



TLM Daily Devotions

February 2023





Intro to the month and the year

It came to my mind how close we are now in time to celebrate in 2023 the 150th anniversary of TLM! Just a footstep... humainly said...

150 years ago this time Wellesley and Alice Bailey were already in Ambala as a teacher, sent by the American Presbyterian Mission, facing day by day with the suffering of people affected by leprosy.

"I almost shuddered...yet at the same time I was fascinated, and I felt, if ever there was a Christ-like work in the world it was to go amongst these poor sufferers and bring them the consolation, the hope of the gospel..."

The need is the same and the solution is the same.
Bringing consolation and hope of the Gospel is our task.

Let us equip ourselves with the Call and Strength of The One who is the same, and has not changed since then either!

May God bless us all!

Marta



JD

For much of my early life I was known, in the family, as JD. My sister was CM my big brother PR but curiously my little brother was always Graham, not GP.

I still call my big sister CM and she still calls me JD most of the time.

We children all had two forenames; my dad had 3! My mum was the odd one out having only one.

I only ever use the D name in full when I must complete official documents. Passport, driving licence etc.

So, when I sign anything, it is always as John D etc, etc.

D, of course stands for David.

In Scotland, David was the most popular boy's name in both 1954 and 1964 but declined rapidly in popularity. Last year it was the 86th most popular baby name in Scotland.

I must have been unconsciously aware of David's declining popularity as in my late teens and twenties I would tell anyone who asked that my middle name was Demetrius.

Initially this was to sound more interesting and vaguely exotic but very quickly I was doing it to tease and amuse.

I chose Demetrius as I knew it was a Bible name but knew little beyond that.

There are two people called Demetrius in the New Testament. One was a silversmith in Ephesus who made images of the goddess Artemis. Fearing a loss of business, he instigated the riot in Ephesus. See Acts 19.

The other Demetrius appears in 3 John 1,12 where this is written of him,

"¹² Everyone has a good word for Demetrius—the Truth itself stands up for Demetrius!" (The Message)

God's truth lived in Demetrius, and he expressed it in his behaviour and love for others.

The 'bad' Demetrius gets more verses than John's friend Demetrius which is as it should be.

Followers of Jesus, like Demetrius, just quietly get on with being salt and light.

By name I will remain David but in behaviour and love for others and service for God, I strive to be like John's friend Demetrius.

*Today, at home, at work, in all your relationships, conversations and communications
be a 3 John Demetrius.*



God promises us his blessings!

It is within God's nature and character to bless:

Psalm 115:12 – "The LORD has remembered us; He will bless us....."

1)GOD BLESSED US IN HIS CREATION.

Genesis 1:28 – "And God blessed them. And God said to them,

'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over it....'"

2)GOD BLESSED HIS DAY OF REST.

Gen. 2:2,3 – "And on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done,

and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done.

So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested...."

3)GOD BLESSED HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE.

Numbers 6:24 – "The LORD bless you and keep you...make His face to shine upon you...

be gracious to you...lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."

4)GOD BLESSED ABRAHAM(THE FATHER OF FAITH) AND ALL THE FAITHFUL AFTER HIM.

Gen. 12:3 – "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse,

and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

5)GOD BLESSES US THROUGH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.

Ephesians 1:3 – "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places"

6)GOD BLESSES US WITH MERCY, FORGIVENESS AND ETERNAL LIFE.

Luke 23:40-43 – "But the other criminal rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God,.....

we are receiving the due rewards of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.'

And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.'

And He said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'"

7)GOD BLESSES US TO BE A BLESSING.

1 Peter 3:9 – "Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless,

for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing."

Jeremiah 17:7 – "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,

whose trust is in the LORD."

-Amen.



Who are the N.T. heroes of faith ?

1) John the Baptist: Matth.11:9-11a – *“...Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.”*

2) The Early Church: Acts 11:26b– *“And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.”*
Part of their fellowship were Peter, Barnabas and Agabus!

3) N.T. Jews + Gentiles: Rom.11:11,23,33- *“Through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.....And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.... Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and how inscrutable His ways!”*

4) The Apostle Paul: 1Cor.11:1- *“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”* An example of life and learning about Christ!

5) The Apostle Paul: 2Cor.11:22-30- *“...Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I....Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one...with far greater labours...imprisonments...beatings...stoned...shipwrecked...adrift at sea...danger from robbers...danger in the wilderness...danger from false brothers...hunger...cold...the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.”* An example of love and devotion to Christ!

6) O.T. saints with a ‘N.T. faith’: Heb.11:1-40- *“...And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”*

Talking about O.T. heroes like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, etc.

7) God’s 2 End-Time witnesses: Rev.11:3-13 – *“And I will grant authority to my 2 witnesses, and they will prophecy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth...fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes...They have the power to shut the sky that no rain may fall... they have power over the waters to turn them into blood...to strike the earth with every kind of plague..the beast..will make war on them...and kill them...their dead bodies will lie in the street...But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them ...And they went up to Heaven in a cloud...and a tenth of the city fell... and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of Heaven.”*

8) You + I – the least in the Kingdom:Matth.11:11b- *“Yet the one who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John the Baptist.”* - As long as we have entered in correctly!
Matth11:28,29- *“Come to Me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*
Heb.11:6– *“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.”* -Amen.



Psalm 119

⋮ Ayin

- ¹²¹ I have done what is righteous and just;
do not leave me to my oppressors.
- ¹²² Ensure your servant's well-being;
do not let the arrogant oppress me.
- ¹²³ My eyes fail, looking for your salvation,
looking for your righteous promise.
- ¹²⁴ Deal with your servant according to your love
and teach me your decrees.
- ¹²⁵ I am your servant; give me discernment
that I may understand your statutes.
- ¹²⁶ It is time for you to act, LORD;
your law is being broken.
- ¹²⁷ Because I love your commands
more than gold, more than pure gold,
- ¹²⁸ and because I consider all your precepts right,
I hate every wrong path.



Psalm 119

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- ¹²⁹Your statutes are wonderful;
therefore I obey them.
- ¹³⁰The unfolding of your words gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple.
- ¹³¹I open my mouth and pant,
longing for your commands.
- ¹³²Turn to me and have mercy on me,
as you always do to those who love your name.
- ¹³³Direct my footsteps according to your word;
let no sin rule over me.
- ¹³⁴Redeem me from human oppression,
that I may obey your precepts.
- ¹³⁵Make your face shine on your servant
and teach me your decrees.
- ¹³⁶Streams of tears flow from my eyes,
for your law is not obeyed.



Christian Identity – Restored in Resurrection

Part 1 of 3 - Man's Identity at Creation: Image of God

Every human being at some point of time or the other in life faces 3 quintessential existential questions – Who am I (**Identity**), Why am I in this world (**Purpose**) and Where will I be after death (**Destiny**)? One may respond to these questions based on worldly experiences or search one's soul for a revelation by the Spirit of God. True answers to these questions can be found in the human soul and not in intellect.

God has created me by His grace in His image at the beginning of the Creation (Genesis 1:27). He loved me so much that He has created me as His replica. He was well pleased in creating me from the dust of the earth and breathed into my nostrils His Spirit of Life (Genesis 2:7). Physically, I am nothing but the dust of the earth; but God gave me His Spirit/Life. I have in me His precious breath which gives me hope in life to live as His child. An inert insignificant matter like dust has been made into a living being through God's power, love and grace.

My life is gifted to me by God. It is not of my own making. I am who I am because of God's grace. I have no privileges on my life beyond what He gives. Essentially and effectively my life is His, not mine. God's character is innate to me. I manifest God. Apart from the identity He gives, I have no other identity.

God determines who I am. Just as He has molded Man from the dust of the earth, He molds my character every day, smoothing out my imperfections (which are in plenty) as a potter molds clay into a pot which serves his purpose. I progress everyday as per His plan and purpose. My inherent value is given by God alone. The affirmation of my identity comes from God Himself. I am not a random happening physiologically or existentially. I did not evolve through an inexplicable sequence of random events. He created me according to His will for His pleasure and purpose (Psalm 139:14).

I am infinitely small in the universe, but uniquely precious to God (Psalm 8:3-8). No two individuals in this world are the same. Each one's DNA is distinctly different; a mystery scientists are unable to reason it out. Just as each one's identity, each one's reality is also different according to God's plan.

My creation is magnificent, a phenomenon far above the rest of the created things, a physiological entity embodying God's Spirit. I am the epitome of the created world. I am the crown of God's creation. I am His masterpiece, highest form of His creation. I am created at the creation; my existence coexists with creation of the world. God had created first everything in the world and finally Man/Me.

My identity is not my own. I belong to God by His grace and mercy. There is nothing in me that He does not know or made. I owe everything that I am to my creator. I am His child. I walked with my Father in the cool of the day enjoying His fellowship in the Garden of Eden. Scriptures do not record fellowship of God with any form of His creation other than with man, what a privilege! what love!

God blessed man and gave him the dominion/charge over all animate and inanimate things of creation in the world (Genesis 1:28). I have the authority as well as the responsibility to represent God and care/tend for His creation. I am His steward in His Kingdom, accountable for its wellness.

God gave me the free will to make my choices to reflect His very own nature as the Supreme God. I lost the fellowship with my Father God by succumbing to Satan's deceptions. I exercised my free will gift to disobey my own Creator. I sinned in my unbelief of what God said, that eating from the tree of good and evil will lead to my death, separation from God. The God of justice had dealt with my sin in the Garden of Eden by casting me out from His presence. I lost my identity as the Child of God.

I am God's creation, in His image.

In gratitude for His grace

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



The Vision (1)

“Look at the sky and count the stars [...] such will be your descendants” Genesis 15.5

A vision is the ability God gives to see the invisible. Without vision, “the people live in disorder” (Pr 29.18, PDV). When God told Abraham that he would be the father of many nations, he and Sarah were old and had no children. On a human level, it seemed impossible. So, God “led Abram out. [...] “Look at the sky and count the stars [...] such will be your offspring”.

Abraham not only had to hear what God was saying to him, but also visualize it. Although the promise did not come true until twenty years later, the stars in the sky were a constant reminder of God's faithfulness. Woodrow Wilson says, “A man without a vision is incapable of realizing a big dream or undertaking a big project.” Before putting an idea into practice, you must first see it through the eyes of faith and impress the image of it on your mind. Jesus said, “If your eye is good, your whole body will be enlightened, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be in darkness” (Mt 6:22-23).

One day, Michelangelo examined a block of poor-quality marble. But he said, "To me it is invaluable because an angel is locked inside, I have to free him." A vision changes the direction of a life. It functions as a barometer which indicates the maximum level and the minimum level. Here is the good news: even if the outer circumstances seem bleak, today God can give a new vision and a new future.

Prayer of the day

Lord, give me a new vision!

LA VISION (1)

« REGARDE LE CIEL ET COMPTE LES ÉTOILES [...] TELLE SERA TA DESCENDANCE » GENÈSE 15.5

Une vision, c’est la capacité que Dieu donne de voir l’invisible. Sans vision, « le peuple vit dans le désordre » (Pr 29.18, PDV). Lorsque Dieu dit à Abraham qu’il sera le père d’une multitude de nations, Sarah et lui étaient âgés et n’avaient pas d’enfants. Sur le plan humain, ça semblait impossible. Alors Dieu « mena Abram dehors. [...] “Regarde le ciel et compte les étoiles [...] telle sera ta descendance” ».

Abraham devait non seulement entendre ce que Dieu lui disait, mais également le visualiser. Bien que la promesse ne se soit réalisée que vingt ans plus tard, les étoiles dans le ciel étaient un rappel constant de la fidélité de Dieu.

Woodrow Wilson affirme : « Un homme sans vision est incapable de réaliser un grand rêve ou d’entreprendre un grand projet. » Avant de concrétiser une idée, il faut d’abord la voir à travers les yeux de

la foi et en imprimer l'image dans son esprit. Jésus a dit : « Si ton œil est en bon état, tout ton corps sera illuminé, mais si ton œil est en mauvais état, tout ton corps sera dans les ténèbres » (Mt 6.22-23).

Un jour, Michel-Ange examine un bloc de marbre de mauvaise qualité. Mais il dit : « Pour moi il est inestimable car un ange est enfermé à l'intérieur, je dois le libérer. » Une vision change la direction d'une vie. Elle fonctionne comme un baromètre qui indique le niveau maximum et le niveau minimum. Voici la bonne nouvelle : même si les circonstances extérieures paraissent sombres, aujourd'hui Dieu peut donner une nouvelle vision et un nouvel avenir.

Prière du jour

Seigneur, donne moi une nouvelle vision

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 vision (2)

“Here I am doing a new thing [...] will you not recognize it?” Isaiah 43.19

Life reflects thoughts, creativity, and vision. Paul writes: “But we have the mind of Christ” (1Co 2.16, BFC). A blind man asks Saint Anthony: “What's worse than losing your sight?” He answers: “Losing the vision. One author clarifies this, “You may not be experiencing God's best because your eyesight needs improvement. You say: “I have problems, debts, I feel lonely”. Don't let these thoughts take hold. Replace them with images of success, strength, good health, growth, dreams to accomplish. Let these images take root, internalize them. Read these verses:

- “I can do all things in him who makes me strong” (Phil 4.13, BFC).
- “This is the day the Lord has made” (Ps 118.24).
- “We are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Ro 8.37, NBS).
- “God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ” (2Co 2.14).
- “For you, Lord, you bless the righteous [...] you surround him with favor” (Ps 5.13).
- “Yes, happiness and grace will accompany me all the days of my life” (Ps 23.6)”.

In the past, wine was stored in new leather wineskins. And just like “new wine cannot be put into old wineskins” (Mt 9:17), God will not give you a new vision unless you let go of your old attitudes. God said, “Behold, I am doing a new thing, will you not recognize it? “. He wants to make something new in your life today. Are you ready to change your old way of thinking?

Prayer of the day

Help me, Jesus, to get rid of old attitudes!

La vision (2)

« Voici que je fais une chose nouvelle [...] ne la reconnaîtrez-vous pas ? » Esaïe 43.19

La vie reflète les pensées, la créativité et la vision. Paul écrit : « Mais nous, nous avons la pensée du Christ » (1Co 2.16, BFC). Un aveugle demande à Saint Antoine : « Qu'y a-t-il de pire que perdre la vue ? » Celui-ci répond : « Perdre la vision. » Un auteur précise : « Vous n'expérimentez sans doute pas le meilleur de Dieu car votre vision a besoin d'être améliorée. Vous dites : “J'ai des problèmes, des dettes, je me sens seul(e)”. Ne laissez pas ces pensées s'installer. Remplacez-les par les images de réussite, de force, de bonne santé, de croissance, de rêves à accomplir. Laissez ces images s'enraciner, intériorisez-les. Lisez ces versets :

- “Je peux tout en celui qui me rend puissant” (Ph 4.13, BFC).
- “C'est ici la journée que l'Éternel a faite” (Ps 118.24).

- “Nous sommes plus que vainqueurs par celui qui nous a aimés” (Ro 8.37, NBS). “Dieu, qui nous fait toujours triompher en Christ” (2Co 2.14).
- “Car toi Éternel, tu bénis le juste [...] tu l'environnes de faveur” (Ps 5.13).
- “Oui, le bonheur et la grâce m'accompagneront tous les jours de ma vie” (Ps 23.6) ».

Autrefois, on conservait le vin dans des outres en cuir neuves. Et tout comme « on ne met pas [...] du vin nouveau dans de vieilles outres » (Mt 9.17), Dieu ne vous donnera pas de nouvelle vision si vous ne lâchez pas les anciennes attitudes. Dieu dit : « Voici que je fais une chose nouvelle, ne la reconnaissez-vous pas ? ». Il veut faire du neuf dans votre vie aujourd'hui. Êtes-vous prêt(e) à changer votre vieille façon de penser ?

Prière du jour

Aide-moi Jésus, à me débarrasser des anciennes attitudes

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



Barefoot on holy ground

“When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Exodus 3:4-5

“Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand..... The commander of the LORD’s army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.” Joshua 5:13,15

“..Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.” John 13:4-5

The Bible is full of stories of people’s encounters with God. They are often very different, but if you look deeper they are still very similar. The places may differ, and the circumstances may differ but a real meeting with God is to enter into holy ground. I’m sure we all may remember in our own lives such holy moments in God’s presence.

For **Moses** the encounter with God was a moment of calling into the real purpose of his life. He had been prepared by God during 80 years for this new step of leadership and he will later be considered as one of the world’s most important national leaders. Now the burning sand in the wilderness became holy ground. It all started barefoot on holy ground!

Joshua was facing a difficult task to lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land. To defeat Jericho was impossible for him and he couldn’t find a relevant strategy. Then he met “the commander of the army of the LORD” with a divine strategy. It all started barefoot on holy ground!

The disciples didn’t know that they spent their last night together with Jesus but later they understood that Jesus that night was giving them the key and calling for the future. He was sending them into the world with the Gospel. That night it all started with Jesus washing their feet and they were all barefoot around the table on holy ground taking part in the Holy Communion!

It’s interesting that both Moses and Joshua and later the disciples were asked to take off their shoes when they entered holy ground. Why?

- Don’t run away! Stay! A human reaction could be to try to escape God’s calling. It’s not easy to run away without shoes so we have to stop and listen to God and to be equipped by him.
- It’s a question of respect for God when we take off our shoes. We are not afraid of God, but we respect him. To stay before God barefoot is a sign of humility.
- We are ready to take off our own shoes and stop guiding ourselves and be ready to follow his guidance and direction. We want to be obedient to God and his will.
- Without shoes we are without protection for the skin. We are ready to be vulnerable and sensitive. And ready to be touched by God’s presence.

I'm sure that this is our own experiences. We remember the precious moments of God's presence in our lives when we had to take off our own shoes. But those experiences are the starting point of a new step with God and a new journey with him like it was for Moses, Joshua and the disciples.

We have to take off our shoes, but God will give us new shoes! The prodigal son came to his father without shoes but he quickly received a brand new pair of shoes for the future.

"...and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace." Eph. 6:15

Allan Ekstedt, Nordic Hub



5 Things You Need to Know Today

Over the past year, I have been receiving a notification on my mobile phone each morning entitled '5 things you need to know today'. Circulated by a national news agency, the digital link provides me with a helpful summary of the top news stories that I (according to the news agency) need to know each day to keep me abreast of national and international news events.

Whilst it is a helpful summary of news items, with the passing of each day, it has made me reflect on a few questions - In knowing these things, how is my day different? If I didn't know them, what difference would it make? What are the 5 things that I **really** need to know each day – things that will influence me for the better, to be the best version of myself (as God created and intended me to be) and live a life of fullness as Jesus promised?

If you had to choose 5 things to know, what would they be?

Here's my list:

1. I am loved beyond measure

God loves me. Even when I am in sin, full of doubt, and covered in the messes of this life He loves me so much that He sent His Son to take my place and die for me. There are lots of verses in the Bible that speak about God's love for us. This verse is one of my favourites: *'The Lord your God is with you, the mighty warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you: in His love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.'* Zephaniah 3:17

2. I am called by name

In my mother's womb, God created me. The creator of the universe, the one who hung the stars into space knit me together. He breathed life into me. Psalm 139 v 14 reminds me that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. He knows me intimately. The very hairs on my head are counted. He knows my name. He knows me. I am His. (Isaiah 43:1)

3. God sees me

In Genesis 16 v 13, Hagar (Sarai's mistreated servant) refers to the Lord as 'You are the God who sees me'. In her distress, pregnant and running away from her master, she encounters God. This encounter, and her new found understanding that God sees her, changes everything. So much so that she is able to go back to the difficult situation that she was running away from and face the challenges that each day will bring.

4. God is with me each day, no matter what that day brings

God's promise, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you' is found in multiple books of the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. With this promise we can be assured that He is always with us and we are never alone no matter what our circumstances or how we feel. This promise is truth which we can depend upon and live our lives on.

5. God's plans for me are to prosper and not to harm me

‘Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture’ (Psalm 37:3)

‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight’ (Proverbs 3: 5-6)

‘For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.’ (Jeremiah 29:11-13)

God’s heart is for us, not against us. He can bring good out of every situation. As in the verses above, we often need to respond to God’s love through actions (trusting, doing good, submitting, calling upon, praying, seeking) in order to fully know and live out, and in, His goodness for us.

If we all could really understand these 5 biblical truths and live each day in their reality how different would our days be? How different would our relationships be? How different would our communities and world be like?

I am going to try. What about you?

Joanne Briggs – TLM Northern Ireland Country Leader since 2014



Psalm 119

✠ Tsadhe

- ¹³⁷ You are righteous, LORD,
and your laws are right.
- ¹³⁸ The statutes you have laid down are righteous;
they are fully trustworthy.
- ¹³⁹ My zeal wears me out,
for my enemies ignore your words.
- ¹⁴⁰ Your promises have been thoroughly tested,
and your servant loves them.
- ¹⁴¹ Though I am lowly and despised,
I do not forget your precepts.
- ¹⁴² Your righteousness is everlasting
and your law is true.
- ¹⁴³ Trouble and distress have come upon me,
but your commands give me delight.
- ¹⁴⁴ Your statutes are always righteous;
give me understanding that I may live.



Psalm 119

ק Qoph

¹⁴⁵ I call with all my heart; answer me, LORD,
and I will obey your decrees.

¹⁴⁶ I call out to you; save me
and I will keep your statutes.

¹⁴⁷ I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I have put my hope in your word.

¹⁴⁸ My eyes stay open through the watches of the night,
that I may meditate on your promises.

¹⁴⁹ Hear my voice in accordance with your love;
preserve my life, LORD, according to your laws.

¹⁵⁰ Those who devise wicked schemes are near,
but they are far from your law.

¹⁵¹ Yet you are near, LORD,
and all your commands are true.

¹⁵² Long ago I learned from your statutes
that you established them to last forever.



The Mission Imperative 1 - Thomas

'Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.' (John 20:29)

Five years residence in Chennai gave us frequent reminders of the life of one of Christ's disciples - Thomas. I would take great pleasure in showing visitors some of the sites of the Thomas Pilgrimage: the area where he is said to have lived; the cave where he hid when being hunted down for converting a Brahmin; St Thomas's Mount where he was assassinated.

He had brought the gospel to the Indian subcontinent, still TLM's widest field of service. It was to a people where visual images dominate religious worship, so not surprising that 2000 years later they still appreciate the visual. I loved taking visitors to another location on the pilgrimage: Little Mount. Here there are larger than life-size displays of the 14 Stations of the Cross, ending up at a model of Thomas kneeling at the feet of Jesus, with the words: 'My Lord and my God!'

Fifteen hundred years later questions had arisen in India about the humanity and divinity of Christ. The pope sent Francis Xavier, co-founder of the Jesuits, to emphasise to the people that Jesus was both. Some time later he arrived in Chennai, spending several months in the Cathedral of St Thomas, much of the time in the Chapel of Our Lady of Mylapore. There he pondered and planned his mission to China and the Far East. Christendom owes much to the Catholic orders for its expansion worldwide in the pre-reformation era.

I showed visitors the Mylapore Chapel, especially explaining how Francis Xavier used it as a place of quietness and meditation in planning missionary strategy. I was even happier to point out the small stained glass window behind the altar, above which is the effigy of Christ, risen, ascending, crowned and glorified. The wording on the stained glass: 'Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.'

I'm tempted to suggest those words could be slightly amended for TLM and other health workers to something like this:

'Blessed are those who have not been healed and still have believed.'

Apart from his work with The Salvation Army, South African born **Dr Paul du Plessis** has had a number of honorary roles with TLM dating back to his work at TLM Field Representative for TLM for Zambia in the 1970s. He is a former vice-president of TLMI.



The Mission Imperative 2 - John Wesley

'Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; ' (Isaiah 51:1)

It was well worth visiting Wesley's Chapel in the city of London. I could picture the 18th century founder of Methodism in the pulpit, visit his modest house and learn a little more about Methodist history in the museum.

I knew something of his background as an ardent university student at Oxford where his methodical and systematic approach to devotion and study earned him and a group of friends the unofficial title of 'Methodists'. I knew of his early ministry as an Anglican priest, his ministry in Georgia, USA, his spiritual awakening and his emphasis on holiness. But I had no idea of his interest in electrical therapy. 'So even someone with such significant theological ability could be concerned about human health and well-being,' I thought.

But perhaps the most enduring memory was to see the simple kneeler in the small room off his bedroom - his place for prayer.

Here was an Anglican with a difference. His formal training for the priesthood completed, he associated with the Moravians, generally recognised as the first post-reformation missionary society. But it was with the Anglican-oriented United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel that he went to Georgia. His ministry was compromised by the breakdown in a romantic relationship and he returned to England, surviving a dramatically frightening trans- Atlantic passage.

Still under the continuing influence of the Moravians, he experienced a radical deepening of faith. He discovered in a new way that spiritual transformation is 'by grace through faith'. He eventually broke from the Anglicans and Methodism was born.

He called the world his parish, but concentrated his own ministry on England. Wesley's assistant, Thomas Coke, was the driving force for world mission that ultimately led to the formation of the Methodist Missionary Society in 1818. It is an example of a leader needing others to help him achieve his vision; or for one to concentrate on the 'home base' and another 'the field'. Wesley saw Coke as his likely successor; others had different views. Unperturbed, Coke devoted himself to the fundamental task of initiating, organising and (importantly) financing the earliest overseas missions. Even Wesley and Coke were not without their opponents!

I left the chapel reflecting on whether any of this was relevant for us today - for current day Methodists, for The Salvation Army (it grew out of Methodism) and for me.

I add another question today: *What about The Leprosy Mission?*

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The Mission Imperative 3 - William Carey and others

'We hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.' (Acts 2:11)

'Preach the gospel and use words if necessary,' might have become something of a TLM mantra. It's good advice but it does highlight the dual ministry of preaching and healing to which our Lord commissioned the twelve.

Leaders in my early days with TLM often mentioned William Carey, the 'father of the modern missionary movement' who underlined the importance of a supporting organisation and background prayer. The Baptist Missionary Society resulted from his challenge in 1792. And of course prayer features strongly in the life of TLM. A natural with languages himself, India and the world owes him a great debt with another major contribution with translation of the New Testament and the Bible into Bengali.

In the 1960s, six months study of Zambian Tonga at London's School of Oriental and African Studies stood us in good stead for our twelve years at Chikankata, where local teacher, Ken Maguswi, followed on as language tutor and mentor. During those years we appreciated meeting Cecil Hopgood, author of our Tonga grammar. He told us how, after a day's work in the classroom at the nearby Kafue Secondary School, he'd sat up late into the night with a paraffin lamp, translating the Bible. Sometimes he had to create ideas rather than words that conveyed meaning. We had a similar experience when sitting in on a working group led by Jake Loewen working on the Tonga equivalent of the Good News Bible. Participants ended the session at the bottom of our garden, looking at an early-flowering tree with strong resemblance to an almond tree. No wonder they decided it should be incorporated in Jeremiah 1:11.

I'm no linguist myself, but understand the importance of communicating the truth accurately, so my prayer would sometimes include a request for 'the gift of tongues' - so that, as on the Day of Pentecost, people would understand. In later years, my late wife, Margaret, served as international literature secretary with The Salvation Army, sometimes collaborating with organisations such as the *International Bible Society* or The *Evangelical Literature Trust* that became *Langham Partnership*. She often reminded us that she was aiming to distribute Christian literature 'in the language of the people at a price they can afford'.

And now I'm on a list of prayer partners with Johan Velema, one-time Director of TLM's Evaluation Unit. In more recent years he has been involved in a massive undertaking. He is managing a programme that encourages theologians from the global south to write Bible commentaries for their own context and in their local language. It is sponsored by the *Langham Partnership* and teams from different continents are involved. The first volume on the first 11 chapters of Genesis was published in 2022. The author is from Bangladesh. He wrote his commentary in Bengali, showing connections between the Biblical text and local mythology and beliefs. I suspect William Carey would approve.

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The Mission Imperative 4 - C T Studd

'For me to live is Christ...' (Philippians 1:21)

Charles Studd was born in 1869 into a wealthy English family who had made their fortune during the days of the Raj in India. Educated in Eton and Cambridge, he also became a well-known cricketer nationally. He was batting when England lost to Australia and the stumps were burned to become 'The Ashes'. A radical conversion experience with a commitment to a fundamental faith and then world mission under the influence of Hudson Taylor led to nine years in China where he met his wife. Cricket was a thing of the past.

Ill health brought him back to England but a few years later he proceeded to India where he pastored the Union Church in Ootacamund. I got to know the church, largely because our son was at school there. I recall listening to a speaker urging us to consider the opportunities for mission to 'tribals'. It was not C T Studd speaking, but his influence lingered there nearly a hundred years later. It had an impact on my own emphases as I encouraged colleagues to recognise evangelistic opportunities.

But the inner conviction to return to 'mission' overpowered his wife's plea and medical advice not to leave Britain and he proceeded to Africa where he established the *Heart of Africa Mission*. It later became *World Evangelisation for Christ*, and more recently *WEC International*. His wife remained in England, largely to administer the office - another important part of 'mission'.

In 2003 Glenn Schwartz of *World Mission Associates* invited me to meet up with several other executives involved in mission. I had the good fortune to sit next to Patrick Johnstone, former executive director of *WEC* and author of *Operation World*. We discovered we shared so many values, priorities and hopes. The day galvanised my own commitments!

On the death of his father, C T Studd gave his inheritance to several missionary causes, among them to Commissioner Booth-Tucker for his work with The Salvation Army in India. When I visited its headquarters in Mumbai I was told that his donation had contributed to its construction. He knew how to deny himself, to take up his cross and follow Christ.

To all who questioned the wisdom of his choice, Studd's reply could be found printed on the postcard that graced his desk:

'If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.'

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The Mission Imperative 5 - Frederick Booth- Tucker

'... so that in one way or another I might win some.' (1 Cor 9:22)

Named as *'William Booth's First Gentleman'* by his biographer, he grew up in the comforts of a wealthy family. His father, William Tucker, was assistant commissioner serving under the Raj in India. Well educated in England, Frederick returned to India in the same capacity in Amritsar and elsewhere.

He was converted under the ministry of Moody and Sanky, but having read The Salvation Army's paper *The War Cry*, he volunteered to join. General Booth was hesitant, feeling he was too sophisticated for a denomination committed to a life of simplicity, managing with the least of resources. But Tucker won the day and persuaded Booth to allow him and his wife, Louisa Mary, to return to India in 1882. In later life, after her death, he married into the Booth family, now with the name, Booth-Tucker.

Their initial approach was to focus ministry on the higher castes, but made little headway, so changed and concentrated on the Dalit community.

Following the example of Hudson-Taylor in China, he and his colleagues attempted to identify with the people, adopting their clothing, styles of living and names, his was *Fakir Singh* (a saintly person). Success was still limited.

He embarked on another mission, this time to Gujarat, accompanied by a converted Sri Lankan Buddhist, Arnolis Weerasooriya. One night the two camped under a tamarind tree outside the village of Atmapur. Booth-Tucker was still asleep when the villagers came to check their visitors. Seeing the sleeping man's feet they asked Weerasooriya why they were so badly blistered. His explanation led them to exclaim: 'If this man can do this for us, we must follow that way.' It was the beginning of a wider acceptance of the gospel. Booth-Tucker often said: 'I never preached a better sermon than with my feet that day!' He went on to spend many years in India, ultimately coordinating Salvation Army work in the subcontinent.

It was a role in which I succeeded him a hundred years later, and in that capacity in 2003 my late wife and I were invited to lead a gathering of some 15000 Salvationists meeting for *an Atmik Mela* (spiritual festival) in Gujarat. It was especially meaningful to be under canvas alongside the tamarind tree at Atmapur! In one of the services in an impromptu moment I called for a bowl and basin and proceeded to wash my colleague's feet. 'Will this be a more powerful sermon than anything I say?' I thought to myself. An unusual silence broke to the sound of a tabala, a singer took the microphone, someone accompanied *ex tempore* on the keyboard. Dancers took to the floor. What better way to celebrate in gratitude for all that had happened and most of all, to the One whose example we were following?

TLM staff know all about feet, especially those without sensation. I suspect some of us might occasionally echo Booth-Tucker, *'We will never preach a better sermon than by the way we deal with our patients' feet.'*

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Psalm 119

ⲁ Resh

¹⁵³ Look on my suffering and deliver me,
for I have not forgotten your law.

¹⁵⁴ Defend my cause and redeem me;
preserve my life according to your promise.

¹⁵⁵ Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek out your decrees.

¹⁵⁶ Your compassion, LORD, is great;
preserve my life according to your laws.

¹⁵⁷ Many are the foes who persecute me,
but I have not turned from your statutes.

¹⁵⁸ I look on the faithless with loathing,
for they do not obey your word.

¹⁵⁹ See how I love your precepts;
preserve my life, LORD, in accordance with your love.

¹⁶⁰ All your words are true;
all your righteous laws are eternal.



Psalm 119

Ⲱ Sin and Shin

- ¹⁶¹ Rulers persecute me without cause,
but my heart trembles at your word.
- ¹⁶² I rejoice in your promise
like one who finds great spoil.
- ¹⁶³ I hate and detest falsehood
but I love your law.
- ¹⁶⁴ Seven times a day I praise you
for your righteous laws.
- ¹⁶⁵ Great peace have those who love your law,
and nothing can make them stumble.
- ¹⁶⁶ I wait for your salvation, LORD,
and I follow your commands.
- ¹⁶⁷ I obey your statutes,
for I love them greatly.
- ¹⁶⁸ I obey your precepts and your statutes,
for all my ways are known to you.



“What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

On 12 March 1488, the Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias arrived at the Cape and named it the "Cape of Storms". King John II of Portugal renamed it the "Cape of Good Hope" (Cabo da Boa Esperança) because it opened a sea route to the East.

However, I think Bartolomeu's name was more accurate. In Portuguese, the name is "Cabo das Tormentas", and I can assure you, that when you go walking or paddling in the shrieking teeth of a South Easter, it most certainly feels like torment.

We're coming to the end of the worst of our summer storms. During winter – especially July and August – the wind switches direction and huge North-westerly storms pummel the coast, as a result of which, there are several wrecks along our beaches.

Some time ago, a small ship was driven onto one of the beaches near our home. This being Cape Town, where nothing much happens, we all went down to the beach to look at it. It seemed like a lost cause. The waves were driving it ever higher onto the sand we assumed that it would soon be declared a wreck and that the salvage crew would start cutting it up. However, the operator of the local rescue tug was quietly optimistic. He assured us that the spring tide was a few days away and that he would be able to re-float the ship. This looked improbable, but one morning we awoke to find our beach empty. Spring tide had arrived during the early hours of the morning and the tug had managed to free the ship and tow it to the harbour. Seems that Archimedes was onto something.

I think we all find ourselves looking at ships on the beach at some point, thinking, "No, this will never float, no matter how hard I push it."

The thing is, we are looking at the ship without a full understanding of the principles that allow it to float. Are there tasks you face this year that look a bit like ship wreck about to happen?

If so, I invite you to consider these words of Jesus from Luke 18:27

“What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

When we looked at the ship on the beach, we thought the tug would rely on its power to free the ship. In fact, the tug merely held the ship in place whilst the water rushed in around the hull – once the ship had risen above the sand, the tug was able to move it away.

The people who had been listening to Jesus were astounded to hear that it was so difficult for a rich man [a blessed man] to be saved. Who could be saved then? They were looking at the process of salvation from the wrong perspective, a process that they thought meant "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" [Luke 18: 18] Are you and I focusing on thinking about how you should push that ship?

Be assured, with His help, it will float, but we need to look at the task differently. He will send the tide at the pointed time and it will float free.

Maybe you and I need to be pulling the ship less and understanding His ways more deeply.

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.



“Dear Sir, I am!”

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” Romans 3:23-24

Recently I watched a documentary about a conflict just within living memory in which dreadful genocides were committed. It questioned some on the perpetrating side, now very elderly, about whether they knew what was happening, and to what extent they felt responsible or guilty. How did they see it decades later; did they regard themselves as perpetrators?

Their responses varied; some were surprising. At one extreme a man had no compunction over what happened and his part in it; he still believed in the ideology that had led to mass murder; he regretted the deaths, but now believed that the ‘final solution’ should have been reached another way. Another outlined the classic ‘excuses’: “I didn’t realise what was happening, if I had I would have acted differently; I was only obeying orders; I had no choice, if I had resisted I would have been shot.”

Perhaps the most moving response was that of a man interviewed by college students. He got heated when challenged by those who were not brought up with the same ideologies and pressures. But his closing remark, passionately expressed to those young people, was “Don’t be blinded!”

It reminded me of a current discussion from history: To what extent were European people (and Churches) aware of the slave trade which supplied cheap primary products and brought the wealth behind many of today’s cities and institutions? Should reparations be made now, and if so, how? Then there are the complex arguments about subsequent colonialism and its role in Christian mission and interpretation.

And what of today? With all the spectrum of media there is no concealment from genocide, terrorism, persecution, corruption, injustice, exploitation, profiteering, trafficking, violent rejection of democratic process and so on. No-one can say “I didn’t know”.

Scripture shows this is not new. At the end of Judges we read, “*In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.*” (21:25); and it didn’t get much better when there were kings! In Romans 1 and 2 Paul sums up in graphic terms what happens when people turn from God; then he concludes, “*...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (3:23). So we are all -in a sense- both victims and perpetrators of a fallen world. Early last century a similar discussion was conducted in the press: ‘What is wrong with the world?’. Writer G. K. Chesterton responded in The Times, “*Dear Sir, I am.*”.

We thank God that this verdict is not the end of His salvation story. Paul goes on, “*...all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*” This is our Gospel. God is not finished with us or with His world, even though at the moment, “*the whole of creation (is) groaning*”, in His good time, “*the creation ... will be liberated*” (Romans 8:22 and 21).

The challenge for each of us is to walk with God through the valleys of shadows, expressing His proactive love in today's world in whatever ways we can, knowing that on another day we will be enfolded in His arms in a new, tear-wiped world.

May God bless you today.

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 has recently retired from the pastorate but continues as a volunteer speaker for TLM



A Story of Change

In the primary school where I have been working as a school-pastor, the previous academic year was named “the year of mission”. We tried to present several different branches of mission to the children and the teachers.

That’s why I invited Rev. Márta Fazekas Riskó, leader of TLM Hungary. She gave a really great presentation with a lot of pictures, after which the audience could ask questions. While Márta was talking, we watched the photos, the adults and the kids were amazed, and questions were asked... a thought was born in me that is (I believe) God-given:

What if the kids donated their money that they get for buying crisps for themselves?

Unfortunately or not (irrelevant from the perspective of the topic), but most of our students can or do buy a bag of crisps every single day. They get the money for it at home. My request towards the kids was that whoever is willing should offer the price of an average quality crisps (300 HUF) for people affected by leprosy seen on the photos and others like them. Since this was money that was given to the kids for snacks, and they already had it with them, this donation had higher value because it was not given directly by the parents as usual, but the kids sacrificed their own.

It was fascinating and sometimes even positively shocking to hear the reaction of a child. They said stuff like this:

- “The crisps I like don’t cost 300 but more, so I brought 500.”
- “Can I still donate? I would like to but I forgot it at home. I’ll get it after school, please wait for me.”
- “How much do I have to give?”, to which another kid: “You don’t have to but you can. Didn’t you hear ‘pastor Momo?’” She has already told us like a hundred times.”

It was a satisfying, pleasant feeling too that I had not even had enough time to count the paper money box before the teachers came to me saying that although it is not their “crisps money”, and it is not the same amount (but more than the kids’) they still would like to drop it off.

Later when the charity had dealt with the money, we got to know what treatment and child our donations were spent on. I told the school’s community and a couple of our students came to me, and asked “Then they are really not sick anymore? Just because we gave them our “crisps money”? How cool is that?” – then left me with a smile.

“Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40)

Rev Mrs Momo Victor – school-pastor and volunteer of TLM Hungary



Something New

Don't we all love "something new"! So does our Heavenly Father!

To mention a few: New Birth, New Creation, New Song, New Wine, New Moon Feasts...

For the work of Jesus to be fully effective and implemented our Heavenly Father had to make a "**New Covenant**" available to the "**God-kind or God-image**" creation. He had what is called an "Old Covenant" with a nation called Israel but He needed a "**New Covenant**" for all people from "*every tribe, every tongue and every nation*" and only Jesus could make it happen!

The New Covenant

*Hebrews 8:7-13 NIVUK "For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: 'The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a **new covenant** with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the LORD. This is the **covenant** I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the LORD. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbours, or say to one another, "Know the LORD," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. 'By calling this **covenant** 'new', he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear."*

It seems that trying to get the Israelites to follow very detailed rules and regulations was not easy for them and this disappointed our Heavenly Father so much: "*they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the LORD*" so He instigated the **New Covenant** which He'd conceived before He established the foundations of the earth!

- I. *I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.*
 - A. I feel this means that we'll be able to serve our Heavenly Father from our **hearts** and not just our minds. This includes passion, compassion and God-given emotions and responses.
- II. *I will be their God, and they will be my people.*
 - A. We all become part of God's forever family from every tribe, nation and language!
- III. *they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.*
 - A. The old to the young, the rich to the poor, the clever to the not so clever, in other words: **EVERYBODY!**
- IV. *I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.*
 - A. Thank you our Heavenly Father for **forgetting** my sins!
 - B. It's a godly trait to forget the wrong things others do to us, it's also an expression of true love.

Don't you love God's **New Things** for us! Don't you feel like shouting: *Thank you God for sending Jesus, thank you Jesus that you came! Holy Spirit tell us more about that lovely name!*

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 ALM and TLM. We have relocated to the UK to live with our children.



How could WE understand Smallness and Simplicity?

Mark 4,26-34

The parables of the kingdom do not tell us about a world beyond the world in which we live, they do not tell us what is there, but they describe our reality to us with the eyes of God, they reveal to us how and where God already reigns here and now and - only consequently - how will full life be when this kingdom, enclosed in a small seed, will have expanded to a cosmic and eternal dimension.

Then the parables of the two seeds, that of wheat and that of mustard, speak to us of our human history, of our small personal stories, of our ordinary family and community events. And they invite us to look at them with the eyes of God and in the perspective of his reigning over the universe. They ask us to trust in our human dough where the image and likeness of God is imprinted, trust in the seed of eternity placed in us with baptism, trust in the daily work of the Spirit at work in us and in others.

And it is beautiful that the two seeds placed at the heart of these parables belong to two such different plants. The first, wheat, is the seed of necessity, the embryo of solid food, the germ from which the concrete fruit is expected: the bread that nourishes every human being, humanity capable of cultivation and cooking, capable to collect, sift, grind, knead, cook... to eat. The other, the mustard seed is the seed of gratuitousness: not only because the fruit will be a spice - which adds flavor and duration to a food other than itself - but also because our parable is not interested in the fruit born from that grain and he invites us to look at the fronds, the branches, the nests of those birds "that neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns" (cf. Mt 6:26), yet are fed by the heavenly Father.

Finally, at the conclusion of the parables, a question remains suspended. Jesus proclaimed the Word "**how could they understand**", with references to the earth, to nature, to daily life... For this reason we could say that the **little ones "could understand well"**, they easily grasped the mysteries of the kingdom. However, to the disciples - whom Mark in particular presents to us as hard-hearted, slow to believe, refractory to the teachings - **Jesus "explained everything"**. Here is the suspended question: **did he explain everything to the disciples so that they could share in the messianic secret, or did he have to explain it to them because they were not among those "little ones" to whom these things had been revealed, but rather they were among those "wise men" to whom they had been hidden?**

Smallness and simplicity remain the access keys to the kingdom and its daily reality, here and now.

Reflection inspired by: <https://www.monasterodibose.it/preghiera/vangelo-del-giorno/15421-semi-del-regno>



Psalm 119

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Taw

¹⁶⁹ May my cry come before you, LORD;
give me understanding according to your word.

¹⁷⁰ May my supplication come before you;
deliver me according to your promise.

¹⁷¹ May my lips overflow with praise,
for you teach me your decrees.

¹⁷² May my tongue sing of your word,
for all your commands are righteous.

¹⁷³ May your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.

¹⁷⁴ I long for your salvation, LORD,
and your law gives me delight.

¹⁷⁵ Let me live that I may praise you,
and may your laws sustain me.

¹⁷⁶ I have strayed like a lost sheep.
Seek your servant,
for I have not forgotten your commands.



Psalm 120

A song of ascents.

¹I call on the LORD in my distress,
and he answers me.

²Save me, LORD,
from lying lips
and from deceitful tongues.

³What will he do to you,
and what more besides,
you deceitful tongue?

⁴He will punish you with a warrior's sharp arrows,
with burning coals of the broom bush.

⁵Woe to me that I dwell in Meshek,
that I live among the tents of Kedar!

⁶Too long have I lived
among those who hate peace.

⁷I am for peace;
but when I speak, they are for war.



Better Than Normal

Work

Work is a good thing that GOD has given all of us. Children work at school and do chores at home. Teenagers train in sports of choice while others get their first job. Adults work at raising kids, serving others, and running the companies. Some of us go to work away from home, and some of us don't. Some of us get paid to work, and some of us don't. And some of us love work, and some of us don't. No matter what we do or how we work, GOD has given us this gift to provide for our families as well as to make a difference in the world.

While our work is a gift from GOD, sometimes we can develop an unhealthy relationship with it (just like with money). For example, some people over work themselves to the point of burn out, which may lead to serious health issues. Other times, we may struggle with under working whether by choice or due to the circumstances out of our control. Working hard and resting well are both incredibly valuable, but ultimately, we must find a better than normal viewpoint and work ethic when it comes to how much we produce.

So, Lets take a look at the difference between **normal** and **better than normal** can look like in our work lives.

- Normal finds its identity in a job, while **better than normal knows who we are in Christ.**
- Normal Chooses workaholism, while **better than normal knows when to say "no".**
- Normal accepts exhaustion, while **better than normal values rest.**
- Normal looks for ways to avoid difficult work, while **better than normal perseveres.**
- Normal sees what we do, while **better than normal sees purpose in how we work.**
- Normal does the bare minimum, while **better than normal works with integrity.**

All of us living on this planet are unique and diverse. Regardless of how we work, the point is that we choose to work hard at whatever we do. The best way to do this is to see ourselves working for GOD.

In all the work we are doing, work the best we can. Work as if we were doing it for the Lord, not for people. *(Colossians 3:23).*

No matter what our work schedules and tasks look like, let's consider Jesus to be our employer. Yes, we should work hard to do our jobs well and honor our earthly employers. But placing Jesus at the forefront of our minds is even better because we can then honor him by working hard and resting well.

Reflection:

In what ways do you feel healthy, and in what ways should you make changes? Spend some time thinking through your work life.



The secret of joy

*“Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”
John 6:8*

It was early morning. We were staying with friends and I was looking out over the garden from the bedroom window. The sky was clear and sunny. A good day, I thought. Then a sudden movement caught my eye. The telephone wire, stretched across the garden and anchored just below the window, was swaying.

There, just yards away, was a sparrow. He was perched on the wire, tail twitching as he kept his balance. I suppose he only weighed an ounce or so - or maybe I should say a few grams these days - but his coming had set the wire dancing. And when he flew off, as he did when I unthinkingly moved my hand, he set the wire dancing even more.

It was just a momentary thing but it made me realise that even a small event can have a significance far beyond itself. “Oh,” we say, confronted by some world problem, “There’s nothing I can do about it.” And we turn away, feeling helpless. But if we accept that we can do nothing that’s just what we’ll achieve. Nothing. So let’s try.

Say something, write to the papers, lobby your MP. Whatever it takes. Who knows, your weight may set the wires dancing. Maybe it won’t, but at least you’ve tried and that has to be worth something. And it’s the same with relationships. A friendly gesture, a welcoming word, may make someone else’s day. It doesn’t take an awful lot of energy to make the world dance - or at least our little part of it.

Lord, teach me to dance in the joy of your presence today.

Eddie Askew (1927-2007) devoted half a century to leprosy and its consequences. In 1950 he and his wife Barbara set sail for India. Eddie's first placement was in Purulia, West Bengal. In 1965 Eddie took up the post of executive secretary at TLM's office in London. His first overseas visit in this new role was to Ethiopia, where he learned of plans to set up a leprosy training centre that would benefit patients and medics throughout Africa. He offered to become a founding member and signed TLM up to support what was to become ALERT (All Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre). The following year, the organisation now known as the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP) was set up. In 1974 Eddie became general director of TLM. He was keen to develop TLM's work elsewhere, and took a team into the closed land of Bhutan in response to a request from its government. - Inspired by his travels and his Christian faith, Eddie found an outlet for his creativity in painting and poetry. He retired in 1987. From 1998 until his death he was TLM- vice-president, and in 2000 he was awarded an OBE. (Fiona Spence)

Authors in ABC Order**Country****Textuaries in Canonical Order**

+ Eddie Askew	28 February	UK	Genesis 15,5	7 February
Allan Ekstedt	9 February	Sweden	Psalms 8, 3-8	6 February
Arianna Bobba	24 February	UK	Psalms 115,12	2 February
Dan Izzett	23 February	Zimbabwe/UK	Psalms 119	4,5,11,12,18,19,25 February
David Beazley	21 February	UK	Psalms 120	26 February
Dorothy Owen	27 February	Papua New Guinea	Isaiah 43,19	8 February
Élie Fofolo	7-8 February	DR Congo	Isaiah 51,1	14 February
Joanne Briggs	10 February	Northern Ireland	Zephaniah 3,17	10 February
John Twynham - Perkins	1 February	Scotland	Matthew 11,9-11	3 February
Momo Victor	22 February	Hungary	Matthew 25,40	24 February
Otto Kingsley	2-3 February	Southern Africa	Mark 4,26-34	24 February
Paul de Plessis Dr	13-17 February	UK	Luke 18,27	20 February
Peter Laubscher	20 February	Southern Africa	John 6,8	28 February
Raju PLN Dr	6 February	India	John 20,29	13 February
			Acts 2,11	15 February
			Romans 3,23-24	21 February
			1 Cor 9,22	17 February
			Ephesians 6,15	9 February
			Philippians 1,21	16 February
			Colossians 3,23	17 February
			Hebrews 8,7-13	23 February
			3 John 1,12	1 February