he rebuked kings:

¹⁵ "Do not touch my anointed ones;
do my prophets no harm."

¹⁶ He called down famine on the land
and destroyed all their supplies of food;

¹⁷ and he sent a man before them—
Joseph, sold as a slave.

¹⁸ They bruised his feet with shackles,
his neck was put in irons,

¹⁹ till what he foretold came to pass,
till the word of the LORD proved him true.

²⁰ The king sent and released him,

the ruler of peoples set him free.

²¹ He made him master of his household,
ruler over all he possessed,

²² to instruct his princes as he pleased
and teach his elders wisdom.



Psalm 105 – 2.

²³ Then Israel entered Egypt;
Jacob resided as a foreigner in the land of Ham.
²⁴ The LORD made his people very fruitful;
he made them too numerous for their foes,
²⁵ whose hearts he turned to hate his people,
to conspire against his servants.
²⁶ He sent Moses his servant,
and Aaron, whom he had chosen.
²⁷ They performed his signs among them,
his wonders in the land of Ham.
²⁸ He sent darkness and made the land dark—
for had they not rebelled against his words?
²⁹ He turned their waters into blood,
causing their fish to die.
³⁰ Their land teemed with frogs,
which went up into the bedrooms of their rulers.
³¹ He spoke, and there came swarms of flies,
and gnats throughout their country.
³² He turned their rain into hail,
with lightning throughout their land;
³³ he struck down their vines and fig trees
and shattered the trees of their country.
³⁴ He spoke, and the locusts came,
grasshoppers without number;
³⁵ they ate up every green thing in their land,
ate up the produce of their soil.
³⁶ Then he struck down all the firstborn in their land,
the firstfruits of all their manhood.
³⁷ He brought out Israel, laden with silver and gold,
and from among their tribes no one faltered.
³⁸ Egypt was glad when they left,
because dread of Israel had fallen on them.

³⁹ He spread out a cloud as a covering,
and a fire to give light at night.
⁴⁰ They asked, and he brought them quail;
he fed them well with the bread of heaven.
⁴¹ He opened the rock, and water gushed out;
it flowed like a river in the desert.

⁴² For he remembered his holy promise
given to his servant Abraham.
⁴³ He brought out his people with rejoicing,
his chosen ones with shouts of joy;
⁴⁴ he gave them the lands of the nations,
and they fell heir to what others had toiled for—
⁴⁵ that they might keep his precepts
and observe his laws.

Praise the LORD.



Do not be burdened by possessions.

I was visiting Anandaban (in Nepal) for a week or so in connection with research work & teaching, something I had done many times since I left my employment there in 2001. It seemed a good idea to leave, for my next visit, a bag full of those things which I would not need in UK (Nepali-style clothes, my Nepali Bible, spare toiletries and night dress, an interesting book to read). This would reduce luggage to carry next time I came. "May I leave this small locked bag in the loft of the hospital guest house?" I asked, and there was no objection.

A few weeks later I was in Bangladesh when the two major earthquakes struck Nepal. We felt the tremors and prayed for the people affected, and for those who would be helping them. After about 6 months, I had a chance to go back to Anandaban as a facilitator for a leprosy course. "you will have to stay in the training centre" they told me, "since the guest house is badly damaged and unusable". Then I have lost that bag which I left there", I thought. "I should not have left it in such a place".

When I reached the hospital I was handed my bag, a little dirty but intact, with the things inside all dusty and tumbled around by the earthquake. Whilst I felt happy to have it back, I also felt quite guilty that I had even thought about such a small loss which I might have incurred. Soon after I left, my friends had thoughtfully moved it from the guest house to another storage place (for fear of rats nibbling at it in the loft). Had they not done that, I would have lost a change of clothes, a toothbrush and comb, a Bible, a paperback book and a handy zipped bag: all replaceable items. I still had with me the means to travel to a safe place (an air ticket, a passport and a credit card), even if another earthquake struck during my planned stay that month.....at home in UK, I had so much more.....

Friends I met in Nepal told me eye-witness accounts of people who had lost EVERYTHING, when the earthquakes struck. Not just lost clothes and household goods, not just lost savings and treasured mementos, not just lost documents proving who they were and how they were qualified, but even lost relatives and friends (some missing and some who were known to have died). Some had lost limbs or eyesight. Some had lost farm animals or crops on which they depended for food. Most of those people had started off with much less than I had at home, and now had practically nothing of their own. Why was I worried about losing a few trivial possessions, things which I could easily replace?

Jesus told us that when we go out in His service, we should not carry extra money or a spare coat¹. We are to carry the Good News. Nothing else should be carried if it would interfere with our ability to do His service. Do not be anxious about possessions², He said. Lord forgive me for over-valuing my Things. Lord give me grace to hold lightly whatever You have given me, ever ready to share it with others³.

Let us travel light as we go forth for Him.

References 1. Matthew 10, v 9-10

Matthew 6,v 25 and v 28/a

Matthew 10, v8bC

Ruth Butlin Dr - A British doctor, previously TLM overseas staff but now retired and living in Sussex, who has not lost her concern for the leprosy work, so gives voluntary service whenever or wherever she can. Recently this has often entailed short visits to Bangladesh for capacity development or to support national staff with their research work".



Not under the circumstances

2 Corinthians 4:5-10

It is not about us but about Him. At least that is my interpretation of verse five. The trouble is that when you're feeling desperate, stressed or hurt it doesn't seem that way. It is so easy to be 'under' the circumstances. We can be affected by news, weather, our current situation but that doesn't have to prevent us from blooming or bearing fruit.

Paul who faced a lot of tribulation said this: *"Now we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this surpassingly great power is from God and not from us. We are pressed on all sides, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."*

He said that he was a visual aid for God's grace. A reminder to those around that God looks after everything and that all would-be well. He goes on:

"Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, yet our inner self is being renewed day by day. For our light and temporary affliction is producing for us an eternal glory that far outweighs our troubles."

These verses ring so true with me especially if I'm having a bad day. If all you can do is take pain tablets and sleep in the chair, then you can feel a bit useless. I am very aware that my outer self is wasting away although I'm not getting any thinner with it. I am getting shorter though and that doesn't help with the waistline. Still, the Lord is there, and he does renew my inner self. Even in the chair I can pray and intercede. When visitors come, I can listen and brighten their day. I can touch all those around me with Jesus, His light and His love. Amongst my Christian friends I can share what he is doing and how he looks after me.

It's a choice and one that Paul made. He was not going to be crushed or in despair or struck down or destroyed – no. He was going to let God's grace flow through him and reach out to others. What a challenge. Yet if you can't testify to the grace of God and his power when you're struggling then when can you?

My doctor says I'm a fighter. I am not sure that I am, but I have a great and victorious God and living every day for Him is what keeps me going.

Keep blooming where you are planted.

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 go and let God!

“They left everything and followed him.” Luke 5:1-11

Simon Peter and his companions, Andrew, James and John, were professional fishermen. They must have been fishing in the same lake Gennesaret for years. They knew that the best time to catch fish was at night. That was exactly what they had tried to all night. But they caught nothing.

Then a carpenter came along, a man who knew nothing about fishing. He told them to pay out their nets in broad daylight. The fishermen had their doubts. They knew it was a mission impossible. But they were polite people. They did not want to be disrespectful or rude to Jesus. So, out of respect for Him, they paid out their nets. The result was a miracle. They caught enough fish to sink their boats. Immediately, they knew that the man in the boat with them was not a mere man. Simon Peter called Him “Lord”, and said leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man” (Luke 5:8).

That is the difference between doing yourself, and letting God do it with you. Until Jesus intervened, the fishermen were trying to do it on their own. They drew a blank; they caught nothing. The moment Jesus stepped in, a miracle happened.

It is like that with us. We have a project. We know everything about it; it is our field; we are experts in it. We have the resources; money, materials. But we are not making it. We are working at it day and night. Still we are not making it. What are we not doing right? Maybe we are trying to do it on our own, like the fishermen fishing all night on their own without success.

Has it occurred to you to hand that project over to God? Bring God into it. Put it into prayer, have Mass or church service offered, ask your family, friends and fellow Christians to help you in praying for the success of your project. You are likely to end up with what theologians call a “religious experience”, like Simon Peter’s, and find yourself saying “leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man (or woman).” So why not let Go, and let God?

We could pray thus:

Lord, I seek for Your blessing unto the work which You have put on our ordinary hands and we will reap bountifully in all endeavors of our lives. Jesus, I trust in You.

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A Holy People (1)

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God...” (1Peter 2:9)

I have recently joined a small Bible Study Group who are following a very demanding course “Community Bible Experience”. Last year they completed the New Testament part of this, reading a book of the Bible every week and then meeting to discuss what they have learned from that reading. This year they are tackling the Old Testament – more of a challenge I think.

This last week we read Leviticus (and if that is not enough, the first half of Numbers as well). It is interesting just to consider the themes of the books; Genesis – beginnings; Exodus – redemption; Leviticus - ? I have not read Leviticus as a book from beginning to end for many years, not since I was at college and had to write an essay on the Message of Leviticus for the Church of the 20th Century! We find God setting out basic rules for the Children of Israel to live in their encampment, and indeed as they prepare themselves to move into the Promised Land – instructions which, while seeming to be common sense, lead to living a life of holiness.

Holiness is a key theme for the book of Leviticus. God is a Holy God – in **Leviticus 11:44** we are told *“I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy”* – and He wants us to be holy too. Everything about God is holy – His wisdom, His power; His judgements and even His love. Have we today lost some of our sense of awe at the holiness of God? We don’t often hear it preached in our churches – thinking about that, when did you last hear a sermon preached from Leviticus? Do we take our need to be holy seriously? God wants us to be holy but what does that mean for us?

Holiness isn’t attending the prayer meeting or the praise service. It means being in a right relationship with God and that being seen in our lives – so we start at the altar, confessing our sin and being restored through the blood, not of an animal, but of Jesus, the supreme sacrifice. I once read that a successful diet means learning to hate the foods we should not eat and love the foods we should eat. We should learn to hate the sins that separate us from God, that stop us from being holy.

Holiness means obedience and discipline. James tells us that we should keep ourselves from being polluted by the world (James 1:27). How often do we, and indeed the church, take the “easy road” out of a difficult situation or decision. God’s standards as he set them out to His people in these early days are just as important for us today – standards for our daily lives. It is as we live out those standards that we start to make progress towards holiness.

Holiness must come from God. Sentimental religious fervour does not mean that we are pleasing God. We need to take care that our internal fire is lit only by the Holy Spirit, from God’s altar, that we are cleansed, and not by our own actions – Satan is a powerful deceiver and we must be aware of him at work in the world and in our lives, if we let him.

Holiness means that we have to come before God through our great High Priest, Jesus. In the New Testament church, all believers are priests, but just as the Children of Israel came to God through the mediation of the priests, so we come through the mediation of Jesus. As God’s people we, today, can come into His presence to obtain mercy and find grace to help us. Unless we take “time to be holy”, and spend time with God we will not grow in holiness or likeness to Christ.

Christine Osman, former International Treasurer



A Holy People (2)

Holiness means living to please God alone. Jesus Himself reminds us of that in Matt 6:1-18 – we must live our lives before the eyes of God, not before the eyes of people so that they are impressed by us. We need to build our Christian character rather than our religious reputation. It is to God we ultimately give our account. We need to seek to live a holy life, not so that we are praised by others, but because that is what will please God, He expects it of us. Our holiness as it develops should bring glory to God, and to God alone.

Holiness however, isn't a private matter. While we need to individual and personal time with the Lord, we are part of our Christian community and we need their help and they need ours. The "assembling ourselves together to encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:25). Collectively too, we are seen in our community. What do they see? - a church living in step with God through the lives of its members?

Holiness affects our church, our town, our nation. Sin isn't just personal. Moses made it quite clear that the sins of the people affected the land God had given them. (see Leviticus 18:24-25) Although we can do all we can to uphold God's standards of holiness, the church doesn't have the authority to impose God's laws on the country. However, if we don't uphold those standards in our lives and in our churches, we have no influence to change the country or the world. How often are God's standards of holiness flouted in our literature, our films, our TV programmes – our entertainment. Peter tells us that judgement is coming, and it will begin in the "*house of the God*" (1Peter 4:17).

So holiness affects every part of our lives; holiness is our right relationship with God lived out in our lives, where and when we are. I conclude with the words of a hymn, written many years ago but still so relevant today:

*Take time to be holy, speak oft with Thy Lord,
Abide in him always, and feed on His word,
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak;
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.*

*Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone –
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be!
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.*

*Take time to be holy, let Him be thy guide.
And run not before Him whatever betide;
In joy or in sorrow still follow thy Lord,
And, looking to Jesus, still trust in His word.*

*Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul;
Each thought and each temper beneath His control;
Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love,
Thou soon shall be fitted for service above.*

W.D. Longstaff (1822-94)

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God..." (1Peter 2:9)



Psalm 106 – 1.

¹ Praise the LORD.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

² Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the LORD
or fully declare his praise?

³ Blessed are those who act justly,
who always do what is right.

⁴ Remember me, LORD, when you show favor to your people,
come to my aid when you save them,

⁵ that I may enjoy the prosperity of your chosen ones,
that I may share in the joy of your nation
and join your inheritance in giving praise.

⁶ We have sinned, even as our ancestors did;
we have done wrong and acted wickedly.

⁷ When our ancestors were in Egypt,
they gave no thought to your miracles;
they did not remember your many kindnesses,
and they rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea.

⁸ Yet he saved them for his name's sake,
to make his mighty power known.

⁹ He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up;
he led them through the depths as through a desert.

¹⁰ He saved them from the hand of the foe;
from the hand of the enemy he redeemed them.

¹¹ The waters covered their adversaries;
not one of them survived.

¹² Then they believed his promises
and sang his praise.

¹³ But they soon forgot what he had done
and did not wait for his plan to unfold.

¹⁴ In the desert they gave in to their craving;
in the wilderness they put God to the test.

¹⁵ So he gave them what they asked for,
but sent a wasting disease among them.

¹⁶ In the camp they grew envious of Moses
and of Aaron, who was consecrated to the LORD.

¹⁷ The earth opened up and swallowed Dathan;

it buried the company of Abiram.

¹⁸ Fire blazed among their followers;
a flame consumed the wicked.

¹⁹ At Horeb they made a calf
and worshiped an idol cast from metal.

²⁰ They exchanged their glorious God
for an image of a bull, which eats grass.

²¹ They forgot the God who saved them,
who had done great things in Egypt,

²² miracles in the land of Ham
and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.

²³ So he said he would destroy them—
had not Moses, his chosen one,
stood in the breach before him
to keep his wrath from destroying them.

²⁴ Then they despised the pleasant land;
they did not believe his promise.

²⁵ They grumbled in their tents
and did not obey the LORD.

²⁶ So he swore to them with uplifted hand
that he would make them fall in the wilderness,

²⁷ make their descendants fall among the nations
and scatter them throughout the lands.

**Psalm 106 – 2.**

- ²⁸ They yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor
and ate sacrifices offered to lifeless gods;
²⁹ they aroused the LORD's anger by their wicked deeds,
and a plague broke out among them.
³⁰ But Phinehas stood up and intervened,
and the plague was checked.
³¹ This was credited to him as righteousness
for endless generations to come.
³² By the waters of Meribah they angered the LORD,
and trouble came to Moses because of them;
³³ for they rebelled against the Spirit of God,
and rash words came from Moses' lips.
- ³⁴ They did not destroy the peoples
as the LORD had commanded them,
³⁵ but they mingled with the nations
and adopted their customs.
³⁶ They worshiped their idols,
which became a snare to them.
³⁷ They sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to false gods.
³⁸ They shed innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters,
whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan,
and the land was desecrated by their blood.
³⁹ They defiled themselves by what they did;
by their deeds they prostituted themselves.
- ⁴⁰ Therefore the LORD was angry with his people
and abhorred his inheritance.
⁴¹ He gave them into the hands of the nations,
and their foes ruled over them.
⁴² Their enemies oppressed them
and subjected them to their power.
⁴³ Many times he delivered them,
but they were bent on rebellion
and they wasted away in their sin.
⁴⁴ Yet he took note of their distress
when he heard their cry;
⁴⁵ for their sake he remembered his covenant
and out of his great love he relented.

⁴⁶ He caused all who held them captive
to show them mercy.

⁴⁷ Save us, LORD our God,
and gather us from the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.

⁴⁸ Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.

Let all the people say, "Amen!"

Praise the LORD.



Left overs

I make delicious Biryani (flavoured rice cooked with meat.) and those who have sampled it will vouch for it. And whenever I make it, my daughter asks me: "Mummy, is there more?" She wants leftovers... to eat it the next day, she wants it to last a few more days.

When Jesus fed the five thousand, the disciples did not expect leftovers. After the crowds had been fed there were 12 baskets of leftovers. One for each! How thoughtful of Jesus. And what a mind blowing life principle in the kingdom of Jesus.

As children of God, we are citizens of God's kingdom. And we abide by the rules of that kingdom.

This world says....give but not all, make sure you keep something for yourself.

God's kingdom principle says give your all and keep nothing for yourself.

The world principle does not satisfy those we serve, and in turn we remain unsatisfied.

The kingdom principle satisfies the served...and left with leftovers to serve ourself.

Luke 9,,17 "They all ate and were satisfied and the disciples packed up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over."

The disciples were served with satisfying 12 baskets of leftovers.

When we give....our time, money, our career, our families, our desires, our efforts, and empty ourselves, that's when we start experiencing the satisfaction of being served the leftovers... That's the principle of God's kingdom.... my friend.

Are you giving your all? Emptying yourself in the service of God's kingdom? Take heart! You will experience the satisfaction of being served leftovers in full basket measure.

Jesus cares. We can't out give Jesus. When we spend our life for others, our needs will be met.

"My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus!" Philippians 4,19



The Walk of Faith is No Cake Walk!

Philippians, Chapter 1: 12-30 Salvation is a free gift of God, in Jesus. The life journey manifesting my salvation will be full of challenges; each one actually an opportunity to demonstrate my faith in Jesus, my Lord.

Paul wrote to the believers at Philippi encouraging them in their faith walk, giving his own testimony. The church there was started by Paul and Timothy. Like new born babies, the believers needed to be nurtured to mature and stay in faith. Experiences in advancing the gospel have to be shared to encourage them especially when there is persecution, opposition, confusion and deception.

Paul wrote this letter from a Roman prison. He says in *verse 12* *"Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel."* Rather strange! Paul was not angry, depressed, disillusioned, discouraged and spiteful of being a prisoner. For Paul every circumstance was an opportunity to serve Christ – even as a prisoner. The prison guards were his captive audience. They in turn were the couriers of the Good News seeing Paul's faith in Jesus. We do not determine our situations to preach the Gospel but accept every opportunity to share Christ's atoning sacrifice and love for man and woman. God has a purpose for me in every circumstance. Exalting Jesus in trying circumstances reveals in whom I trust, in whose fellowship I am in and who is inside me. This is possible when I give God first place in my life, thinking and acting.

Paul makes a profound statement about his/our life in this world in *verse 21* *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."* I exalt the Christ in me through my life. To live is for Christ, for His purpose, for His Good News, for His Grace. Manifesting Him. The purpose of my life is to bring glory to Him through surrendering my life (physical, mental and spiritual) to God. My body in which I live is a living sacrifice for Jesus. Living yet dead to sin. My life is not mine. I give my life to serve God and His people for what He has done for me; saved my soul. It is an expression of my gratitude. There is a reason and meaning for my life in this world. My life is not an aimless wandering. I serve Jesus through serving others by sharing and manifesting my salvation in Jesus and His love for me (*John 13:35* *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"*). To die is to depart from this world to be in His presence forever, after I complete His work in this world as per His calling in my life and plan.

When I face oppression because of following Jesus, does the Lord want me to retaliate? Paul's pointed advice is in *verse 28* *"without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God."* Jesus is in-charge of my actions and outcomes. I merely follow His instructions. Those who are offended because of my faith are dealt (destroyed) by God. Justice and retribution are in God's hands; not in mine. The battle is His and not mine. I am at peace. (*Romans 12:19* *"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord".*)

In summary; expect, accept and rejoice persecution/rejection when you manifest the Christ in you. When Christ is first in your life, you will be lonely by worldly standards. You are an odd man/woman when your behaviour demonstrates the joy of salvation. Let Him deal with your situation and not stress yourself to deal with it with your wisdom. Surrender the circumstance in prayer to God to deal with it through yourself or others according to his will, wish, plan and purpose. Be at peace in the Lord.

Whatever be my situation; my attitude and behaviour will manifest my faith in Jesus, my Lord



Fulfilment of the Word

Jesus reads the passage from Isaiah 61:1 *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. The assembly of the day holds its breath: 'This word of Scripture that you have just heard is fulfilled today.'"*

But little by little, curiosity gives way to anger. Without waiting for the end of the sermon, the public leaves the synagogue. At the exit, the critics are heard. He look to be the son of Joseph and Mary ? It is very good to feed the hungry, to clothe those who are naked, but it could do for those here rather than elsewhere.

After praising Jesus, they get angry. They push him out of town to an escarpment. Whoever we are, we are always tempted to imprison God and his Messiah in the circle of our churches and our groups, our certainties and our traditions, in the ghetto of our confessional institutions ... For a number of prophets, the Word could be announced only elsewhere.

God is bigger than our horizons. Today, it comes in the middle of our lives. And this God of the present always surprises us. The word is fulfilled today. How to see this word come true in our everyday lives. To achieve this, I see two important conditions : to know the Word of God and to look at events through the lens of faith.

It seems difficult to know the fulfilment of the Word without taking the time to think about it. It seems difficult, to see this Word of God be fulfilled in the events of the dailies without reading it carefully. It is the faithful and daily prayer that gives us the grace to concretely receive the Word. The people of Nazareth hoped that Jesus would do wonders, but Jesus had chosen his true identity. Before becoming a physician, he was God's presence in the midst of his people.

These words shocked the Nazarenes. Sometimes, only silence is possible. If hearts remain closed to the message of faith, it is better to keep calm. Faith should not be imposed, but suggested. If someone rejects Jesus, he will go elsewhere. Faced with the rejection of his compatriots, Jesus went to his Passover, by the cross and the resurrection

Pascal Machefer – country leader of TLM France



United in our mission

I don't know about you, but I am really excited about our global strategy. I am hungry to make a difference and be innovative - it is something I am enjoying getting up in the morning for. I have the cover of the strategy as my desktop wallpaper on my computer and it motivates and inspires me to get on with it! One thing is certain though - no one of us can achieve the strategy alone. It is something that we will have to do **together** and as a whole Global Fellowship work in **unity and harmony**. Each playing their part.

Following Jesus Christ, The Leprosy Mission seeks to bring about transformation; breaking the chains of leprosy, empowering people to attain healing, dignity and life in all its fullness.

God wants His people to be of one mind and one united - working together as a unit to achieve our mission. The Bible has a lot to say about the importance of unity in ministry.

Philippians 4:2-3 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have laboured side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. (ESV)

In this short passage, the word 'syn' meaning 'together' is used 5 times. Paul appeals with Euodia and Syntyche to make up whatever differences they have. **Discord hurts the work of the Gospel.**

In *Philippians 2:2* - Paul also appeals for synergy, for unity - *complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. (ESV)*

In the days of the Roman Empire, the Roman Army used a shield wall (known as the 'tortoise') to make great gains against other armies. The 'tortoise' enabled them to walk in lock step - as one and it was very effective in battle. Each person in the 'tortoise' had a job to do - to keep in step and in sync with everyone else. That is the only way they would make progress and if everyone did their part, every other person was protected from the arrows and spears of the enemy.

As a Global Fellowship, we need to have this same unity. Of course, we have to play the part that God has given us to do, we don't all have the same role with the mission of TLM - *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office. So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. (Romans 12:4-5)*

One translation of Philippians 4:2 says *"think the same as the Lord"*.

What does it mean to think the same as Jesus?

1 Peter 2:23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

Luke 23:34 And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do".

Reflection:

- Do you willingly work alongside others or do you have habit of opting out if something is not done in the way you would like it done?
- Do you look down on others in the Global Fellowship? Do you think others are less valuable?

Jannine Ebenso: Head of Quality Assurance, TLM International Office



Attitude determines altitude!

Since last year I've been doing various "word studies" during my quiet times and have really enjoyed doing them, it's something I'm going to be doing for a while.

What is "word studies". This is how I do it : Reading a portion of scripture and then taking words that tweak my mind and follow the theme that develops from that.

Philippians 4:4-9 What a lovely passage of scripture and many of the thoughts are repeated over and over in other portions of The Bible. For this article I'll only comment on this portion:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. The key word for me was ANXIOUS!

We live in a nation that has gone from one crisis to another virtually all my life and it never seems to stop. We have so making reasons to become anxious; and it seems like our rulers through the decades have a never ending resource of anxiety moments to load us in our lives. Anxiety disturbs and disrupts every area of our lives: our emotional stability, our physical health and every level and type of relationships we have with people. Jesus said *"...in this world you will have trouble..."* Paul gives us a few steps to overcome anxiety.

1. Prayer

...but in every situation, by prayer and petition...

Why would prayer help? Because I have a Heavenly Father who cares for me!

1 Peter 5:6-7 NIVUK "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

Not my government but the creator of everything, cares for me! There's a catch! My anxiety levels are determined by my humility posture! No humility no God-given peace. Humility is the key, it means that I voluntarily become totally dependent on my Heavenly Father, I hand my life over to Him and trust Him because He is my God! Anxiety is overcome by ...prayer and petition and thanksgiving ...

A few ideas of how to deal with anxiety:

1. PRAYER - Go to Our Heavenly Father, talk to Him for who He is and then trust Him!
2. PETITION - Tell Him your whole story, get it off your chest and into His loving care.
3. THANKSGIVING - Give Our Heavenly Father thanks for what He's done for us in the past and for what He is about to do for you in the future. ...under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time...
4. in due time... Our Heavenly Father will deal with our situation and relieve us of our anxiety.

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.

**Psalm 107 – 1.**

¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

² Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,
³ those he gathered from the lands,
from east and west, from north and south.

⁴ Some wandered in desert wastelands,
finding no way to a city where they could settle.

⁵ They were hungry and thirsty,
and their lives ebbed away.

⁶ Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.

⁷ He led them by a straight way
to a city where they could settle.

⁸ Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind,

⁹ for he satisfies the thirsty
and fills the hungry with good things.

¹⁰ Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness,
prisoners suffering in iron chains,

¹¹ because they rebelled against God's commands
and despised the plans of the Most High.

¹² So he subjected them to bitter labor;
they stumbled, and there was no one to help.

¹³ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.

¹⁴ He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness,
and broke away their chains.

¹⁵ Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind,

¹⁶ for he breaks down gates of bronze
and cuts through bars of iron.

¹⁷ Some became fools through their rebellious ways
and suffered affliction because of their iniquities.

¹⁸ They loathed all food
and drew near the gates of death.

¹⁹ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.

²⁰ He sent out his word and healed them;

he rescued them from the grave.

²¹ Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind.

²² Let them sacrifice thank offerings
and tell of his works with songs of joy.

**Psalm 107 – 2.**

²³ Some went out on the sea in ships;
they were merchants on the mighty waters.
²⁴ They saw the works of the LORD,
his wonderful deeds in the deep.
²⁵ For he spoke and stirred up a tempest
that lifted high the waves.
²⁶ They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths;
in their peril their courage melted away.
²⁷ They reeled and staggered like drunkards;
they were at their wits' end.
²⁸ Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
and he brought them out of their distress.
²⁹ He stilled the storm to a whisper;
the waves of the sea were hushed.
³⁰ They were glad when it grew calm,
and he guided them to their desired haven.
³¹ Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind.
³² Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people
and praise him in the council of the elders.
³³ He turned rivers into a desert,
flowing springs into thirsty ground,
³⁴ and fruitful land into a salt waste,
because of the wickedness of those who lived there.
³⁵ He turned the desert into pools of water
and the parched ground into flowing springs;
³⁶ there he brought the hungry to live,
and they founded a city where they could settle.
³⁷ They sowed fields and planted vineyards
that yielded a fruitful harvest;
³⁸ he blessed them, and their numbers greatly increased,
and he did not let their herds diminish.
³⁹ Then their numbers decreased, and they were humbled
by oppression, calamity and sorrow;
⁴⁰ he who pours contempt on nobles
made them wander in a trackless waste.
⁴¹ But he lifted the needy out of their affliction
and increased their families like flocks.
⁴² The upright see and rejoice,
but all the wicked shut their mouths.
⁴³ Let the one who is wise heed these things
and ponder the loving deeds of the LORD.



With God in the valley

We love the mountain experiences with God! To be high with clean air and an unlimited and clear view is so wonderful! To meet God, to feel his presence and to hear his voice! - We know them from the Bible, the mountain experiences; the mountains of Ararat, the mountains of Sinai and Nebo, the mountain of Carmel, the mountain of Transfiguration, the mount of Golgotha, the mount of Olives and many more. All those mountains were holy places of God's presence and revelations, where people had life-changing experiences. - We love the spiritual mountain experiences and to be on the top! God lets us see new things, hear his words and receive new directions for our lives and our work. But honestly, we are more often between the hills in the valley, than on the hill top. But then it's good to know that the God of the mountain is also the God of the valley.

In the Book of Psalms king David tells us a lot of his many valley experiences. He was sure that God didn't stay on the mountain but followed him in the valleys of his life: *"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;" Ps 23: 4* - Often we even discover surprisingly blessings in the valley. The dark valley is full of springs and streaming water *"they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools". Ps 84:6.* David walked through many valleys! He describes it openly in many psalms:

- The valley of life's question. David often ask God: Why? How? Where are you? *"Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?" Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."* Ps 42: 9-11.
When you have questions, don't forget that God is present in that valley with his guidance and answers.
- The deep valley of sin. The painful experience of sin in David's life was almost to end his ministry and his fellowship with God. Fortunately God was present in his valley with forgiveness and rehabilitation after David's repentance. *"For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. 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 of my sin".*
Don't forget that God is present in that dark valley with forgiveness through Jesus Christ if we are humble and confessing.
- The valley of troubles: *"The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; Ps 34:19.* We can read about David's many troubles in the books of Samuel in the Old Testament but his testimony was that God was faithful and present in his troubles.
Don't forget that God is with you and will be your comforter.
- The valley of Baka or the valley of Weeping: *"they pass through the Valley of Baka or Weeping, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools" Ps 84:6.* We can read about David: *"So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep" 1 Sam. 30: 4.*
In your tears don't forget God is with you to change the situation.
- The valley of the shadow of death *"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;" Ps 23: 4* KJV translates: *"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil".* Death is just a shadow, but this valley is deep, dark and lonely, full of fear and uncertainty. What a comfort to know that we are not forgotten and on our own. No, God is close to us though Jesus Christ!
Don't forget that he knows the way forward and we are in good hands!



The salt of the earth

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.” Matthew 5: 13 When I read from the Gospel of Matthew chapter 5 about the salt of this earth, it reminded me again what was my life in 2018, have I obeyed Jesus to be the salt of the earth, to make any difference in Nepal or lost its saltiness?

Jesus used the concept of salt to refer to the role of His followers in the world. Salt had two purposes, it used to preserve food and also was used as a flavor enhancer, to change the taste of food. It teaches me as followers of Christ stand out as those who enhance the flavor of life in this world. We Christians, living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in obedience to Christ, will inevitably influence the world for good, as a salt has a positive influence on the flavor of the food it seasons. Outreach to the area where this salt has not been there, that is the aim of my service to Nepal. When Jesus Christ taught His followers to be salt of this earth, He did not mean it was only their teaching or their morality, but their whole person, their whole life to change the people surrounding them wherever they are. So, it reminds me whatever I talk, work, play and eat..., do others observe me differently? Have they been changed after seeing Jesus' life (an abundant life) in me? This is a hard question for myself.

I would like to share some changes of two Nepali colleagues, who have worked in different departments in the hospital. Last year when I started working in the hospital, the Lord gave me a few months to build up good relationship with staff from different departments, and then He guided me to achieve new activities and rehabilitation program for the leprosy patients, first of all was to set up a leprosy care team from different departments, to have regular meeting in order to have close coordination and cooperation with each other as well as to improve the quality of care for leprosy service. As I set up a rotation system for coordinating the meeting, so every department head would have the chance to take up such coordination job in terms. As I knew one department head was quite against such system, and always used different excuses to be absent from the meeting. That time I felt quite disappointed and started praying for his cooperation and motivation to learn. After 6 months, I have seen the changes of his attitude and motivation, he became interested in such new system and willing to coordinate. He told me with my support in last few months, he realized that he has learnt so much and is happy to see things change.

Meanwhile, I have started many new activities for leprosy patients to learn and support each other. So, I requested one staff from the outpatient department to come to the ward every morning for two hours to teach the inpatients. Because this female staff is very skillful in leprosy teaching as she has been working in leprosy service over 25 years, her experience and contribution to the care was very effective. I have seen her big change over last year after coming to support the leprosy teaching. The first time I met her was in the weekly prayer meeting, she was very quiet, no eye contact, never share any prayer needs. Just came to sit for 10 minutes and then gone. So, I knew she is a believer, but I can observe how unhappy she was, no job satisfaction, no confidence, didn't feel she was useful or helpful to others. However, after she came to support the leprosy teaching, I found her changed a lot, she became very cheerful and started sharing prayer needs in the prayer meeting, she found her confidence back through such small job, and the important point is she knew God cares for her life.

Yuek Ming Poon (Hong Kong) Worked with TLMI for 22 years. 1993 – 2000 seconded to INF to work in Nepal in leprosy clinic as Clinic Manager. 2002 – 2004 worked with TLM as POID Technical Officer in India, 2005 – 2012 worked with TLM as Country Leader in China and Laos, 2013 -2015 worked with TLM in PNG as Capacity Building Advisor. June 2015 left TLM and then studied in Vancouver Regent Bible College from September 15 to April 2016, and then back to HK involving in Nepali ministry. 2017 back to Nepal as Leprosy Nursing Advisor in Green Pastures Hospital with INF.



Everyone has his cross !

Our daily life is often not paved with flowers or unfolds like a calm river. Many pass through turbulence not easy to face. There is sickness, the loss of a loved one, relationship problems with spouse, children, associates, the work, the weariness, to be fed up to the back teeth... As we say willingly, each one carries his cross. But this cross can be very heavy to bear. For some it is more severe than for others. I have just finished reading a book of a person who has lived through terrible aggressions both in his body and in his soul. She concludes her life experience as follows: "I have long trivialized what had happened to me by saying that there are worse than me. What is worse is to minimise oneself. We all deserve respect, justice, love and freedom."

At the beginning of a new year, when we can be depressed, it is good to remember that we no longer need to carry our burdens alone. Christ knows our situation. He knows it is not easy. He offers to be our support as it is mentioned in *Matthew 11:28* "Come to me, all you who are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

A chacun sa croix !

Notre quotidien n'est souvent pas pavé de fleurs ou ne se déroule comme un fleuve tranquille ! Beaucoup passent par des turbulences pas faciles à affronter. Il y a la maladie, la perte d'un être cher, les problèmes relationnels avec son conjoint, ses enfants, son entourage, le travail, la lassitude, le raz le bol... Comme on le dit volontiers, chacun porte sa croix. Mais cette croix peut être très lourde à porter. Pour certains, elle est plus lourde que pour d'autres.

Je viens de terminer la lecture d'un livre d'une personne qui a vécu des agressions terribles tant dans son corps que dans son âme. Elle conclut son expérience de vie comme suit : « J'ai longtemps banalisé ce qui m'était arrivé en me disant qu'il y avait pire que moi. Ce qu'il y a de pire, c'est de se banaliser soi-même. Nous méritons tous le respect, la justice, l'amour et la liberté. »

Au commencement d'une année nouvelle, où la déprime peut nous gagner, il est bon de se rappeler que nous ne sommes plus seuls pour porter nos fardeaux. Le Christ connaît notre situation. Il sait que ce n'est pas facile. Il se propose d'être notre soutien. « *Venez à moi, vous qui êtes fatigués et chargés, et je vous donnerai du repos* » nous assure-t-il dans *Matthieu 11 :28*

Eric Chollet - I'm retired since four 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.



Good News

Isaiah 52,7

I recently came across the following that had laid buried in one of my files for 40 years! In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God. One day, God told Moses what was on his mind and Moses took it down on two enormous slabs of rock. When God had finished dictating and Moses had finished chiselling he tucked this first edition under his arms and set off down the mountain.

But the Word was heavy, the mountain was steep, and Moses was a long time coming. By the time he reached the plain, the children of Israel were no longer inclined to serious reading, and had given themselves to a god of gold. Moses – with anger in his eyes and tears in his heart – shattered the great rocks on the ground.

He wrote it all again: this time on skins, soft and pliable, light and lean – the first paperback edition of the Word; easy to slip into a pocket... or onto a camel... or under a bed... or into a drawer or... tell me – where did you last see that book? This time the Word got lost.

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign in Jerusalem, and he had never heard of the Word. One day, some workmen restoring the temple for its forth centenary, found the book and gave it to the High Priest, who gave it to the King. The King, in his excitement, tore his coat and Israel soon celebrated the biggest revival in her history. In the office and across the counter they told each other “there’s been nothing like this since Samuel’s time!” But it didn’t last, and the Word was soon forgotten.

But God didn’t forget. He kept on publishing his Word – a new edition for every generation.

Isaiah was the editor of the ‘comfort’ edition *“though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson they shall be like wool. In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the desert highway for our God!”*¹

Jeremiah thundered rebuke “How can you say we are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Wise men shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken. Therefore they shall fall among the fallen; when I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the Lord.”²

Malachi’s headline foretold deliverance *“The Lord shall suddenly come to his temple. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight says the Lord”*³

The ages passed.... Unexpectedly, the author made a personal appearance. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory – full of grace and truth. He filled stone jars with wine; told gripping tales and talked to doubtful women. He touched people who were considered untouchable. He spoke to foreigners and dined with people of bad reputation. He referred to God as Daddy, offending the religious leaders who thought they alone had the ear of the Almighty. As if a son should not know his own father!

Therefore the Word, already broken on the ground and lost in deep crypts, was once more broken on a cross and buried in a cave to fester and decay. But God republished it – his extra special final edition: intact, complete and indestructible. And the Gospel newsboys – Peter and Paul, Andrew and Augustine, Carey and Livingstone delivered it across the face of the earth.

Good News is still news. Bright as the *Sun*⁴ revealing as the *Mirror*, topical as the *Times*, urgent as the *Express* and dependable as the *Guardian*. There are news stands at every corner of the world.

But where are God’s Newsboys now?

Trevor Durston - General Director from 1993-2006. Now retired and working as a volunteer speaker for TLM.

¹ Isaiah 1,18 and 40,3

² Jeremiah 8,8 and following

³ Malachi 3,1 and 3,12

⁴ words in italics are the names of UK newspapers



"Mourn with those who mourn."

Romans 12:15

"Jesus wept." John 11:35

Mother tried not to worry. The village was safe and the children often got so involved with their games that they forgot the time. In spite of this all, she could not help casting anxious glances at the window. It was beginning to get dark and her 7 year old daughter had never come home so late.

Almost an hour after the agreed time she came running into the house. Red-eyed and out of breath she blurted out an apology. Mom saw that she was upset so she tried her best to calm her and encourage her to tell exactly what had happened.

"We were playing at my friend's house with her beautiful dolls. Just before it was time for me to come home, one of the dolls' leg broke off."

"So you stayed on to help her fix it, that was very kind of you."

"Oh, no, mommy, we could not fix it, I helped her cry."

There are times when we would like to "fix" things - specially in other peoples' lives. It makes us feel important, useful, needed.

Sometimes it is possible and necessary to get involved and fix things or help in situations.

In other cases we cannot do much to deal with the problem, but our presence, a handshake, a hug can communicate "I care, you are not alone, I may not fully understand your suffering but I feel for and with you."

Thought Do I know someone who is mourning? How can I be the carrier of something of the presence of Jesus in his life?

Prayer "Father help me to be honest with myself so that I can understand my needs and become sensitive to the needs of others."

Silvano Perott - 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.



Psalm 108

A song. A psalm of David.

¹ My heart, O God, is steadfast;
I will sing and make music with all my soul.

² Awake, harp and lyre!
I will awaken the dawn.

³ I will praise you, LORD, among the nations;
I will sing of you among the peoples.

⁴ For great is your love, higher than the heavens;
your faithfulness reaches to the skies.

⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
let your glory be over all the earth.

⁶ Save us and help us with your right hand,
that those you love may be delivered.

⁷ God has spoken from his sanctuary:
"In triumph I will parcel out Shechem
and measure off the Valley of Sukkoth.

⁸ Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine;
Ephraim is my helmet,
Judah is my scepter.

⁹ Moab is my washbasin,
on Edom I toss my sandal;
over Philistia I shout in triumph."

¹⁰ Who will bring me to the fortified city?
Who will lead me to Edom?

¹¹ Is it not you, God, you who have rejected us
and no longer go out with our armies?

¹² Give us aid against the enemy,
for human help is worthless.

¹³ With God we will gain the victory,
and he will trample down our enemies.



Psalm 109

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

- ¹ My God, whom I praise,
do not remain silent,
² for people who are wicked and deceitful
have opened their mouths against me;
they have spoken against me with lying tongues.
³ With words of hatred they surround me;
they attack me without cause.
⁴ In return for my friendship they accuse me,
but I am a man of prayer.
⁵ They repay me evil for good,
and hatred for my friendship.
⁶ Appoint someone evil to oppose my enemy;
let an accuser stand at his right hand.
⁷ When he is tried, let him be found guilty,
and may his prayers condemn him.
⁸ May his days be few;
may another take his place of leadership.
⁹ May his children be fatherless
and his wife a widow.
¹⁰ May his children be wandering beggars;
may they be driven from their ruined homes.
¹¹ May a creditor seize all he has;
may strangers plunder the fruits of his labor.
¹² May no one extend kindness to him
or take pity on his fatherless children.
¹³ May his descendants be cut off,
their names blotted out from the next generation.
¹⁴ May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD;
may the sin of his mother never be blotted out.
¹⁵ May their sins always remain before the LORD,
that he may blot out their name from the earth.
¹⁶ For he never thought of doing a kindness,
but hounded to death the poor

and the needy and the brokenhearted.

¹⁷ He loved to pronounce a curse—
may it come back on him.

He found no pleasure in blessing—
may it be far from him.

¹⁸ He wore cursing as his garment;
it entered into his body like water,
into his bones like oil.

¹⁹ May it be like a cloak wrapped about him,
like a belt tied forever around him.

²⁰ May this be the LORD's payment to my accusers,
to those who speak evil of me.

²¹ But you, Sovereign LORD,
help me for your name's sake;
out of the goodness of your love, deliver me.

²² For I am poor and needy,
and my heart is wounded within me.

²³ I fade away like an evening shadow;
I am shaken off like a locust.

²⁴ My knees give way from fasting;
my body is thin and gaunt.

²⁵ I am an object of scorn to my accusers;
when they see me, they shake their heads.

²⁶ Help me, LORD my God;
save me according to your unfailing love.

²⁷ Let them know that it is your hand,
that you, LORD, have done it.

²⁸ While they curse, may you bless;
may those who attack me be put to shame,
but may your servant rejoice.

²⁹ May my accusers be clothed with disgrace
and wrapped in shame as in a cloak.

³⁰ With my mouth I will greatly extol the LORD;
in the great throng of worshipers I will praise him.

³¹ For he stands at the right hand of the needy,
to save their lives from those who would condemn them.



‘We all have a story’

2 Corinthians 5:20 “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us...”

I’m not sure about other cultures, but in 21st Century Britain I think people are more likely to listen to a story than read a Bible. Years ago we might have used scripture to convince a sceptic. Today people are more likely to say “So tell me what Christ means in *your* life!”

We might say, “*There’s nothing special about my life... what could I say?*” But we all have a story, and those who have come to Christ and made life’s journey with Him have plenty to say! To deny it is to say that God has had little effect in us!

Most scriptural stories are written in the ‘third person’ (“*He did this, she said that...*”). There’s only one book in the Bible which is written almost entirely in the first person (“*I did this, I said that...*”). It’s the book of Nehemiah, -have a look and see him telling his own story. But many other Bible books have some personal testimonies: Psalms has many, like the first verses of Psalm 40, or the comments and memories in Psalm 118. There are snippets too in other books (e.g., Ecclesiastes 1:12-18, Hosea 3:1-3, Jonah 2:2-9). Perhaps the richest mine for vibrant first-hand accounts is the book of Acts. For instance, Saul’s conversion is told in chapter 9, but he tells it again in chapters 22 and 26 with added excitement and detail! Or Peter, accounting for his new-found view of the Gentiles in chapter 11. Then there’s the word “we” in Acts 16:10-17, -Luke is *there*, part of the story he’s telling!

In John 9 the (formerly!) blind man’s repeated account of what happened to him verges on the comic! Then there’s the woman in John 4, who goes to tell everyone what had happened, 4:28-30 and 39; but by the end they are believing for themselves (v. 42)! There are also more subtle evidences of first-hand accounts. Who told Matthew about Jesus’s wilderness temptations? He must have done! Luke says he sought out eye witnesses (Luke 1:1-4). And scholars suggest that much of Mark’s gospel is probably Peter’s first hand story!

What is your favourite Bible story? How about spending some time re-telling it in the words and mouths of the key person? What was it like for Naaman, in *his* words, from *the inside*, or for Daniel, or Joseph or YOU?! We all have a story. It may not be heroic, it may be the story of a career, or a conversion, of God’s guidance, or His resources to fight leprosy and its effects. He saw you there; he picked you up, took you, equipped you, forgave you, loved you, journeyed with you.

Somebody needs to hear your story; it may lead them to Christ (John 4:39, 42!). I think that’s what Paul meant in the context of 2 Corinthians 5:20. It’s about weakness and suffering and misunderstanding; about God putting His treasure in jars of clay, His strength made perfect in weakness. It’s about you and me, our testimony as “*Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us*”.

I must practise my story, to “*be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have*.” (1 Peter 3:15). I’m sure yours is more exciting than mine! Every blessing,

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 chaired the Spiritual Ministry MAWG, and is also able to serve TLMI by leading retreat days and other such things as opportunity allows. He now pastors a Church in South-West England part time, and continues as a volunteer speaker for TLM.



**“Do not withhold good from those who deserve it,
when it is in your power to act.”**

Proverbs 3:27

Some time ago I did something that has repeated coming to my mind and that I have deeply regretted.

I had parked my car on the street and came to the parking meter to pay for my parking time. This actual parking meter did not accept cash, only credit cards. At the parking meter stood an elderly immigrant gentleman with a desperate look in his eyes. He wanted to pay for his parking, but he just had cash. He asked me if I could pay for his parking with my credit card and he would give me the coin he had in his hand.

Myself being in a hurry (a very bad excuse, I know...) just ignored him, paid for my parking and went away.

I could have helped this man very easily, but I didn't. And believe me, I have felt so bad about myself ever since this happened.

And God has reminded me of this word from the Scriptures, saying in a very clear way what we should do. I had the power to act, but I didn't. I failed to help a fellow-man that was in need. I have asked the Lord for forgiveness and I just hope I'll meet this man again and ask for his forgiveness as well.

God has showed us in a very clear way that mercy and compassion are fundamental things in His Kingdom. And whatever we can do for our fellow-men is what we can do for Jesus.

I've been taught a very serious lesson and I just pray that I will do and act differently in the future.

God Bless!



90 for ninety

Hebrews 12:1-3

The author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote this letter of encouragement (using some of the best Greek in the New Testament) to believers who were under huge pressure to lose sight of Jesus Christ as their only high priest, to give up the struggle and to return to a form of Judaism.

He uses expressions like *"let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess" (10:23)*, *"so do not throw away your confidence ..." (10:35)*, *"you need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised" (10:36)* and *"we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved" (10:39)*.

Having listed many faith heroes in the pre-Christian era (Heb 11), the author uses imagery of an athletic contest in a great amphitheatre. The cloud of witnesses is the heroes of chapter 11 – not mere spectators, but inspiring examples: witnesses who bear testimony to the power of faith and God's faithfulness. Christian life is pictured as a long-distance race, rather than a short sprint. Some Hebrew Christians were tempted to drop out of the contest because of hardship and persecution.

Our eyes need to be fixed on Jesus, the goal and objective of our faith, like a long-distance runner would concentrate on the finish line (even in his/her mind's eye, as it may not be in sight for a while yet). Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith: our faith has its beginning in Him and is also completed in Him; He is both the start and end of the race. Jesus is the supreme witness who has already completed the race and has overcome. He endured the cross and secured our eternal redemption. He is glorified at the Father's right hand. As with Jesus, the humiliation of present hardship and suffering for the sake of the gospel is far outweighed by the prospect of future glory. Christ suffered infinitely more than any of his disciples is asked to suffer. This encourages us when we become weary and are tempted to become discouraged (Is 40:28-31).

During June last year my Dad, who had just celebrated his 90th birthday, passed away. Six days after he died, I was due to run the Comrades Marathon, a 90 km foot race between the cities of Pietermaritzburg and Durban. I had trained for seven months to be ready and really wrestled with the question whether I should withdraw. My sister kindly offered to be with our Mom during the weekend of the race and she (and a number of my close friends) encouraged me to run the race as a tribute to my Dad: 90 km in memory of his ninety years.

The race took on a new meaning. As I carefully considered the challenge, I prayed that the Lord would guide my thoughts during the long day ahead. The powerful picture that stayed with me through most of race day, and also as I finally entered the huge football stadium at the finish, was of my Dad, now being a member of the heavenly cloud of witnesses, watching on and cheering, as I concluded the epic journey. Tears of joy flowed freely as I crossed the finish line!



Does your heart yearn?

A month ago, my local beach was given the “seal of approval” by a moulting elephant seal all the way from the sub-Antarctic ocean. He stayed on the beach, waiting for his new fur to grow. Those of us who are trying to shed the weight we accumulated over Christmas are envious, as he didn’t eat for four weeks and by the end of his stay, he looked sleek and healthy. We’re used to the Cape fur seals, which occasionally get tangled in the fishing nets, but this huge seal was unusual and attracted large crowds. He seemed quite unperturbed by his rock-star status and each day he moved closer to the main bathing area.

Earlier this week, he headed into the water and started his journey towards Marion Island, a marathon swim of more than 2 000 kilometres. Marion Island is a mere dot in the Southern Ocean, but he’ll find it without any bother. [Marion Island is home to South Africa’s only active volcano, so my beach probably seemed like quite a tranquil place to spend his Summer holidays].

In Job 38, verses 16-18, we read: “Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the deepest darkness? Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this.”

Chapters 38 – 41 of Job offer us a glimpse of the mysteries of creation. These pages abound in wonderful images. It’s hard to choose a favourite, but for someone who enjoys the mountains of the Cape, Chapter 38 vs 14 is near the top of my list: *“The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment.”* and because I enjoy the desert skies at night, the question in verse 31 is especially captivating: *“Can you loosen Orion’s belt?”*

Do take time to read through these four chapters, as they offer a refreshing view of God’s sovereignty and His goodness. I am sure that you will find verses that resonate with the things that are precious to you.

Job longed to encounter God, to question Him about his suffering. In these chapters God says that we encounter Him every time we contemplate the tiny and enormous things of His creation – constellations and dew drops are equally beyond our powers of creation.

The visit from the Antarctic seal was a vivid reminder of His intimate love for His creatures, guiding them over migrations of many thousands of kilometres, making sure that they find food, making sure they understand the times of the flooding of the Nile. How much more will He provide for you, His beloved child?

As we will soon be celebrating Easter, let me finish with these words from Job, which feature in the soprano’s opening to Part III of Handel’s *Messiah* - I am sure many of us will be attending or participating in performances in the coming weeks [Job 19: 25 -27]

I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth.

And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;

I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

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.



Do you care, what others say about you?

Read Mark 3:9-12,20 -35

Recently, someone who was very agitated with me, used the following tactic to get at me: "Do you realize, people are talking about you behind your back!?"—trying to intimidate me. I thought: "If they really only knew all about me....."

CARE WHAT OTHERS THINK/SAY ABOUT YOU?! RATHER CARE WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT U!!

1) Mark 3:11 – We learn what the evil spirits said of Jesus!

"You are the Son of God!" – But Jesus wants no affirmation from the demonic world....

2) Mark 3:21 – We learn what Jesus' family said of him!

"He is out of His mind!" – But Jesus would rather be about His Heavenly Father's business...

3) Mark 3:22,30 – We learn what the religious fraternity said of Jesus!

"He is possessed by Beelzebul" and *"by the prince of demons He casts out demons!"*

"He has an unclean spirit!" – Jesus earnestly explains eternal spiritual realities with them(+us)!

4) Mark 3:35 – We learn what Jesus says about his spiritual family!

"For whoever does the will of God, he/she is My brother and sister and mother!"

What an eternal privilege, joy and blessing it is, to belong to Jesus' Family and to do His will!

5) Matth.5:3-12 (The Beautitudes) 8 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FAMILY MEMBERS OF JESUS!

-Poor and humble in spirit (cf Is.57:15)

- Mourn and grieve about personal sin (we are all Prodigal sons or daughters!)

-Meek (but not weak)

-Hunger and thirst for righteousness (cf Matth.6:33)

-Merciful and compassionate (cf Lament.3:22,23)

- Pure in heart (cf Prov.4:23; 23:26; 1Pet.1:15,16)

-Peacemakers and mediators (cf Eph.4:32)

-Persecuted for righteousness sake (cf read Acts 4:12,13, 18-21, 29-31)

Don't concentrate on what others say about you – keep doing God's thing! Amen.



Psalm 110

Of David. A psalm.

¹ The LORD says to my lord:

“Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.”

² The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying,
“Rule in the midst of your enemies!”

³ Your troops will be willing
on your day of battle.

Arrayed in holy splendor,
your young men will come to you
like dew from the morning’s womb.

⁴ The LORD has sworn
and will not change his mind:
“You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek.”

⁵ The Lord is at your right hand;
he will crush kings on the day of his wrath.

⁶ He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead
and crushing the rulers of the whole earth.

⁷ He will drink from a brook along the way,
and so he will lift his head high.

**Psalm 111**

¹ Praise the LORD.

I will extol the LORD with all my heart
in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

² Great are the works of the LORD;
they are pondered by all who delight in them.

³ Glorious and majestic are his deeds,
and his righteousness endures forever.

⁴ He has caused his wonders to be remembered;
the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

⁵ He provides food for those who fear him;
he remembers his covenant forever.

⁶ He has shown his people the power of his works,
giving them the lands of other nations.

⁷ The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy.

⁸ They are established for ever and ever,
enacted in faithfulness and uprightness.

⁹ He provided redemption for his people;
he ordained his covenant forever—
holy and awesome is his name.

¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.
To him belongs eternal praise.

Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Allan Ekstedt	18 March		Job 38,16-18	28 March
Bo Lundin	26 March		Psalm 23,4	18 March
Christine Osman	7,8 March		Psalm 105	2,3 March
Dan Izzett	15 March		Psalm 106	9, 10 March
David Beazley	25 March		Psalm 107	16,17 March
David, psalmist, king of Israel	23, 24, 30 March		Psalm 108	23 March
Eric Chollet	20 March		Psalm 109	24 March
Heather Smith	1 March		Psalm 110	30 March
Jannine Ebenso	14 March		Psalm 111	31 March
Joydeepa Darlong MD	11 March		Proverbs 3,27	26 March
June Nash	5 March		Isaiah 52,7	21 March
Moses Onoh MD	6 March		Isaiah 61,1	13 March
Otto Kingsley	29 March		Matthew 5,13	19 March
Pascal Machefer	13 March		Matthew 10,9-10	4 March
Peter Laubscher	28 March		Matthew 11,28	20 March
Raju, PLN Dr	12 March		Mark 3,9-12, 20-35	29 March
Ruth Butlin Dr	4 March		Luke 5,1-11	6 March
Silvano Perotti	22 March		Luke 9,17	11 March
Theo de Villiers	27 March		Romans 12,5	22 March
Trevor Durston	21 March		1 Cor 12,12-27	1 March
Yuek Ming Poon	19 March		2 Cor 4,5-10	5 March
			2 Cor 5,20	25 March
			Philippians 1,12-20	12 March
			Philippians 2,2	14 March
			Philippians 4,4-9	15 March
			Hebrews 12,1-3	27 March
			1 Peter 2,9	7, 8 March

The Bridge - TLM Daily Devotions

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