



# **TLM Daily Devotions**

**September 2019**



## Intro to the month

### ! APPEAL !

Dear TLMFamily worldwide,

In this set of September you will meet with new faces. One of them is a young lady, a lovely missionary kid, representing two groups in her person: the one of a new generation and that one of TLM staff family members.

This latter one gave for me a new idea on making an appeal expanding the frame of contributors on **family members**, too! They are belonging to TLM with the same strong cords as we, the “official” ones do! How much sacrifice they have been bringing for our mission’s sake! “Cherchez la femme!” - spouses, children give their faithful, lifelong contribution to this mission in a humble, silent, but most efficient way! Their prayers, background services are contributing as living stones to the blessed ministry of TLM among people affected by leprosy. Why should they remain in silence when it is about the spiritual nurturing of TLM?

So, dear **family members of TLMers** in any capacity: parents, spouses, children, you are the most welcome to come forth and contribute to building The Bridge! We should like to hear your voice, be strengthened by your outstanding faith, helping thoughts, struggles, blessings! Come and join us in putting down “your stories”, your received messages, bits of your walk with the Lord and TLM.

You are more than welcome, all!

Do not hesitate: come and contribute!

Thank you in advance!

**Marta**



## Psalm 128

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup> Blessed are all who fear the LORD,  
who walk in obedience to him.

<sup>2</sup> You will eat the fruit of your labor;  
blessings and prosperity will be yours.

<sup>3</sup> Your wife will be like a fruitful vine  
within your house;  
your children will be like olive shoots  
around your table.

<sup>4</sup> Yes, this will be the blessing  
for the man who fears the LORD.

<sup>5</sup> May the LORD bless you from Zion;  
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem  
all the days of your life.

<sup>6</sup> May you live to see your children's children—  
peace be on Israel.



## Grace of God Vs Greed of Man - Part 3

What is the dynamic between a gracious God and a greedy Man? In *Nehemiah Chapter 9*, the Holy Spirit records 3 aspects. They are: (A) God's Nature; (B) Man's Nature and (C) **God's Desire**.

**(C) God's desire?** Three things God desires from Man, all in public! (Verse 3)

### **Reading the Word of God together in public**

It takes effort and time to read and meditate on God's Word. Reading is an act where one is engaged with the Word personally. It is a personal matter. One has to apply one's mind. Reading sends the Word into one's heart where each person's personal God resides. It is a one to one connection with the living Word/God. It nourishes and nurtures faith in God. While reading, one cannot do other things as in when you are hearing the spoken Word. In reading, you are committed. It is intentional. It is delving into depths of God's wisdom. All our faculties are centred at only one object (God) and objective (His glory).

Through the reading of the Word, the Holy Spirit reveals the mysteries of God's purpose and direction for Man. The written Word when it is read, reveals where does one stand in relation to God's grace and mercy. The revelations of God's Word and my reality come face to face. It is an opportunity to reflect, realize, reorient and respond to God's Word. Reading aloud amidst the believers is a community's affirmation of God's Word as the common thread among them. Public reading is a declaration of common faith in the Word. The Word connects all believers together as much as connecting the person with God. The one platform where all believers stand together is the living Word of God, the only source of advice, guidance, correction and promises.

### **Confessing to sins in public**

It takes courage to publicly acknowledge one's disobedience and ingratitude. We are eager to publicly commit what we will do for God but not publicly confess our failings. Private confession is Ok but not public confession. For that, the conviction has to come from the Holy Spirit himself. Confession is being truly honest with God. Only a heart which is at peace with God can possibly make a public confession of one's sins. Public confession can create discordance in mutual relationships among believers. It can be hugely embarrassing. But confession is a process of cleansing, baring one's heart for God's forgiveness, in faith. It is not shaming oneself but appealing to the mercy of God. It prepares the heart to worship God in truth and spirit. I am accountable to God, first and then to others.

### **Worshipping God together in public**

Man ought to worship God in gratitude. It comes from the heart and has a reason. It's strange to worship God after confessing to all of one's wrong doings! But the Israelites did not feel condemned. They were not dejected. They went back to God to praise and worship Him. Worship is also a binding force among believers. In worship the believers affirm their faith in the one and only Holy God. We worship God together for Who He is (righteous) and not just what He had done for us.

In gratitude to God's grace and justice, we worship the Creator. Our gratitude compels us to worship. God's primacy as the Almighty is worth adoring and worshipping. God is worthy of our worship whether our prayers are answered or not, whether we understand His deeds or not. We worship Him because He is God. Worship is the pinnacle of our submission to God in gratitude. Worship is the antidote to Man's greed and self-righteousness. God's grace must be responded to through worship.

### **Takeaways**

Pride takes man away from God, worship in gratitude brings him back. They continuously need the anointing of the Holy Spirit to remain in obedience to God's will. God's Word reveals my insufficiency. My response makes or breaks my relationship with God. Repent and commit to a new way of life of growing into the likeness of Jesus. God's justice is couched in His mercy, grace and compassion.

In gratitude, for His glory.

**Dr PLN Raju** - Former Director (Resource Mobilization) The Leprosy Mission Trust India New



## God's Plans

Last time I wrote about Jesus' instructions to various people.

One of the most quoted verses in the Bible is found in *Jeremiah chapter 29* and is part of Jeremiah's letter to the exiles who still have 70 years of captivity ahead of them.

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

A friend and I have been meeting with another friend once a month for several years. This friend had been led to study for Ministry with the Church of Scotland. It has been a long journey with many twists and turns in it. Sometimes it has been a rocky road and at other times there have been lovely surprises round a corner. She has been an Ordained Lay Minister now for some years and has just completed her additional training to be a full time Minister. Sometimes we have almost wept, the three of us, as we have seen the tangles of "red tape" or the distresses of ill health. But all through this we have all been a part of her determination to see the end of this journey - and the end is very near now as churches meet with her, hear her preach and together they decide whether this church or that church will be her place of ministry. It has been a tremendous privilege to journey in prayer along this road with her knowing that God does indeed have a plan for her – and for each one of us.

There is another verse, this time from the New Testament which has become so very real to the three of us recently and this is found in Philippians chapter 4:

*"The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

That verse has brought reassurance to us as together we have prayed for our friend. And in the final stages of linking up with the church of God's choosing for her, we know that she will also find that peace in the place God has planned for her. We look forward to praying with her along her next journey with the Lord.

How often it is that as we pray for ourselves and others we find that *PEACE* just settling over us reaching deep down into our hearts and lives encouraging and strengthening us.

One of my African friends, when confronted with a problem either in her own life or that of another, will say to me – pray and let's see what God will do. So often we pray as if we think we know what God should do rather than waiting to see what God will do.

So today as you pray for yourself, for a friend, for another, for a situation let us take comfort in knowing that God does indeed have a plan for each one, and that when we seek God and allow Him to "do" we can know that deep peace that we cannot understand and which comes from God into our hearts and minds.

*"Pray without ceasing" – there is always so much to pray about – be patient as you wait for God to work in the situation and in that waiting, be blessed.*



## Meditation on Mark chapter 6

Mark wrote a very fast moving gospel. Chapter 6 starts with the story of the painful rejection that Jesus faced in his home town. Then we are told that he went among the other villages of Galilee teaching, after which he sent the disciples out two by two to preach and heal.

This is followed by the horrific death of John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin, at the hands of Herod, news of which would have caused Jesus deep grief, and then a description of the saddened Jesus meeting up with his excited disciples after they returned from their adventures, and all of them needing a time of quiet to unwind and rest. So they set off in a boat to a deserted spot – only to find that it is no longer a deserted spot because a great crowd was already there and waiting for them. - So Jesus puts his grief and concern for his disciples to one side and gets on with teaching the crowd, after which he feeds the 5000 who had gathered. It is left to John's Gospel to tell us that the crowd, at this point, want to make him king.

But then we are told that Jesus 'made' his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side. The word used for 'made' can also be translated 'compelled'. It is a strong word, and probably means that the disciples were not happy at leaving Jesus behind alone with that crowd. But Jesus insisted, then firmly dismissed the crowd, said farewell to them and went up onto the mountain to pray and no doubt refocus.

Thick and fast the problems were coming at him. There was the hostility of the orthodox leaders, the frightened suspicion of Herod Antipas, the political hotheads who would make him leader, not to mention the burden of his cousin's death.

What do you do when there is so much coming at you that your mind is spinning? I often wonder how Jesus quietened himself down. Did he walk till the strain eased, or did he recite well known Jewish prayers over and over again, or perhaps concentrate on his breathing? I wish we knew!

Nevertheless it is a comfort to know that Jesus, too, has been in that place where we so often find ourselves in this busy world, and it is a reminder that on occasion we too may need to take a good amount of time out to unwind so that we can sense God's presence near us. Jesus was probably on the mountainside for some hours, but at about 3 am he could see that his friends were in trouble and went to help.

As William Barclay says in his commentary, 'What happened we do not know, and will never know. The story is cloaked in mystery which defies explanation. What we do know is that Jesus came to them and their storm became a calm. With him beside them nothing mattered any more. - William Barclay also quotes what St Augustine wrote about this incident. He said, "Jesus came treading the waves, and so he puts all the swelling tumults of life under his feet. Christians – why afraid?"

I love the words that William Barclay finishes with. He writes: 'It is the simple fact of life, a fact which has been proved by countless thousands of men and women in every generation, that when Christ is there the storm becomes a calm, the tumult becomes a peace, what cannot be done is done, the unbearable becomes bearable, and people pass the breaking point and do not break. To walk with Christ will be for us also the conquest of the storm.'



## Hidden Majesty

### *Psalm 13*

Earlier this year I had the chance to visit Pokhara in Nepal to visit Green Pastures Hospital. Green Pastures is run by the International Nepal Fellowship and is one of our partner projects.

For weeks before my trip people were telling me about how beautiful Pokhara is. Friends told me about the amazing chain of mountains – the Annapurna range – that tower above the town. Several people specifically mentioned Machapuchare, the fish tail mountain, which is apparently particularly impressive.

I was already looking forward to my trip but all these recommendations just heightened my expectations.

On the little, unpressurised, plane I was sitting on the wrong side to get a good view of mountains from the air but surely the view from the ground would be just as impressive. Wouldn't it?

Pokhara town and the lake are a lovely place to visit, but for 4 days it was surrounded by hazy clouds. Warm and sunny in the town but invisible, hidden mountains.

I saw the work of an amazing hospital with a great staff team. I saw picture postcards in the shops. People told me all about the beautiful mountains and the fact that you can see a massive tiger's face on one of them. But they were hidden from me.

In Psalm 13, David feels like God has hidden his face from him. He feels sorrowful and weak, as if his enemies will defeat him.

But even in his despair he finds he can trust in God's unfailing love, rejoice and sing praises.

In times when life feels surrounded by haze and clouds, when God seems hidden from us, remember that just because it's cloudy doesn't mean the mountain isn't there.

Our past experiences of him, the faith of others and what we can read of him in the Bible can help us to have faith, like David, and to sing his praises through the clouds.

Clouds are temporary and there will be other days when we can see him, crystal clear, like a snow-capped mountain in the sun.

**Stuart McAra** – Head of Engagement, The Leprosy Mission Scotland. Stuart has worked with The Leprosy Mission since 2004





## When risk is right

This afternoon I visited one of the Leprosy Mission's long-standing and generous supporters. Originally from the Netherlands, he and his wife made South Africa their home in the 1950s.

He reminisced about how most of his youth was spent below sea-level and he recalled the great flood of January 1953, in which his parents lost everything. His early years in South Africa were devoted to sending cash home to help them rebuild their lives [which made me chuckle, because a few days ago during a trip through the DRC, a group of us were talking about Africans who go to Europe to earn money to send home!] Some time later, one of his relatives came to visit him in South Africa. He took them for a drive and after a while his passenger pleaded with him to return home – they were driving over a mountain pass and she was overwhelmed by fear – the height and the precipitous drop were too much for her and she began to cry in anguish. Now South African mountain roads are pretty tame compared to what you'll find in the Himalayas, but I suppose if you've spent all your life below sea-level, even our mediocre mesas have the capacity to inspire fear. - This ties in rather neatly with a book I'm reading at the moment, "Thinking, Fast and Slow" by the 2002 Noble economics laureate Daniel Kahneman [Penguin 2011]. Kahneman demonstrates with uncomfortable robustness how we frequently make bad intuitive decisions – decisions that are significantly detrimental to our wellbeing – because we make judgements based on a narrow framework. In consequence of this framework, we are often needlessly risk averse. [If the lady from the Netherlands had grown up in Nepal, she would have scoffed at the idea that South African mountain passes were devastatingly dangerous]. Unfortunately, most of Kahneman's illustrations are based on examples drawn from gambling, which sits uncomfortably with my heart which was shaped by stern Calvinistic reformers and their apoplectic aversion to all things pertaining to games of chance – my favourite pinball machine fell foul of South Africa's strict gambling laws as it afforded me the opportunity to win back the five-cent piece that I had invested in the game. As an aside, that pinball table was acutely sensitive to being 'tilted'. [You can buy Gottlieb pinball machines – the staple of my misspent youth – on Gumtree, but I fear the wrath of a higher power.]

Nevertheless, I got to thinking about the great risk-takers of the Bible. Just about every great person in the Scriptures could be characterised as a risk-taker and many of us would have grown up with images at Sunday school of fisherman abandoning their nets to follow to follow a mysterious itinerant preacher. Wherever you find the word 'follow' in the Bible, it seems to be associated with an element of risk and cost. Does any of this make sense to an economist? Kahneman would certainly get the risk-taking, but what of the promised reward? The church has been built by the willingness of 66 generations to forgo worldly rewards for the sake of something greater. I suspect that even for Kahneman, who is willing to consider way-out possibilities, this would seem like a risk too far.

On 28<sup>th</sup> October 1949, the American missionary Jim Elliot wrote: "*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.*" - On 8<sup>th</sup> January 1956, Jim Elliot and four other missionaries died at the hands of the people to whom they had come to minister in Ecuador. For many observers, this would have been an indication of 'time to quit', but Elizabeth his wife and other missionaries continued his work and members of that people group came to faith. It is an astonishing story of mercy, forgiveness and risk-taking.

And perhaps most extraordinary of all, you and I are invited to continue on that path today – to count the cost, but to forge ahead despite it.

*Dear friend, be full of courage.*

**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.



## Psalm 129

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup>“They have greatly oppressed me from my youth,”  
let Israel say;  
<sup>2</sup>“they have greatly oppressed me from my youth,  
but they have not gained the victory over me.  
<sup>3</sup>Plowmen have plowed my back  
and made their furrows long.  
<sup>4</sup>But the LORD is righteous;  
he has cut me free from the cords of the wicked.”  
<sup>5</sup>May all who hate Zion  
be turned back in shame.  
<sup>6</sup>May they be like grass on the roof,  
which withers before it can grow;  
<sup>7</sup>a reaper cannot fill his hands with it,  
nor one who gathers fill his arms.  
<sup>8</sup>May those who pass by not say to them,  
“The blessing of the LORD be on you;  
we bless you in the name of the LORD.”



## Psalm 130

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup>Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;

<sup>2</sup> Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive  
to my cry for mercy.

<sup>3</sup>If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,  
Lord, who could stand?

<sup>4</sup>But with you there is forgiveness,  
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

<sup>5</sup>I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,  
and in his word I put my hope.

<sup>6</sup>I wait for the Lord  
more than watchmen wait for the morning,  
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

<sup>7</sup>Israel, put your hope in the LORD,  
for with the LORD is unfailing love  
and with him is full redemption.

<sup>8</sup>He himself will redeem Israel  
from all their sins.



## The psalmist (A man after God's own Heart)

Somebody once said to me "Aren't the Psalms just a bunch of HAPPY CLAPPY chapters (incorporating songs played on harps, lyres & stuff?)" The book of Psalms is actually a collection of poems, songs & writings, over 75 per cent of which are attributed to King David.

Through them, David's heart is laid bare, his life & character are opened up for examination. Encouragingly for us, this man of success & failure, great faith and great sin, coupled with ecstatic joy and deep depression, is described in *Acts 13* as "A man after God's own heart" 'He raised up for them David as King, to whom also He gave testimony & said" I have found David the Son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who will do ALL my will" ' (Acts 13:22-23)

Let's look at a few reasons why God would say of David "I have found a man after my own heart" – but I believe these two verses highlight the central reason.

*'As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants after you o God  
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When shall I come & appear before God?' (Psalm 42:1-2)*

God was THE PASSION of the Psalmists HEART

The children's author Roald Dahl said this in his later life,  
"I began to realize how important it was to be an enthusiast in life.  
If you are interested in something, no matter what it is, go at it full speed ahead.  
Embrace it with both arms, hug it, love it and above all be passionate about it.  
Lukewarm is no good.  
Hot is no good either.  
White hot & passionate is the only way to be "

The thing or one we are passionate about becomes the consumer of our minutes, our spending, in fact all our major energies.

King David's PASSION was "LAID BARE" through the following

1. Absolute Faith – 1 Samuel 17:33-37 (God delivers)
  2. He Loved God's commandments – Psalm 119:47-48 (God is Holy)
  3. He was truly thankful – Psalm 100: 4 (God loves our Praises)
  4. He was truly repentant – Psalm 51: 1-4 (Only God can forgive)
- What great life lessons in 2019?*

FROM THE LIFE & HEART of THE PSALMIST

**Paul Moores**, TLMEW Regional Manager, North West & The Isle of Man.  
Taken from a recent sermon at Ogden Baptist, Rochdale, UK



## The Step before 'The Step'

*The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him - Psalm 37:23*

In recent times we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of man landing on the moon; perhaps one of the most significant events in human history.

A story that has emerged from this historic event, is how one of the Apollo 11 astronauts, Buzz Aldrin, took Holy Communion just before he left the spacecraft and set foot on the surface of the moon. Aldrin had arranged with NASA space agency and his church to take the holy sacraments on the mission to the moon. There was a short time after the spacecraft landed and when the astronauts stepped out onto the surface of the moon, and it was during this time that Buzz Aldrin read some scripture and partook in Holy Communion. Soon after, Neil Armstrong, Aldrin's fellow astronaut, became the first man to set foot on the moon, and as he did so, he uttered these now famous words, 'one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.'

Later in his memoirs when reflecting on the lunar landing, and partaking in Holy Communion, Aldrin said, "We had come to space in the name of all mankind. But at the time I could think of no better way to acknowledge the Apollo 11 experience than by giving thanks to God."

As I reflected on this story, I could not help but think of the 'step' before one of the most famous 'steps' in history. How special that the first meal, taken at this historic occasion in human history, was one that gave thanks to The Most High God!

*Take time today to delight in the One who makes firm all our steps; be they big or small,  
and wherever they may be in His awesome creation.*

**Brent Morgan** - International Director (based at the International Office in London)



## "God's presence throughout life's experiences

### *Psalm 107*

It's often been noted that all aspects of human experience can be found somewhere in the Bible. It's a very honest book and doesn't try to cover up difficult things. I love Psalm 107 because it unfolds different aspects of human life in a series of four short cameos, and because of that it can be very useful in guiding our prayers.

It starts with a verse of thanksgiving (v 1)

It encourages us all to remember our own experience of God's hand in our lives and to share this with others. (vs 2 and 3)

It speaks of people being lost and unsettled – wandering about aimlessly and being hungry and thirsty. And this can guide our prayers for those who are going through times of spiritual dryness – hungering and thirsting for God's renewing touch (vs 4 and 5)

It speaks of people sitting in chains in darkness which can lead us to remember Christians in some countries who are being persecuted (v 10).

But the next verse develops this to speak of people in chains because they have rebelled against God and are suffering the consequences (v 11). Then verses 17 and 18 expand this further by reflecting on human sinfulness. Any look at the day's news soon reminds us about this aspect of human life – and so we may feel led to pray for those who are caught up in the darkness of sin.

The psalm speaks of people who sail on the seas – always a very dangerous way to travel until only the last couple of centuries (vs 21-27). So we may pray for those whose work exposes them to danger, or of people we know who are experiencing rough storms in their lives.

So through this psalm our prayers can be guided for others – and also for ourselves if any of these experiences strike a chord.

But notice the chorus line! In each case the psalmist comes back to the one in whom our faith is founded. "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and he brought them out of their distress" (vs 6, 13, 19 and 28). He and he alone "led them in a straight way"; "brought them out of darkness"; "sent out his word and healed them", and "stilled the storm to a whisper"

Whatever experience of life we are going through at present, we can trust in God when we turn to him. And so with the psalmist we "give thanks to the Lord for he is good – his steadfast love endures forever"



## Busyness – Part 1

- Ever had too much to do?
- Often run out of time?
- No time to visit, just relax or even take it easy?
- Wish you had the hours to pray and read the Bible or even witnessing? ...

We are living in future shock! Check your diary! **Busyness** is so much part of our lives. We have allowed it to be part of our lifestyle & think that's the only way it should be.

Technology makes it worse – WhatsApp it! - E-mail now! Get on the internet you must know what is happening all over the world now!

The story of my life - repeated by many of us. The curse of our time! It wouldn't help even if we had an extra 10 hours a day. This is no new problem.

*Job 9:25 "My days are swifter than a runner; they fly away without a glimpse of joy."*

*Psalms 39:5 "You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath."*

*James 4:14 "Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."*

The pressure is on us!

**Busyness** can be attributed to any of the following;

- Doing too much - more than God expects you to do!
- Greedy or the necessity for more money.
- Running away from life, don't want to face people ...

### The Effect Of Busyness On Our Lives

*Luke 10:38-42 "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

### 1 It Affects Your Walk With The Lord

Martha had no time to sit & listen to Jesus talking. She was busy with the day-to-day business of life, even with Jesus as a visitor. Maybe she had become **familiar** with Him, He was a family friend. The in your face question is: I know Jesus, have known Him for a few years, but do I allow the day-to-day, run-of-the-mill things to erode my precious time with Him? Ever been there? Ever done that? Why?

### 2 It Makes Us Lose The Correct Perspective To Life

Martha was worried & upset because she chose to WORK!

- She became a driven person
- She violated the Word of God by having worries & being upset
- She substituted work for her relationship with Jesus

Another angle: *Matthew 13:7, 22* “Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants...The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.”

**Busyness** chokes the effect of the Word of God in your life because you don't have time to read or study it. The result is: we get hooked into reading information instead of getting revelation for ourselves.

What do you use to substitute your walk with God?

Why do you have to do what you do?

*"but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful."*

**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.





## Busyness – Part 2

### 3 Busyness Breeds Tension In The Home

*She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"*

The question is: Who told Martha to work so hard? I don't think it was Jesus. Maybe she just wanted everything to be right! Traps of **busyness** we make for ourselves:

- Meetings - getting things we need - another dress to make - another room to paint - another person I just have to see - another \$ to make, ...

Ever been there? Why?

### 4 It Indicates Distrust Towards Your Heavenly Father

*Matthew 6:31-32 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*

In this day & age with the uncertainty of life because of disease, sickness, accidents, wars, terror, thieves, failing monetary system, the list could be endless, **but God's provision is also endless**. Which is the better one? - We have to learn to trust God more & more! If you can't trust God, who can you trust?

- Money, gold, education, If you do you are living in a pipe dream - you're a "sky-pilot".

If you don't trust God, that is using your faith, **life will overwhelm you!**

### What's The Answer Then?

#### 1. Know That God Can Help Us

But we have to believe this - we have to use our faith & trust. **Get life into the correct perspective!**

*Psalms 90:12 "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."*

*Ephesians 5:15-16 "Be very careful, then, how you live-not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil"*

Go to God & ask Him to give you direction & wisdom in life.

**KEY:** Do what He tells you to do - don't let the **busyness** of life choke the Word of God in your life.

Trust God - Trust God - Trust God!!! - Stop sinning!!

#### 2. Keep Your Focus On Him & Not On Things

*Ecclesiastes 2:26 & 4:6 "To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.*

*...Better one handful with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind."*

### 3 Make The Necessary Changes To Your Life

This could be hard! Habits die hard! But hope for a better future, time to recapture control of your life.

- Stop thinking busy! Think peace & order.
- Stop talking busy! Talk enough time.

- Stop planning busy! Plan rest periods.

- **TRUST GOD!**

Remember God can give you and wants to give you direction and perspective in life!

*Summary:*

*The Effect Of Busyness On Our Lives*

*1 It Affects Your Walk With The Lord*

*2 It Makes Us Lose The Correct Perspective To Life*

*3 It Breeds Tension In The Home*

*4 It Indicates Distrust Towards Your Heavenly Father*

*What's The Answer Then?*

*1. Know That God Can Help Us*

*2. Keep Your Focus On Him & Not On Things*

*3 Make The Necessary Changes To Your Life*

**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 131**

*A song of ascents. Of David.*

<sup>1</sup> My heart is not proud, LORD,  
my eyes are not haughty;  
I do not concern myself with great matters  
or things too wonderful for me.  
<sup>2</sup> But I have calmed and quieted myself,  
I am like a weaned child with its mother;  
like a weaned child I am content.  
<sup>3</sup> Israel, put your hope in the LORD  
both now and forevermore.



## Psalm 132

*A song of ascents.*

- <sup>1</sup> LORD, remember David  
and all his self-denial.
- <sup>2</sup> He swore an oath to the LORD,  
he made a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob:
- <sup>3</sup> “I will not enter my house  
or go to my bed,  
<sup>4</sup> I will allow no sleep to my eyes  
or slumber to my eyelids,  
<sup>5</sup> till I find a place for the LORD,  
a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob.”
- <sup>6</sup> We heard it in Ephrathah,  
we came upon it in the fields of Jaar:
- <sup>7</sup> “Let us go to his dwelling place,  
let us worship at his footstool, saying,  
<sup>8</sup> ‘Arise, LORD, and come to your resting place,  
you and the ark of your might.
- <sup>9</sup> May your priests be clothed with your righteousness;  
may your faithful people sing for joy.”
- <sup>10</sup> For the sake of your servant David,  
do not reject your anointed one.
- <sup>11</sup> The LORD swore an oath to David,  
a sure oath he will not revoke:  
“One of your own descendants  
I will place on your throne.
- <sup>12</sup> If your sons keep my covenant  
and the statutes I teach them,  
then their sons will sit  
on your throne for ever and ever.”
- <sup>13</sup> For the LORD has chosen Zion,  
he has desired it for his dwelling, saying,  
<sup>14</sup> “This is my resting place for ever and ever;

here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it.

<sup>15</sup> I will bless her with abundant provisions;  
her poor I will satisfy with food.

<sup>16</sup> I will clothe her priests with salvation,  
and her faithful people will ever sing for joy.

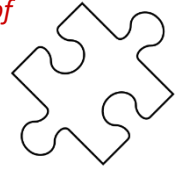
<sup>17</sup> "Here I will make a horn grow for David  
and set up a lamp for my anointed one.

<sup>18</sup> I will clothe his enemies with shame,  
but his head will be adorned with a radiant crown."



*The kingdom of heaven is like sourdough that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough. Mt 13:33*

*Don't you know that a little sourdough leavens the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old sourdough, so that you may be a new unleavened batch. 1 Cor 5:6-8*



## Sourdough

This week, we will be studying passages (mostly) in the gospel of Mark. Each reading is a piece of a puzzle. By Friday we will be able to put the pieces together and gain insight into a saying of Jesus that is often skipped over because it is not easy to understand. So today the first piece: Sourdough.

Do you know the traditional way of making a sourdough? You mix flour and water and expose it to the air and if you wait for several days, a fermentation process will begin driven by yeast and certain bacteria. The fermentation makes your bread dough into a sourdough. The bread you bake with that has a strong, sour taste. The trick is to keep a little part of your sourdough so that next time you bake bread, you don't have to wait so long. You just add some of the sourdough of the previous round to your mix of flour and water and presto! Your fermentation can start right away. Food technologists understand that the sourdough is a culture of a particular strain of yeast and if you treat it right (culture it), it will continue to live and multiply and do its job in baking bread.

In *Finland*, traditional home makers are proud of their sourdough, that they have kept over for more than a hundred years. They will say: My grandmother used it, I use it and my daughter is using it too. In *Jewish* society this was not possible, because in the law of Moses it was specified that once a year you had to get rid of all the sourdough (leaven, yeast) in your house (Exodus 13, Dt 16:4) and eat unleavened flat bread for a while. Then after that you started over making a fresh sourdough. Many cultures have traditions around the preparation of sourdough. What are customs in your culture around baking bread and working with yeast?

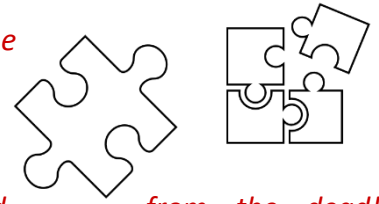
Jesus used this concept as a metaphor. Once he said the kingdom of God was like sourdough (Mt 13:33). You put a little into a whole lot of flour and within a few hours, the whole dough is rising and taking up the sour taste. In the same way, when a few people start following Jesus wholeheartedly, it affects all around them and more and more people will join in and others will begin to sympathize and soon the impact is felt far and wide. That is what happened when Jesus started his movement in Israel. This was a positive image of the sourdough. It is still happening like that all over the world.

But very often, the sourdough was used in a negative sense. In 1 Cor 5, Paul says that when sin is allowed to exist in the church, everyone will be affected negatively. Specifically he was talking about sexual immorality that was being allowed to run rampant among the members of the Corinthian church. And he writes: Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? It is the same idea of something spreading far and wide but now in a negative sense. And Paul says, we should throw the old sourdough away and start over. We should be like unleavened bread, freed from sin.

**Johan Velema** worked with TLM international office from 1999 to 2011. He then studied theology and is currently working with the Christian & Missionary Alliance in West Africa.



*King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago." But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!"*  
 Mark 6:14-16



*from the dead!"*

## Today the second piece of the puzzle: HEROD

The stories about Jesus are not fairy tales. He lived in a particular country that we can point to on the map. He lived in a specific historic context that we know a lot about. We know that his country had become part of the empire of Alexander the Great and later of the Roman empire. Roman soldiers patrolled the streets of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. The governor was the highest representative of the Roman imperial government. In the time of Jesus, Pontius Pilate was the governor in Jerusalem. He was an Italian, a man from Rome itself. In the Northern part of the country, (the part where Jesus was born), Herod Antipas was the governor.

Herod Antipas was not a Jew by birth but he had grown up in the Jewish faith and so knew that context well. He had also studied in Rome, the centre of the empire. His father (known as Herod the Great) had managed to wedge himself between the Romans and the Jews and he, the son, had succeeded him. He had a lot of power. He was wealthy for he was responsible for collecting the taxes for the Romans and made sure he received a comfortable margin for himself. He also had the army on his side. Of course, there were a lot of people who supported him and were part of his clique. They were called the Herodians.

In chapter six of the gospel of Mark, we read that Herod had allowed John the Baptist to be executed. He had used his military power to silence a vocal opponent. Not a rare occurrence in politics. I know many countries where this happens even today. If the opposition gets too strong, you think of a way of discrediting them, of eliminating the leaders. Herod was particularly known for his tendency to kill people who opposed him. Actually, we are told that it was Herod's wife who moved to have John the Baptist killed. She manipulated her husband so that he could not refuse. And so a great man, John, became the victim of two people who indulged in decadence and lust for power. Actually, Herod had a bad conscience about the whole thing. When he heard about Jesus, he thought John the Baptist had come back from the dead. It made him afraid.

Herod exercised power by depending on money and arms. By contrast, we read that Jesus, when given the opportunity, refused the power of money and arms (John 6:15). Why do you think he did that? Was it a good choice?

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*“You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!”*  
Mark 7:9

## The third piece of the puzzle: PHARISEES

The pharisees were first of all spiritual leaders. They taught people the law and declared what was clean and what was unclean, what was OK and what should be avoided. By then the law of Moses was over a thousand years old and there were many situations in ‘modern’ life for which no ready made rule was available. Little by little, a complex structure of rules and regulations had been erected, interpreting and extrapolating from the law of Moses. It covered such diverse areas as hygiene, inheritance, temple worship, giving money to charity, weekend travel and many others.

Through these rules and regulations, Pharisees had a lot of power over people’s lifestyle and behaviour. They could be found at every level of society, where they stood for devotion to God and the practice of religion. But they also exercised political power. They were the representatives of the people. They came together in the Sanhedrin, the national council if you will, with the high priest as the chairman. The high priest combined spiritual and political roles and he would speak to the Roman governors on behalf of the people.

In *Mark chapter 7*, Jesus had spoken out against them in a way that had deeply insulted them. Some pharisees had criticized his disciples for eating without washing their hands. But Jesus defended his disciples and viciously attacked their rules and regulations. In fact, he said they had become so obsessed with them that they had lost sight of what God had originally intended when he inspired Moses to write the law. The rules had become absolute and those who wanted to worship God were weighed down with the burden of studying and keeping them in every detail. As a result, ordinary people were alienated from the worship of God. Keeping the law was too difficult for them. Jesus wanted people to know that God loved them and wanted them to know his grace and generosity. Jesus proclaimed that serving God is not about keeping rules but about an inner attitude of the heart. Someone whose heart is filled with mercy, humility, meekness and love for justice will naturally choose to do things that are a blessing to others. Some rules are necessary to organize the way we live together in society. But the law codes the Pharisees had developed had gone way beyond that.

So it comes as no surprise that Pharisees were very critical of Jesus. They were intrigued by this new teacher and wanted to hear what he had to say. But they began to realize Jesus was attacking the most important principles they lived by and on which their power was based. Gradually they began to see him as threat: If he can mobilize such masses of people, what can he do with that? Will he use it against us? And if he can argue from the holy scriptures so well, will he use it to undermine the very basis of our position?

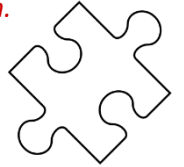
The mounting conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees is a theme throughout the gospels. Jesus wanted the teachers of the letter of the law to go back to the spirit of the law – to the way God had intended them. Similarly, Jesus want us, today, to see the purpose of any rules we live by and to be able to adjust them when they clash with the needs of ordinary people who want to seek God and serve him.

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*The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it." Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side. Mark 8:11-13*



## The fourth piece of the puzzle: A SIGN

The pharisees demanded a sign from Jesus (Mk 8:11-13): "Do something to show us you are truly from God. Something that will prove your authority and your power. That is the language we understand. We can't win from you in debates about the scriptures and the law. But we are in charge and you're not. Right?"

Interestingly, this is the same thing the king of Egypt said to Moses when Moses demanded freedom for his people. And God had given Moses some signs to show God was with him. And the plagues, of course, were signs as well, although very damaging ones. We can read it all in the book of Exodus.

At the beginning of this same chapter 8, Jesus had been teaching a large crowd in a lonely place (a crowd that included many non-Jewish people). The people had not wanted to leave and they had slept there for two nights already. By then the food they had brought with them had run out. And Jesus had given thanks, broken the bread and fish that was available and given it to his disciples. Thus he had multiplied seven loaves of bread and a few small fish and all had eaten, some 4000 people.

In Chapter 6 (6:30-44), a similar event is described. In another location with a largely Jewish crowd. There he had fed 5000 men plus a lot women and children (Mt 14:21). Clearly, these miracles demonstrated Jesus' divinity. They had been performed in response to a specific need. It was Jesus himself who had taken the initiative, going against the disciples, who had said it was not possible to feed so many people. As an act of compassion, Jesus had provided for a vast crowd of diverse people who had come to be with him in the wilderness.

But now the Pharisees are asking for a miracle to test him. They are the sceptics and want to see evidence, proof. They want Jesus to meet them on their terms, to meet their expectations, their image of what a true Messiah should look like. They challenge him to demonstrate his power and therefore his authority.

But Jesus refused. He refused to perform a miracle-on-demand. He refused to blow them away with his power in order to prove himself. He refused to play their game. The miracles were never meant to attract attention. They were an expression of God's love, compassion and generosity. We can never manipulate God into doing something we want for our own benefit. God is sovereign. The Pharisees cannot tell him what to do.

We can freely talk to Jesus about our needs and ask him for miracles if the situation requires it. But He decides how to respond to our requests. He knows what motivates us and what we need. Entrusting ourselves to him, we will receive from him what we need the most.

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*“Watch out and be on your guard for the sordough of the Pharisees as well as the sordough of Herod” Mark 8:15*



## Putting the pieces together: EXERCISING POWER THE JESUS WAY

The Pharisees had challenged Jesus to perform a miracle and He had refused. It had upset him, and He gets out of the discussion by quickly getting into the boat and leaving them behind. As the disciples busy themselves with the oars and the ropes, Jesus sits there, not pleased with the way things had gone; still processing what had happened. And as He is musing about it, He speaks these words cited above.

What did he mean? I think He was referring to the different ways in which these people were exercising power. The Pharisees and Herod were two role models that dominated the thought world of the people of Israel. One exercised power by creating rules and regulations and dominating how people live and behave. External laws. The other exercised power through money and arms. Mafia-like if you will. And the negative effects of their respective approaches impacted every nook and crannock of society.

Jesus knew that his disciples, just a few years on, would be leading the church - a church comprising thousands of people. They would be exercising power. And He said, that is NOT how I want you to do it. You should be different. I know, these role models have deeply influenced you; you grew up with them. But no, that is not the Kingdom way. You have to change. Your thought world must be transformed.

So what is the alternative? How does Jesus want his disciples to exercise power? To answer that, Jesus referred to the two feedings of the crowds. He is asking them to remember the events. We can imagine him asking more detailed questions about it: What did we have? Nothing. Did we lack anything? No, nothing. Did we exercise power? You bet we did. Did we imprison people in external rules and regulations? No. Did we use money or violence or corruption? None of those. We are solving our problems differently. Although we have nothing, we have everything because God is with us. Although we have no power, all the power of heaven is available to us. Do we use that to impress? No. Do we use it to prove ourselves? No. Do we use it to squash the opposition? No. Do we use it for personal gain? No. We use it to bless people, to feed people, to heal people, to restore women and men so that they may be whole and will praise our heavenly father as a result; so that they will live a life of gratitude. Because I am meek, I am poor, I mourn when I see the needs of those around me, I hunger and thirst for righteousness, I show mercy, I am pure in heart, I choose for peace and I am willing to be persecuted for what I believe (Mt 5:3-10). And I want you to do and to be the same.

So if these are the principles of leadership that Jesus puts forward, does that only apply to the church? Or does it apply in other domains of life as well? I think we have no difficulty to see that this will apply to family life as well. But I firmly believe this applies to the way we deal with each other in TLM, too; to the way we deal with clients and patients; to the way we deal with governments. All of us are called to exercise power the Jesus way. Not by imprisoning people in protocols. Not by blackmailing them. But by caring and compassion; by speaking out for the truth; by being transparent; by giving people what they need to do their job; by giving people freedom and encouraging solidarity, in dependence on the power of God - that treasure that we carry in earthen vessels.

**Johan Velema** worked with TLM international office from 1999 to 2011. He then studied theology and is currently working with the Christian & Missionary Alliance in West Africa.



## Psalm 133

*A song of ascents. Of David.*

<sup>1</sup>How good and pleasant it is  
when God's people live together in unity!

<sup>2</sup>It is like precious oil poured on the head,  
running down on the beard,  
running down on Aaron's beard,  
down on the collar of his robe.

<sup>3</sup>It is as if the dew of Hermon  
were falling on Mount Zion.  
For there the LORD bestows his blessing,  
even life forevermore.



## **Psalm 134**

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD  
who minister by night in the house of the LORD.

<sup>2</sup>Lift up your hands in the sanctuary  
and praise the LORD.

<sup>3</sup>May the LORD bless you from Zion,  
he who is the Maker of heaven and earth.



## This is my story...

Growing up, I hated my family because they weren't white! (they still aren't the last I checked)!

As ye'll know, I am Nigerian missionary kid in Niger and was raised and bred among a predominantly white missionary community in Niger. So it's a given that through osmosis I caught the white supremacy bug. Let me do the honor of walking you through my lived experience. Brace yourself it's a long write up:

1. We moved to Niger, and my mum being the angel she is told us kids that one of the attributes of a missionary is being able to understand where people came from, to understand what offends, what honors, to respect them for all that they are and move forward in friendship.

2. I chose to accommodate Westerners because I was not understood as a true Nigerian. For example I began by learning how to speak in an American accent because the white kids weren't clever enough to understand my Nigerian accent. Favour (my brother) learnt his accent later than mine so I would help him 'translate' from English to English.

3. I choose to go to boarding school at 10 years old. From what I remember, I was the only 'black' girl in my class and my dorm. I remember being scared that I was different. I remember being told I looked like a black witch, or being called uncivilized. I remember being conditioned to believe that I was less than a human.

4. So I set out to accommodate, to become as 'white as I possibly could....whatever that means. I began seeing most of the African workers on site as not smart because they were the only ones that did the cleaning and washing. I would dream vivid dreams of waking up as a white girl. Ha! White is good black is bad. Repeat. Rinse. Accommodate.

5. Then my parents moved to the same city I boarded in. "Blessing, you can come live with us now!" I remember being very angry, because it meant I'd live with African people.

My parents knew what had happened to me and it hurt my family. By forgetting who I was, it was like I had stifled and murdered the daughter that was given to them. I think their fervent prayers to Jesus is the reason the Lord has been faithful to lift of the cloud that was placed over me as a child.

It's a rather strange thing, how these things work. The subtle and often unintentional messages educators pass to children. The power they hold over their minds.

I was bullied for being melanated yet I was willing to burn the heritage that was given to me by God because I elevated the praise of people above God's. I was willing to kill the body that was given to me by God Almighty because I allowed myself to believe that people's validation would affirm my humanity.

I am fully redeemed now, I see clearly, and I cringe when I look back. I know that people are capable of doing very beautiful and very evil things whether not they claim to be missionaries. I've learnt that most white missionaries are genuinely clueless when it comes to cultural literacy and white supremacy. That adults don't realize children know their thoughts towards them whether or not they are spoken: that children want grownups to love them. I've learnt the racism can thrive very well even when people chose to live in Africa and have 'black' friends.

**I've learnt that it takes the power of God's love to redeem a discarded soul.**

Coming back home to the same community, hearing the things my brothers and other African friends experience has also being a wonderful tool with which the Lord has used to further open my eyes. My

family isn't bad because of the colour of their skin. Neither are good because of the colour of their skin. They are good because God made them. They are wonderful because each and every member embodies the image of God.

If you seek to become what human beings label as 'good' it will not be enough. Instead seek the person God wants you to be, because God is totally enough.

*<sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." 2 Cor 12,9*

**Blessing Oluloto** – missionary kid (21), daughter of Bunmi Oluloto, country leader of Niger and Chad. Blessing is studying International Development Studies at Redeemer University College, Brightwood Ranch, USA



## Accounting is the only Profession practised on earth and in heaven

*Matthew 6v 19-21. <sup>19</sup> "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also".*

This reminds me that stars that are visible in the night-time. Unfortunately for the city dwellers, it is not so but as you move away from city that lit up with bright lights to remote parts and villages, the sky becomes so bright as thou the Heaven is lit up. Does this strike a code with our worldly and heavenly riches?

Account for all your actions on earth and account for it in heaven.

Now look at this  BALANCE SHEET of LIFE.

Birth is your **Opening Stock**.

What comes to you is **Credit**.

What goes from you is **Debit**.

Your ideas are your **Assets**.

Your bad habits are your **Liabilities**.

Your character is your **Capital**.

Your happiness is your **Profit**.

Your sorrow is your **Loss**.

Your knowledge is your **Investment**.

Your age is your **Depreciation**.

Death is your **Closing Stock**.

And finally: **GOD IS YOUR AUDITOR**.

Always endeavour to have a perfect Balance Sheet because your **AUDITOR** will come back sooner than later. Manage and Keep your books correctly and wisely.

*Let us pray:*

*LORD help us to seek the things that make us rich in YOUR sight and to be wise that the glitter of this world may not dim our hopes of heavenly riches.*



## We Will Finish What Jesus Started

On Sunday (3 days ago), The Leprosy Mission Scotland held a special church service to launch a new report into the state of leprosy in the world and to recommit ourselves in prayer to doing all we can to raise the support needed to bring about the end of leprosy.

Tonight, at a reception in the Scottish Parliament we will be telling politicians and invited guests how we plan to do it. The circumstances and commitment of so many people around the world, including the common goals of the 3 zeroes, mean that there has never been a better time to achieve it.

In Scotland, through the gifts and prayers of supporters from all over the country we will **Make Leprosy A Thing Of The Past.**

The work of our partners from across the whole of The Leprosy Mission means that we will **Eradicate Leprosy. One Person At A Time.**

There are just 3 things we need to do:

### SPOT IT

Spot it early before it can do lasting damage.

Spot it correctly, reducing the number of misdiagnoses in communities around the world

### TREAT IT

Treat it fast – make sure we get the right treatment into people's hands quickly

Treat it fully – providing the right ongoing care for all its effects and complications

### STOP IT

Stop it spreading to infect new people

Stop it destroying lives through poverty, discrimination and injustice

We believe if we do all this then together **We will finish what Jesus started.**

We all know that Jesus healed people with leprosy – a depiction of him doing so is on the front of most of our buildings, on vehicles and uniforms, and on every document we write. (Matt 8:1-4 and elsewhere)

Healing people from leprosy was one of the tasks Jesus gave his disciples on their first ministry trips without him (Matt 10:8)

In the Great Commission, Jesus instructs his disciples to go and make more disciples from everywhere. "Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20). One of those commands was to heal people affected by leprosy.

As a mission we still exist precisely because we are following that command.

During the last supper Jesus told his disciples that those who have seen Him have seen God, the Father. That he is the way to God. That He and God, the Father are in each other. That his words are the Father's words and that his works are the evidence of this.



Then he said “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” (John 14:12)

“Even greater things than these” . Jesus healed some people of leprosy. Following his commands and believing in his word, the greater thing for The Leprosy Mission to achieve is to heal all people of leprosy.

Never doubt that diagnosing leprosy, prescribing medication, operating in theatre, making prosthetics, educating, training or advocating for people affected by leprosy or fundraising to enable these to happen, is following Jesus direct command. Every day we serve a God who loves people affected by leprosy.

And when transmission is zero by 2035 and in future years there is zero disability and zero discrimination we will have achieved an even greater thing.

We will have finished a task that Jesus started. *“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” (John 14:13-14)*

*Let us pray for the means, the passion, the determination and the commitment to see it through to the end –  
for the Father’s glory, in Jesus name.*

**Stuart McAra** – Head of Engagement, The Leprosy Mission Scotland. Stuart has worked with The Leprosy Mission since 2004



## To be in our place!

*"Who knows if it was not for a time like this that you came to royalty?" (Esther 4.14).*

What made the life of some people in the Bible a successful life was not their social rise, their fortune, their exploits ... but the fact that they were where God wanted them to be. to do what God expected of them. One of the most remarkable examples was certainly that of Queen Esther. This young Jewish woman deported to Susa, the capital of the immense Persian Median empire, will have a special destiny since she will become the wife of King Ahasuerus. This position will allow him to be the instrument by which God will protect his people. If "Esther" means, in Persian: star, in Hebrew, "Esther" means: veiled, hidden, which is related to discretion and humility. Ultimately, these two meanings are a shortcut to what a successful life is. It is a life that shines with the light that flows from a hidden life in Christ.

Esther, herself, who symbolizes the Church, reminds us of the hidden beauty mentioned in Song of Songs 4.1: "How beautiful you are, my friend, how beautiful you are! Your eyes are doves, behind your veil. " Is not this how God sees His Church through the work of Christ? It is when our life is hidden in Christ that we have succeeded. We then shine in the eyes of God of the beauty that is in his son. God sees us as: "this glorious Church, without spot, nor wrinkle, nor anything like it, but holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:27).

The book of Esther tells us about the Jews during the period of their captivity, far from their territory, and scattered among the nations of the Persian empire. In this book, events are organized, intertwined with each other in a providential way. Every character is where he needs to be at the right moment.

Success lies precisely in this great truth: To be where God wants us to be, and to do what God expects of us. By being where she should be, and doing what God expected of her, she is going to deliver Israel from Haman's clutches. His true success was not to be queen, but an instrument of salvation for the people.

*My prayer on this day: Lord, let me be in the place you want me to occupy. May my life contribute to this great desire that is yours: "God wants all men to be saved". (1 Timothy 2.4). I wish to experience the happiness of a successful life, being in the place that you have prepared me to participate in your project of salvation for all men. Amen!*

**Reverend Elie FOFOLO** - Born on August 5, 1964, son of a Baptist Pastor, both parents died. I am a pastor of vocation and formation, in 2001 I had my degree in Theology at the Protestant University in Congo (U.P.C). After working as a Pastor in the local Church of Kingabwa 1 from 2004 to 2011, I had a meeting with Angelika Piefer who headed the Coordination of the Mission against Leprosy in the Democratic Republic of Congo, from where I had this passion for people affected by Leprosy and I invited Angelika to come to World Leprosy Day in our church on Sunday 29/01/2012, in Kingabwa. This work led us to discover two girls from the same family with signs of leprosy, and their brother ended up being infected, but all three were treated and in good health. This sparked this passion to work as a volunteer in raising awareness, mobilization and the relationship with the local churches of the platform "Church of Christ in Congo" (E.C.C in acronym). - In July 2019, I obtained the Master in Psychotrauma, at the University of Kinshasa, at the Faculty of Medicine. Training that allows me to better listen to and accompany people who suffer trauma and stress for biopsychosocial care. - I am married to only one woman, Madame Espérance since 16/10/1988. From this union God gave us five children including two girls and three boys. Just like Abraham and Sarah, my wife and I, are willing to give up everything and go where the need for the Mission is felt. - Elie Fofolo is currently pastor at the local church of Masina 3, the 15th Congo Baptist Community in Kinshasa

*The French version read please below:*

## Être à notre place !

*“Qui sait si ce n’est pas pour un temps comme celui-ci que tu es parvenue à la royauté.”(Esther 4.14).*

Ce qui fait que la vie de certaines personnes, citées dans la Bible, fut une vie réussie, ce n’est pas leur ascension sociale, leur fortune, leurs exploits... mais le fait qu’elles étaient là où Dieu voulait qu’elles soient, pour faire ce que Dieu attendait d’elles.

L’un des exemples des plus remarquables fut certainement celui de la reine Esther. Cette jeune juive déportée à Suse, la capitale de l’immense empire Médo Persique, va avoir un destin particulier puisqu’elle deviendra l’épouse du roi Assuérus. Cette position lui permettra d’être l’instrument par lequel Dieu va protéger son peuple. Si “Esther” signifie, en Persan : étoile, en Hébreu, “Esther” signifie: voilée, cachée, ce qui est en rapport avec la discrétion et l’humilité. Finalement, ces deux significations sont un raccourci de ce qu’est une vie réussie. C’est une vie qui brille de la lumière qui découle d’une vie cachée en Christ.

Esther, elle-même, qui symbolise l’Église, nous rappelle cette beauté cachée mentionnée dans le Cantique des Cantiques 4.1 : *“Que tu es belle, mon amie, que tu es belle! Tes yeux sont des colombes, derrière ton voile”*. N’est-ce pas ainsi que Dieu voit son Église au travers de l’œuvre de Christ ? C’est lorsque notre vie est cachée en Christ que nous l’avons réussie. Nous brillons alors aux yeux de Dieu de cette beauté qui est en son fils. Dieu nous voit comme : *“cette Église glorieuse, sans tache, ni ride, ni rien de semblable, mais sainte et irrépréhensible»* (Éphésiens 5.27).

Le livre d’Esther nous parle des Juifs pendant la période de leur captivité, loin de leur territoire, et dispersés parmi les nations de l’empire Perse. Dans ce livre, les événements s’organisent, s’enchevêtrent les uns aux autres d’une manière providentielle. Chaque personnage est là où il doit être, au moment juste. La réussite réside justement dans cette grande vérité : Être là où Dieu veut que l’on soit, et faire ce que Dieu attend de nous. En étant là où elle devait être, et en faisant ce que Dieu attendait d’elle, elle va réussir à délivrer Israël des griffes d’Haman. Sa vraie réussite, ce ne fut pas d’être reine, mais un instrument de salut pour le peuple.

### **Ma prière en ce jour :**

*Seigneur, que je sois à la place que tu veux que j’occupe. Que ma vie contribue à ce grand désir qui est le tien : “Dieu veut que tous les hommes soient sauvés”. (1 Timothée 2.4). Je désire expérimenter le bonheur d’une vie réussie, en étant à la place que tu m’as préparée pour participer à ton projet de salut pour tous les hommes. Amen !*

**Révérend Elie FOFOLO** - Né le 05 Aout 1964, fils d’un Pasteur Baptiste les deux parents sont tous morts. Je suis pasteur de vocation et de formation, en 2001 j’ai eu ma licence en Théologie à l’Université Protestante au Congo (U.P.C). Après avoir travaillé comme Pasteur dans l’Église locale de Kingabwa 1 de 2004 à 2011, j’ai fait une rencontre avec Angelika Piefer qui dirigeait la Coordination de la Mission contre la Lèpre en République Démocratique du Congo, de là j’ai eu cette passion des personnes affectées par la Lèpre et j’ai invité Angelika de venir faire la Journée Mondiale Lèpre dans notre église le dimanche 29/01/2012, à Kingabwa. Ce travail nous a emmené à découvrir deux fillettes d’une même famille avec des signes de la lèpre et leur frère aussi a fini par être contaminé mais tous trois ont été soignés et sont en bonne santé. Cela suscita cette passion de travailler comme volontaire dans la sensibilisation, la mobilisation et la relation avec les églises locales de la plateforme "Eglise du Christ au Congo" (E.C.C en sigle). - En juillet 2019, j’ai obtenu le Master en Psycho-trauma, à l’Université de Kinshasa, à la faculté de Médecine. Une formation qui me permet de mieux écouter et d’accompagner les personnes qui souffrent des traumatismes et des stress pour une prise en charge biopsychosociale. - Je suis marié à une seule femme, madame Espérance depuis le 16/10/1988. De cette union Dieu nous a donné cinq enfants dont deux filles et trois garçons. - Tout comme Abraham et Sarah, ma femme et moi, sommes disposés de tout abandonner et aller où le besoin de la Mission se fait sentir. - Elie Fofolo est actuellement Pasteur à l’Église locale de Masina 3, de la 15<sup>ème</sup> Communauté Baptiste du Congo à Kinshasa



## The Holy of Holies

*“And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” Matthew 27: 50-51*

When I was an undergraduate studying theology in London I had an unusually enthusiastic lecturer. Often our New Testament lectures took place in an ugly, artificially lit basement lecture room, which isn't the most inspiring place on the planet, but that didn't dampen the enthusiasm of this lecturer.

His name was Robin Griffith-Jones and he was a Reverend at the Temple Church. He had white hair, always wore a shirt and jumper and had an astonishingly posh English voice. He was so very passionate about what he taught this group of largely non-Christian undergraduates.

One of things that he taught us has really stayed with me. It's when he told us about the tearing of the curtain of the Holy of Holies.

Robin took us through the history of the Holy of Holies. He explained that the Israelites revered this place as the very place that God resided on Earth; it was so holy that the High Priest was the only human who would be allowed in and even he was only allowed in once a year for a short time. It was surrounded by layers of curtains and an Israelite could only dream of the immense power that lay within.

Then Robin went on to explain that, at the moment of Christ's death, the curtain was torn. This unthinkable holy place was made open to us through Christ. But that wasn't astonishing enough for Robin. The power lay in *how* it was torn: from top to bottom.

God tore it. God said, 'Enough! Come in, be with me. This place is no longer out of bounds to you; through Christ we have broken down all barriers. I love you and I want a relationship with you.'

Wow. There's some very powerful messages in The Bible, but few are more powerful than that. And it gets better.

There's an American band called Kutless and they've got a song called 'Sea of Faces' which has the following set of lyrics that are played as the music cuts away and a voice sings along with just an acoustic

guitar: *“If only my one heart  
Was all you'd gain from all it cost  
Well I know you would have still been a man  
With a reason  
To willingly offer your life”*

God loves *you* so much that you can consider the tearing of that curtain as *your personal invitation* to a life with God. He loves you so much that He would still have sacrificed *everything* just to be with you.

*Next time you are feeling bad about yourself, remember just how much you are worth to the God who flung the stars into space. Even in your worst moments you are worth everything to Him.*



## Psalm 135

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD.

Praise the name of the LORD;  
praise him, you servants of the LORD,  
<sup>2</sup>you who minister in the house of the LORD,  
in the courts of the house of our God.

<sup>3</sup>Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;  
sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant.

<sup>4</sup>For the LORD has chosen Jacob to be his own,  
Israel to be his treasured possession.

<sup>5</sup>I know that the LORD is great,  
that our Lord is greater than all gods.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD does whatever pleases him,  
in the heavens and on the earth,  
in the seas and all their depths.

<sup>7</sup>He makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth;  
he sends lightning with the rain  
and brings out the wind from his storehouses.

<sup>8</sup>He struck down the firstborn of Egypt,  
the firstborn of people and animals.

<sup>9</sup>He sent his signs and wonders into your midst, Egypt,  
against Pharaoh and all his servants.

<sup>10</sup>He struck down many nations  
and killed mighty kings—

<sup>11</sup>Sihon king of the Amorites,  
Og king of Bashan,  
and all the kings of Canaan—

<sup>12</sup>and he gave their land as an inheritance,  
an inheritance to his people Israel.

<sup>13</sup>Your name, LORD, endures forever,  
your renown, LORD, through all generations.

<sup>14</sup>For the LORD will vindicate his people  
and have compassion on his servants.

<sup>15</sup>The idols of the nations are silver and gold,  
made by human hands.

<sup>16</sup>They have mouths, but cannot speak,  
eyes, but cannot see.

<sup>17</sup>They have ears, but cannot hear,  
nor is there breath in their mouths.

<sup>18</sup>Those who make them will be like them,  
and so will all who trust in them.

<sup>19</sup>All you Israelites, praise the LORD;  
house of Aaron, praise the LORD;

<sup>20</sup>house of Levi, praise the LORD;  
you who fear him, praise the LORD.

<sup>21</sup>Praise be to the LORD from Zion,  
to him who dwells in Jerusalem.

Praise the LORD.



## Psalm 136

<sup>1</sup>Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>2</sup>Give thanks to the God of gods.

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>3</sup>Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>4</sup>to him who alone does great wonders,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>5</sup>who by his understanding made the heavens,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>6</sup>who spread out the earth upon the waters,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>7</sup>who made the great lights—

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>8</sup>the sun to govern the day,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>9</sup>the moon and stars to govern the night;

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>10</sup>to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>11</sup>and brought Israel out from among them

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>12</sup>with a mighty hand and outstretched arm;

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>13</sup>to him who divided the Red Sea<sup>[a]</sup> asunder

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>14</sup>and brought Israel through the midst of it,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>15</sup>but swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea;

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>16</sup>to him who led his people through the wilderness;

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>17</sup>to him who struck down great kings,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>18</sup>and killed mighty kings—

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>19</sup>Sihon king of the Amorites

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>20</sup>and Og king of Bashan—

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>21</sup>and gave their land as an inheritance,

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>22</sup>an inheritance to his servant Israel.

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>23</sup>He remembered us in our low estate

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>24</sup>and freed us from our enemies.

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>25</sup>He gives food to every creature.

*His love endures forever.*

<sup>26</sup>Give thanks to the God of heaven.

*His love endures forever.*





## The Living Word

For God's Word is:

1. Supernatural in origin
2. Eternal in duration
3. Inexpressible in valour
4. Infinite in scope
5. Regenerative in power
6. Infallible in authority
7. Universal in application
8. Inspired in totality

We should:

1. Read it through
2. Write it down
3. Pray it in
4. Work it out
5. Pass it on

The Word of God changes a man until he becomes an epistle of God. The Word transforms the mind, changes the character from grace to grace, and gives us an inheritance in the Spirit, until we are conformed – God coming in, dwelling in us, walking in us, talking through us, and eating with us. There is no god like our God. I believe in the Holy Spirit.

God is love. *'He who abides in love abides in God'* (1 John 4:16). God wants to take ordinary men and bring them out into extraordinary conditions.

God has room for the thirsty man who is crying out for more of Himself.

It is not what we are, but it is what God wants us to be.

*'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for Christ is the kingdom of heaven'* (Matt 5:3). Beloved, let us rededicate ourselves afresh to God! Every new revelation means a new dedication.

Let us seek His face and let us take away from this meeting the desire of our hearts. For God has promised to fulfil, fill full, the desire of those who fear Him.

*Like faith,  
Like fulfilment. Amen*

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**Marie N Arnachellum** - Travel & Volunteer Co-ordinator, TLMEW

## Authors in Alphabetical Order

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Christine Osman	3 September		Psalm 13	5 September
Dan Izzett	12, 13 September		Psalm 37,23	10 September
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Elie Fofolo Rev	26 September		Psalm 128	1 September
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Marie Arnachellum	30 September		Psalm 132	15 September
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Tim Burton	27 September		Jeremiah 29	3 September
Trevor Durston	11 September		Matthew 6,19-21	24 September
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			Luke 10, 38-42	12, 13 September
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			Acts 13	9 September
			2 Cor 12,9	23 September
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The Bridge - TLM Daily Devotions

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