

A young boy with short dark hair is smiling and looking down at an open book he is holding. He is wearing a red, black, and white striped shirt. The background is a textured brown wall with a large yellow torn-paper graphic in the upper right. A white decorative line starts from the yellow graphic and curves around the text.

Lent Devotional

**A story
to live by**

tearfund

Welcome to *A story to live by*

The year 2020 shook our foundations. It was a year that brought into stark relief how quickly life's rug can be pulled out from under us; how everything that we thought was normal can be turned on its head. The ground has shifted – where now do we stand?

Lent is a chance to re-plant our feet firmly upon the Rock of Ages. To remind ourselves of truths that never change, no matter what is going on in the world around us. It is a chance to remind ourselves of the story that shaped us. The story of God.

Editors:

Rachael Adams, Tearfund UK

Matthew Schroeder, Tearfund Canada

All devotionals have been provided by the staff and friends of Tearfund UK and Canada.

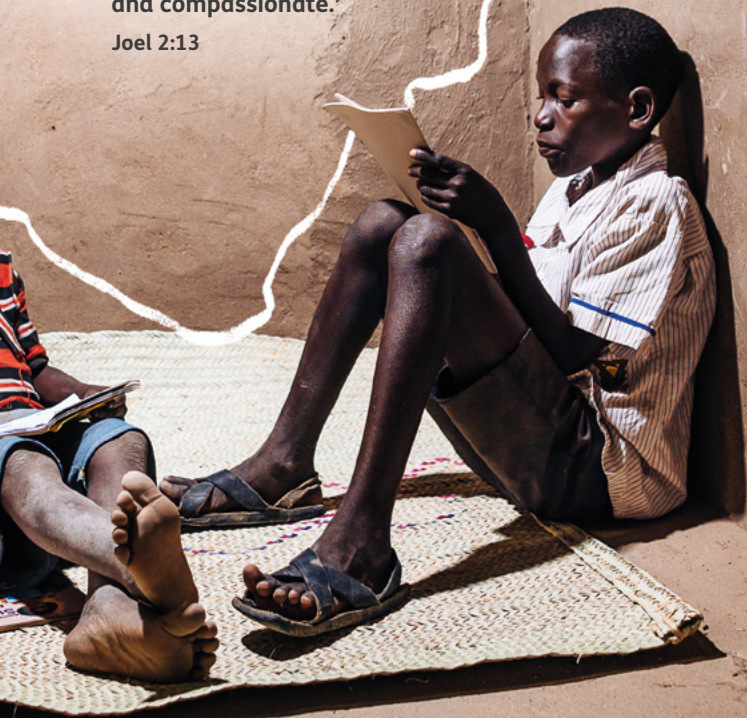
Unless otherwise stated, all Bible quotations are NIV.



Week one: The story of beginnings

**'Return to the Lord your
God, for he is gracious
and compassionate.'**

Joel 2:13



Day 1: Teshuva

Wednesday 17 February

 'Repent
and live!'

Ezekiel 18:32

As a young Christian, the word 'repent' used to make me wince. I often heard it in the context of: 'You're a despicable sinner and you need to change – or else!' 'Repent', therefore, can often have a lot of guilt and shame attached to it.

But now, as an old(er) Christian, it gives me hope.

In Hebrew, the word translated into English as 'repent' is *teshuva*. *Teshuva* literally means 'return'. Return to what? To the vibrant, abundant life that God has made available to us. To the image of the divine at the centre of our beings. To who we've been created to be.

Teshuva is about returning to the path of life.

It is a declaration that there is always a light we can walk towards, that human beings have the capacity to change – not to *be* better, because you cannot improve on God's design, but to *do* better, because that is lining ourselves up with who we truly are.

God of love, we return to you. We return to the divine image you placed within us. We angle ourselves towards the light. In Jesus' name, amen.

Gideon Heugh

Gideon is a poet and a Senior Copywriter at Tearfund UK.

Day 2: Freedom for...

Thursday 18 February

‘I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.’

Exodus 6:6

‘These people were slaves,’ said Gobinda, Tearfund’s local partner. I was incredulous. It was 2011 and I was visiting communities in Nepal to see the impact of Tearfund’s work with local churches.

I thought Gobinda had misinterpreted. So I asked again. ‘Yes, slaves.’ What I could see was a bustling community with lush fields of freshly-grown produce. In 2008, the government of Nepal freed 20,000 people from slavery.

It’s estimated that there are more than 40 million people worldwide living in slavery today.

Witnessing the community building a new life for themselves as free people was wonderful. It is something we’re passionate about at Tearfund – that people are not just freed from poverty and exploitation, but freed for something. Free to live life to the full as God intended.

God is the great liberator. Freeing us from sin, shame, our pasts, even death. We are free. The question is, what will we do with that freedom?


Father God, thank you for freeing us into abundant lives. Help us to bring about a world where no one is kept in slavery. Help us root out and end this injustice. Amen.

Peter Shaw

Peter is the Editor of Tearfund UK’s magazine *Tear Times*.

Day 3: Without limits

Friday 19 February

 'Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.'
Ephesians 3:20

'Safe? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you.'

Mr Beaver speaks these wise words in CS Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. He's referring to Aslan, a lion who the author paints as a picture of God.

To try and make God safe only serves to make us comfortable. But God cannot fit within the limits of our imagination. We must not reign God in and instead let go so we can see for ourselves the fullness of God at work.

As part of my role, I am the Editor of One Voice – Tearfund's weekly prayer email. Our global teams send me weekly prayer requests. They often feel too big: peace in Yemen or deadly floods that hit the Rohingya refugee camps.


I remind myself not to put my human limits on an almighty God. I surrender to him, and include the requests. Thousands of our supporters then stand with us in prayer. And through this we see lives transformed and God's love in action.

Dear God, teach me to let go so I can see your love at work in all its fullness. Amen.

Rachael Adams
Rachael mentors youth and writes for Tearfund UK and others.

Day 4: Growing Faith

Saturday 20 February

 'In you, Lord my God,
I put my trust.'

Psalm 25:1

When I was growing up I thought being a good Christian was more about not doing certain things – to repent and do good. And although we are called to repent and turn, it was only until later that I realised what it truly meant to trust God.

In this Psalm, David is in anguish. He is pouring out his heart to God. Clinging to God's love and faithfulness. Trusting in God involves having an intimate relationship with him. It is seeking out more about his character, and choosing to praise and follow even when times are tough or don't make sense. Even though David is going through a hard time, he still knows that "Good and upright is the LORD" and "All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful." David's faith is in God, not his circumstances.

It is because of this that David can cry out to God and have hope. You might be going through a hard time right now, or maybe you don't know what to do next. Trust in the Lord, lean on him. No matter how bleak the situation may look, God is listening and He loves you.

Matthew Schroeder
Director of Marketing, Tearfund Canada

Day 5: Subversive Beginnings

Sunday 21 February

**'In the beginning God
created the heavens
and the earth.'**

Genesis 1:1

The first verse of Genesis is classic and easy to memorize. But as with so many 'classic' bible verses, there is so much more happening underneath this story than we might realize.

At the time of the writing of Genesis, the Israelites would have been familiar with the creation stories of the surrounding cultures. One of which was *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, an ancient Sumerian poem where humans, and indeed the whole creation, were mistakenly created in chaos and rooted in the bloody violence between the god Marduk and goddess Tiamat.

Surrounded by these stories of violence and destruction, the author of Genesis sought to tell another story. Yahweh, the one true God, intentionally created humans and the entire universe to reflect his love and shalom. He created the world out of nothing, and it was all 'very good'.

This narrative went against the grain of the culture that the Israelites would have been all too familiar with in their Babylonian captivity and exile. It is in this story of subversive beginnings that we discover God created all of humanity not out of anger or violence, but out of a place of sacrificial and nurturing love.

Cameron Phillips
Writer, Tearfund Canada

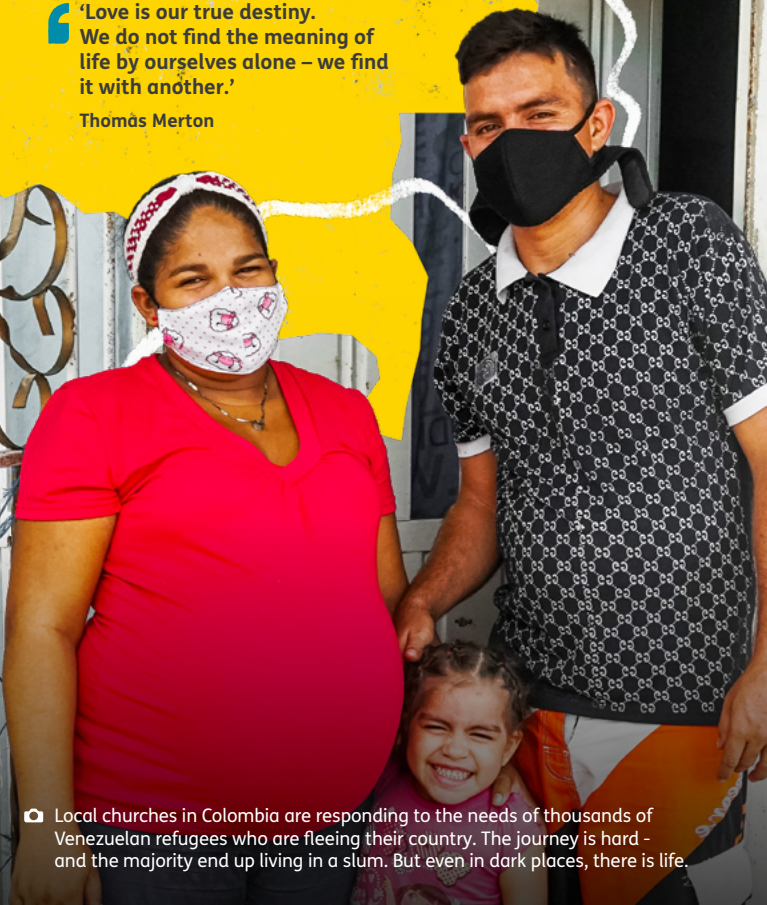


📷 An Ethiopian mother and children standing in their thriving field

Week two: The story of us

‘Love is our true destiny.
We do not find the meaning of
life by ourselves alone – we find
it with another.’

Thomas Merton



Local churches in Colombia are responding to the needs of thousands of Venezuelan refugees who are fleeing their country. The journey is hard - and the majority end up living in a slum. But even in dark places, there is life.

Day 6: Better together

Monday 22 February

**‘Carry each other’s burdens,
and in this way you will
fulfil the law of Christ.’**

Galatians 6:2

Sales of jigsaws soared in 2020. Restrictions and isolation resulted in many of us spending hours staring at the detail on small pieces, trying to work out how they fit together.

The world around us often resembles a jumble of puzzle pieces. It can be hard to make sense of it all. But we can take heart in the fact that God’s plan is for us to not do life alone.

We’re built for authentic relationships with God, ourselves, each other and creation. When life gets difficult it can be easier to put up barriers and withdraw, rather than admit how we’re really doing, in order to feel like less of a burden for others.

When everything feels like it’s falling apart, we can keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the one in whom all things hold together. And through him, we can find the strength we need to reach out and do life together.

Lord, when I’m feeling anxious, help me to reach out. And when others are in need, let them know they can reach out to me. Amen.

Nadine Parkinson
Nadine helps lead Tearfund’s work with UK churches.

Day 7: Living for love

Tuesday 23 February

‘For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.’

Matthew 16:25

Matthew 16:25 helps us to ask the question: ‘What was I created for?’ I almost died in a car accident when I was 18. I was faced with that question in a very deep and life-transforming way. Why was I alive? And what for?

The words of Martin Luther King Jr woke me up: ‘Unless there is something you are willing to die for, you have nothing to live for.’ What was I willing to die for?

The more I searched the more I found myself drawn to the dreams of God for the world. I was made for loving God, all people and myself; because God does.

We are all created in God’s image. Anything or anyone that enslaves us or marring and diminishes the ability of others to see God’s glory or goodness opposes God. It keeps us from the very purpose of our lives: that we, like Jesus, would live for loving God and our neighbour.

God of love, you created us for love. Help us to embrace freedom from the slavery of hatred that we may embrace true liberty – as freely as if we have never been hurt before. Amen.

Rev René August

René is Co-director of The Justice Conference South Africa.

Day 8: The Story of Us

Wednesday 24 February

**‘Lord, teach us to pray,
just as John taught
his disciples.’**

Luke 11:1

I wonder if this disciple had any idea of the huge world that would be opened up with this simple request. On several occasions the disciples witnessed Jesus slipping away to a quiet place. Perhaps they wondered what he was actually doing, or if this was something they were missing out on? So Jesus teaches them this prayer.

When our kids were little, their teacher wanted them to clean up at the end of the day. So, she taught them a song that encouraged them to clean up. At first they were fully engaged and cleaned up, but after a while they got tired and only cleaned up grudgingly!

Is it possible that sometimes we treat prayer like that? Initially we start off with enthusiasm, wonder, and desire for more. Then, over time we see prayer as a sense of duty and routine. It becomes a chore to be engaged in, rather than a conversation to be cherished.

If that is where you find yourself this Lent, then I would invite you to look again at the words Jesus gave his disciples in the Lord’s Prayer. Read them with fresh eyes and new enthusiasm.

This beautiful prayer is for each of us today!

Don Miller
Director of Church Relations, Tearfund Canada

Day 9: Two powers

Thursday 25 February

‘Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego... neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.’

Daniel 3:12

There are two kinds of power on display in this story: the power of domination, and the power of God’s dominion.

The Babylonian empire was a symbol of domination. The wealth and excess of the royal court was built off the back of military conquests – the vulnerable trodden upon so that the powerful could rise higher. The golden gods that the king had made were a dazzling representation of this. But these three Jews refused to bow down. Because they were aware of a different kind of power. Kingdom of heaven power.

Worldly kingdoms dominate; the heavenly kingdom liberates. Worldly kingdoms marginalise; the heavenly kingdom includes. Worldly kingdoms control; the heavenly kingdom serves. Worldly kingdoms are centred on the self; the heavenly kingdom pours itself out for others.


Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down before the power of domination. They trusted instead in God’s dominion. They chose the power of love, not the love of power.

Dear God, give us the courage and conviction to refuse the gods and images of gold in our lives. And help us to always choose love. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 10: Unwavering

Friday 26 February

 'For I, the Lord,
love justice.'

Isaiah 61:8

I belong to the indigenous Guna people of Panama. Our Gunadule grandmothers teach that 'living well' is 'living well in community'. So, when I think of God's goodness, I can't forget that when God blesses us, he often does so in community.

Each of our actions impacts the lives of others. Life connects us like a web, and whether or not we like it, destruction connects us as well. The good God intends for us is constantly threatened by lifestyles of individualism and consumerism.

As a Christian Gunadule woman, I mourn the suffering of my indigenous brothers and sisters under the direct threat of a changing climate affecting their crops and food. I see them putting their lives at risk to defend the forests, waters and residents of our ancestral lands. These realities tear at my heart, because the injustice we cause to God's creation is an injustice we commit against God and ourselves.


Jesus, forgive us for when our actions damaged your creation and its inhabitants. Give us greater awareness to understand the struggles faced by indigenous people. Help us to participate in your reconciling work. Amen.

Jocabed Solano

Jocabed is part of Tearfund UK's network of Young Theologians.

Day 11: 31 words of blessing

Saturday 27 February

 'The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.'

Numbers 6:26

After God spoke to Moses about purity, about spiritual leadership and faithfulness, Moses was instructed to have Priests pray a simple blessing that they were to regularly bless their people with.

A very simple 31 words. Not complicated. Just 31 words of blessing. They have been spoken out as blessings millions of times over the millennia.

They are for you and for me.

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


Take the time right now. Pray them quietly while looking inward. Then quietly over your family. Then over your co-workers, associates, and friends. Over your church. Over your nation. Over our First Nations People. Over Tearfund and the people of the world.

And then rest in His presence.

Wayne Johnson
Executive Director, Tearfund Canada

Day 12: This very day

Sunday 28 February

 'The Lord has done it
this very day; let us
rejoice today and
be glad.'


Psalm 118:24

This very day

This is the day
the Lord has made:
this day; today;
it is the only day we have.
Yesterday and tomorrow
are imaginings of vapour;
today as real as an unfolding smile
or a breaking bone.

Whatever darkness this day brings,
whatever radiance,
whatever quaking or stillness
sorrow or astonishment
anxiety or boredom or delight;
this is the day the Lord has made,
I will rejoice,
and be glad in it.

Gideon Heugh



Week three: The story of you

‘Life is not a matter of creating a special name for ourselves, but of uncovering the name we have always had.’

Richard Rohr

Day 13: The Breath of Life

Monday 1 March

‘Then the Lord God formed a man[a] from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.’

Genesis 2:7

We were brought to life by the very breath of God. Indeed, the very air we breathe and the ground we walk on was created by God in a selfless act of love as we learned on Day 5 in this devotional.

In this moment, we seem to always be rushed for time, even in the middle of a global pandemic. There are so many things that compete for our attention, whether it's Netflix or our never-ending to-do lists.

As a person who wrestles with anxiety and depression, one of the ways I've learned to rely on God is through what's called 'breath prayer.' To practice breath prayer, we stop and become still, reflecting on the very breath of life that God breathes into us daily.

It can be as simple as meditating on God as Abba Father: *Deep breath in while saying "A", deep breath out saying "bba".*

Or, it could be a breath prayer that originates from the 3rd century: *Deep breath in while saying "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God," deep breath out saying "you love me."*

I invite you into the stillness and presence of God's love for you, breathing in the very breath of Life and Love itself.

Cameron Phillips
Writer, Tearfund Canada

Day 14: Risk-takers

Tuesday 2 March

‘But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them.’

Joshua 2:4

I often wonder about the journeys into courage and boldness that different people in the Bible went on...

Ruth left everything behind to follow an unknown God. Rahab risked it all to help out two strangers. These are two women who were marginalised in society, but both are rewarded by God; their stories of courage live on today through the Bible, and they are part of Jesus' lineage.

The Bible tells us little of how God spoke to these two women, or how they came to their decision to follow him. But it does highlight their bravery, and shows us what happens when we make a decision to be all-in for God.

It paints a vivid picture of a God who throws open his arms in delight every time someone chooses him. A God who welcomes the stranger as part of his family.

Each day we have the privilege of choosing to follow God. How are you going to choose to follow him today?

Father God, I recommit to following you. Help me overcome my fear of rejection so I can make bold decisions for you. Fill me with such an understanding of your incredible love for others. Amen.

Viv Bateman

Viv is a Lead Pastor at Vineyard 61 church in South London.

Day 15: When your all seems small

Wednesday 3 March

**‘And whatever you do,
whether in word or deed,
do it all in the name of the
Lord Jesus.’**

Colossians 3:17

I have often wondered what I can offer God. I am only one person in the vast tide of history.

But God does not want anything grand from us. God is the loving parent who delights in who we are, as we are – our passions, our interests, our dreams, but also all of the small things.

God is not interested in particular types of people doing particular types of things. ‘Whatever you do’ invites us to give our all to God, even if our all seems small. Do you love gardening? Give that to God. Do you love working out? Give that to God. Do you love accounting (there’s bound to be someone!) – give that to God. God will love it.

The Examen is a type of prayer to help us keep a regular rhythm of conversation with God and bring him our all.

1. *Find a quiet place and be still.*
2. *Give thanks to God for every detail you can remember over the last few hours.*
3. *Reflect on how you’re feeling. Name these emotions and give them to God.*
4. *Choose one joy or sorrow and lift this to God in prayer.*
5. *Commit the next few hours to God.*

Rosa Camargo de Bravo

Rosa oversees Tearfund’s work in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Day 16: Enough

Thursday 4 March

‘So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.’

Genesis 1:27 NLT

Most advertisements that you see will tell you a version of the same story: you are not enough. TV ads, billboards and sponsored content on social media repeat the same narrative: there is something missing in your life, and buying this product will make you feel more complete.

So pervasive is this message – the message of consumerism – that it has sunk into our subconscious and, without even knowing it, we believe it to be true.

But it is not true.


The story of God tells us something different. It tells us that before we were even born God declared us worthy, complete, and very good. I knew this the moment I held my daughter in my arms for the first time. She was perfect – a masterpiece of our Creator. The fight of my life will be to ensure she never forgets that; to say over her again and again ‘You are enough.’ For that is what God is doing to each of us.

Loving God, thank you that you made us in your image – the image of completeness. Thank you that, in you, we are in no way deficient. Help us to remember this always. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 17: Love is a verb

Friday 5 March

 'In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.'

James 2:17

It was December 31 and the Tearfund office had closed for the day. Calls were being re-routed from the office to my cell phone.

I answered. Bill* said, "...My wife and I realized we could give more. We are too comfortable. God has been good to us. We need to think beyond ourselves. We'd like to make a last-minute donation to women who have been sexually assaulted for your Biblically based trauma healing program. We will never meet those women in South Sudan, but we must give..."

I hung up the phone with a deep sense of appreciation, wonder and thankfulness.

Thirty minutes later the doorbell rang. It was after dark. My Iraqi neighbours - Muslims that we have become friends with were standing there with masks on. They handed me a plate of steaming Iraqi delicacies.

Abdul said, "... you are our friends. We wanted to show you..."

I am reminded that Jesus calls us to live out our faith. Not just talk about it.


Wayne Johnson
Executive Director, Tearfund Canada

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📍 Tearfund works among rural tribes in India, teaching farmers how grow 2-3X more food.

Day 18: Open unto me

Saturday 6 March

‘Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.’

1 Chronicles 16:11


‘There must be always remaining in every life, some place for the singing of angels, some place for that which in itself is breathless and beautiful.’ Howard Thurman.

*Lord, Lord, open unto me
Open unto me, light for my darkness
Open unto me, courage for my fear
Open unto me, hope for my despair
Open unto me, peace for my turmoil
Open unto me, joy for my sorrow
Open unto me, strength for my weakness
Open unto me, wisdom for my confusion
Open unto me, forgiveness for my sins
Open unto me, tenderness for my toughness
Open unto me, love for my hates
Open unto me, Thy Self for myself
Lord, Lord, open unto me!*

Howard Thurman, from *Meditations of the Heart*
Howard (1899–1981) was a writer who influenced Martin Luther King Jr and others.

Day 19: Revel in the music

Sunday 7 March

 'You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

Psalm 16:11

A song thrush makes the poet think of God


After perhaps fifteen minutes or so
I gave up looking for the song thrush;
not because I am impatient
(though there is that)
not because I didn't want my coffee to get cold
(though there is that);
no, it is because I realised
that as long as I was searching
I was not listening;
as long as my mind was grasping
my heart was not receiving;
as long as my eyes were straining
to find the source of the music
I could not stop
to revel in the fact
that there should be music at all.


Gideon Heugh

Week four: The story of our world

‘Whoever you are, you are human. Wherever you are, you live in the world, which is just waiting for you to notice the holiness in it.’

Barbara Brown Taylor



 Photo: Hazel Thompson/Tearfund

Day 20: Holy uncertainty

Monday 8 March

‘Can you fathom the mysteries of God?... They are higher than the heavens above – what can you do?’

Job 11:7-8

‘All you need to do is believe.’ That’s what we are told. ‘Hold tight to your convictions.’ There is little room in a life of faith – allegedly – for uncertainty.

But the Bible is full of uncertainty. It is full of questions that have no answers. It is full of people who (quite literally on one occasion) wrestle with God. And that’s because it’s full of human beings. And uncertainty is a perfectly natural feeling for a human being to have.

There are certain views that we think are right, that may turn out to be wrong, and vice versa. As we mature in faith, our understanding of who God is may be (and should be) different and deeper ten years from now from today.

We all have questions for God. We all have things of which we are uncertain. And that’s fine. It’s normal. Or do we think that God is so petty that we would be chastised for not being sure of everything?


God’s path is generous. There is plenty of room for questioning. So go ahead.

*Dear God, thank you that you always listen to me.
I come to you with my questions and my doubts. Amen.*

Gideon Heugh

Day 21: Among the brokenness

Tuesday 9 March

 'The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the heavens languish with the earth.'

Isaiah 24:4

Last summer, I brought my garden back to life. With God within me and surrounding me, together we levelled the ground, planted new grass and a tree, and invited wildlife back in. In the loneliness of lockdown, I've never felt closer to God. In its entrapment, I've never felt more free.

This is what happens when we align ourselves with God's plan. Among the brokenness we can find peace and purpose. God asks us to take care of creation and our neighbours – an increasingly urgent call. Alongside the pandemic, we're in the midst of a changing climate that is hitting people in poverty the hardest. They're facing more frequent and deadlier disasters. They're losing their food, their homes and their hope.

The climate crisis is a huge issue. But revival always starts small and starts within. It begins with persistent prayer. If we want to see movement on this issue we have to pray, then roll up our sleeves and take part in restoring God's beautiful earth.

Creator God, I'm sorry for how I've treated your earth and ignored your plea to take care of creation. Show me how I can make amends and help restore your earth. Amen.

Rachael Adams

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To learn more and register visit:
tearfund.ca/pray

📷 Your prayers are needed for places like South Sudan - a country ravished by years of war and famine.

Day 22: Everything for you

Wednesday 10 March

**'But I trust in your
unfailing love.... I will sing
the Lord's praise, for he
has been good to me.'**

Psalm 13:5-6

I was walking through Belfast when I heard it: crackling percussion and a melody echoing through the streets. I saw a crowd, distanced, masked, yet gathered still and rapt. Four musicians were playing, caught in the moment.

I hadn't heard live music in months. Neither had anyone else, and the city stopped in its tracks. Below the masks there were smiles, and even some dancing.

God's people have always sung. Singing and worship are inextricably linked. But last year, we started to ask: how can we worship when we cannot sing?

David begins this Psalm by wrestling with God. But something moves him from his lament: 'for he has been good to me'. Recalling God's past deeds enables his present rejoicing.

What worship can you bring to God today? There are many ways to worship to God without singing, all beginning with the recollection of God. Think of his favour poured out for us at the cross. Think of Jesus as the one who has made it possible for us to come to the Father without fear. Take some time to write, draw, dance... or simply be still. Whatever form it takes, let worship rise.

Glen Mitchell
Glen leads Tearfund Northern Ireland.

Day 23:

Refuge

Thursday 11 March

'The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.'

Nahum 1:7 ESV

When life gets tough, where do you run? In my early years as a Christian, whenever life was hard my default setting was to flee from God rather than run towards him.

Yet the Bible tells us that God is good, our safety, our stronghold, our refuge.

During this last year, some of us have struggled with being 'locked down' in our homes. To stay safe from coronavirus, we have been 'locked in' while others – including those we dearly love – have been 'locked out'.

It has been hard. But for many people living in poverty, home is not a refuge at all. Millions of people around the world do not know what it is like to feel safe. They have nowhere to run. Let us keep them in our prayers today, and thank God that, no matter what our circumstances, we can run to him to find refuge.

Father, thank you that you are our safe place. Thank you that whatever storms we are facing – whether they are storms around us or storms within us – you never leave us nor forsake us. Help us to run towards you, because you are our stronghold. Amen.

Natalie Williams
Natalie is the CEO of Jubilee+.

Day 24: An antidote to fear

Friday 12 March

**‘You prepare a table
before me in the presence
of my enemies.’**

Psalm 23:5

This last year our world has been gripped by fear. Tearfund was called to respond in more than 40 countries (the most we ever had at one time) – places where the impact of coronavirus, and the lockdowns, have been huge, knocking back our work in getting people out of poverty by ten years.

It would have been easy to sink in fear – fear for those already struggling being impacted so badly, fear of the need being so beyond our means to respond. But we have laid this at the Lord’s feet, knowing we cannot do this ourselves.

And God has really honoured that – with churches throughout the world stepping forward and reaching out to support the vulnerable. Even more, they have gone beyond any support provided through Tearfund and mobilised their own resources to help their communities. Seeing how God is working has been such an encouragement and an antidote to fear.

Lord, you desire us to have peace, and to know that you will work for your purposes through every situation. Thank you for the ways you are working. Help us to see them and to calm our fear. Amen.

Myles Harrison
Myles is Tearfund UK’s International Director.

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Day 25: **A lament for peace**

Saturday 13 March

 **'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.'**

Matthew 5:9

Lord Jesus, conflict ravages the world. Homes are being shattered. Families are being torn apart. Lives are being destroyed.

Lord, we cry out for peace.

Children are being used as soldiers. Women and girls are being abused. The innocent and vulnerable are being exploited in the name of power.

Lord, we cry out for peace.

People are millionaires because they sell bombs that fall on hospitals. An entire industry exists to fuel warfare around the world. Greed, corruption and evil are everywhere.

Lord, we cry out for peace.

Lord Jesus, you are the prince of peace. You are the light of the world. You are love. Let your kingdom come. Let your kingdom come. Let your kingdom come.

Lord, we cry out for peace. Amen.

Veena O'Sullivan
Veena oversees Tearfund's work in Asia.

Day 26: The delicate miracle

Sunday 14 March

**‘He performs wonders
that cannot be fathomed,
miracles that cannot
be counted.’**

Job 5:9

Miracles

It's not always the big miracles –
the thunderous, pulsating, ground-shaking ones –
but those that are small, delicate, unheralded:
like when the sobs finally stop,
or when the anxiety begins to fade,
or when the blackbird decides
that there is enough light
to begin praising the new day.

It's when your broken heart eventually accepts
that it can begin to heal,
or when the delicate stem pushes through the dirt
to discover that air and light are real.

It may just be to open your eyes
after a night at the end of your rope,
to find that your lungs are way ahead of you
and never stopped breathing in hope.

It's not the big miracles, not the ones that shout and shine,
it's the small miracles that are sent to show us
the loving hand of the divine.

Gideon Heugh

Week five: The story of the wilderness


**‘later that night
i held an atlas in my lap
ran my fingers across
the whole world
and whispered
where does it hurt?’**

**it answered
everywhere
everywhere
everywhere.’**

Warsan Shire

Day 27: God on mute

Monday 15 March

 'My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord, how long?'

Psalm 6:3

God sometimes falls silent and appears absent. It is important to embrace these painful seasons and not to deny them or rush through them.

When God is silent and seems to have left us to suffer alone, the Bible still voices our desperation and contextualises our doubt. With Job, Jeremiah and those dark psalms of dislocation, we too may fill the silence of God with cries of outrage and lament. And at such times, there can be reassurance in this realisation that our circumstances, though painful, have also been articulated (and thus validated) repeatedly in scripture.

When we are present in a situation – no matter how terrible it may be – God cannot be absent. Whenever life gets tough and we cry out to God for help, our desire is always to be airlifted out of the theatre of war. But more often than not, instead of *airlifting* us to safety, God *parachutes* down to join us in the muck and chaos of our situation.

God, where are you in this season? Speak to me and show me where you are, and how I can join in with what you're doing. Amen.

Pete Greig, from *God on Mute*

Pete is the Founder of 24-7 Prayer, Tearfund Ambassador and author.

Day 28: Overlooked

Tuesday 16 March

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

Matthew 25:40

Imagine this scene: all the nations of the world are gathered before Jesus. Jesus speaks. He speaks with utmost passion about the people He loves most: those whom society has treated as “the least”.

If we are convinced followers of Jesus, then we know in mind, heart, spirit and action that God created all people in all nations equal. But because of so much brokenness that we humans cause in this world, Jesus had no option but to establish a strategy for the people who are overlooked and ignored.

In His Kingdom, characterized by love and already here on Earth while also not yet fully here on Earth, there are no least persons. Jesus feels this so deeply that He weighs our actions so heavily to the point of judgment: whatever action you do to someone who is overlooked, Jesus equates this action as doing this to Him!

You want to worship God? Worship Him by doing something meaningful for “the least”. Each of us humans bears God’s image which is Love. Every deed of love to someone overlooked or ignored is an act of God Himself.


Anja Oussoren
Program Manager – East Africa & South Asia, Tearfund Canada

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📹 We believe God's people
are a hub of change.

Day 29: Finding your eremos

Wednesday 17 March

 'But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.'
Luke 5:16 NASB

Nearly two and a half thousand years ago, Socrates warned his followers to 'beware the barrenness of a busy life'. If he felt that he needed to say that nearly two and a half thousand years ago, imagine how he would feel looking at our society today.

Busyness has become a badge of honour. Frantic is the new normal. Distracted is now our default setting.

It's time to resist. If we are to thrive – mentally, physically, spiritually – then we *must* resist.

And the primary weapon in our insurrection? *Eremos*. This is the word translated in today's verse as 'wilderness'. But it encapsulates far more than that: it is a place of solitude. A place where we can get away from the bright lights and relentless noise of the modern world. A place where it is only us and God.

Think of how you can create some *eremos* in your life today. What spaces and times can you carve out in order to slip away and be with your God?

Dear God, we thank you for stillness. We thank you for silence. We thank you for solitude. May they increase in our lives. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 30: At the foot

Thursday 18 March

‘Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.’

1 Peter 5:7

Anxiety attaches itself easily, doesn't it? And it's very good at breeding. In a recent survey, 65 per cent of those questioned admitted to feeling more anxious than usual.

Fear is natural. It stops us getting run over by a bus. But fears are very good at growing. And growing out of proportion. Martin Luther said this: 'You can't stop the birds flying over your head, but you can stop them nesting in your hair.' Is fear nesting in your hair today?

I love this advice from Peter. He got to hear Jesus' teaching on anxiety and fear first hand. 'Do not fear' is one of Jesus' most repeated advice. 'Don't worry.' 'Don't be anxious.' Jesus is here. He is inviting you to cast your anxiety and fear on him today.

Allow some time of stillness. Allow your fears to surface in the presence of Jesus. He looks on you kindly. With compassion. He cares for you.

Jesus, I name my fears in your presence.... I cast all my anxiety on you - both my personal fears and the great issues of the world, such as poverty. It's such a comfort that you care for us. Amen.

Jill Duff
Jill is the Bishop of Lancaster.

Day 31: Catch your breath

Friday 19 March

‘The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.’

Psalm 34:18

We heard a gunshot. ‘Let’s all move away from the window, please,’ said the head of the Tearfund partner we were visiting. We all drew breath, and calmly did as instructed.

We were in Beirut, Lebanon, listening to the stories of Syrian refugees. Earlier that day a woman told me of how her family would hide under a table as conflict – missiles and rifle fire – raged outside their home.

It was a false alarm, a car backfiring. But it brought alive to me the accounts I was hearing from the Syrian families. It helped to experience that moment of fear to break me out of observer mode. And get a tiny glimpse of life in war-torn Syria.

We need that jolt sometimes to break our hearts out of our safety. To feel like we’ve been kicked in the gut. So that we can find God in situations we can’t imagine.

Lord, break our hearts for people facing unimaginable hardship. People who have lost their homes and fled with their families to seek safety. Help us to catch our breath and be prepared to speak out in prayer for those whose voices are too often not heard. Amen.

Peter Shaw



📷 The conflict in Syria forced Tamam and her family to escape to Lebanon where they now live in a makeshift slum.

Photo: Ruth Towell/Tearfund

Day 32: Unswerving

Saturday 20 March

‘Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.’

Hebrews 10:23

God’s faithfulness is unswerving. Read through these statements three times, declaring them as truth over your life:

When we are anxious and we long for peace, we hold unswervingly to the hope we profess – knowing that he who promised is faithful.

When we are weary and strength has left us, we hold unswervingly to the hope we profess – knowing that he who promised is faithful.

When our way ahead is unclear and we don’t know what to do, we hold unswervingly to the hope we profess – knowing that he who promised is faithful.


When we are grieving and our tears run freely, we hold unswervingly to the hope we profess – knowing that he who promised is faithful.

When we are joyful and thankful for God’s presence, we hold unswervingly to the hope we profess – knowing that he who promised is faithful.

Fiona Michael
Fiona leads Tearfund Cymru (Wales).

Day 33: We begin again

Sunday 21 March

 'The heavens declare the glory of God... Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.'

Psalm 19:1-2

Hope

You don't need to create
your own hope –
the sky is full of it.

Wake up early one day
(I dare you)
and watch the sun rise,
watch how it encourages the Earth
to become itself, only more so,

watch how it allows all things
(even the sad beings)
to be colourful, and beautiful,

then listen,
listen as it says
quietly, but undoubtedly,
'We begin again.'

Gideon Heugh

Week six: The story of redemption

**‘Love deems this world
worth rescuing.’**

Philip Yancey



Day 34: He who calms the storms

Monday 22 March

“What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

Matthew 8:27

Matthew records that the disciples were caught in a storm and in danger of drowning. While this was going on, Jesus was asleep. They wake him up and he stops the storm.

However, while the storm was still raging, Jesus asks them why they're afraid; he's not telling them off, but trying to help them to realise that they didn't need to be scared. Jesus had told them they were going to the other side of the lake (Matthew 8:18), and so they would; they didn't need to wake him – he had determined their destiny.

God was in their boat, in the person of Jesus. This is how the disciples can know peace. And this is how we can also know peace: for God is committed to us. The presence of life's storms doesn't indicate God's absence; even through the difficulties we may face, he's in charge.

Lord, help me to know your peace in my storms and to realise afresh that I am safe because you, my God, are with me. Thank you for being my friend in my fears, a pocket in my storms, a lion in my darkness. Amen.

Rev Dr Keith Warrington

Keith is an author who preaches and teaches globally on the New Testament.

Day 35: A beautiful potency

Tuesday 23 March

‘What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?’

Romans 8:31

There’s an old saying: ‘Give someone a fish and they will be fed for a day. Teach someone to fish and they will be fed for a lifetime.’ It’s used as an example of how community development should be done. It makes a certain amount of sense; but it also has a problem.

What does that person do when the fish run out? Or when their equipment breaks? Or if something else goes wrong?

This is why, at Tearfund, we don’t just ‘teach people to fish’. We empower communities to solve their own problems, using the resources they have to hand. Often this is done through local churches – using Bible studies to help people unlock their God-given potential.

An example of this that I’ll never forget was when Cyclone Idai devastated southern Africa in 2019. A support team sent by one of Tearfund’s partners arrived at a village only to be told they’d wasted a trip – the community had already swung into action and begun rebuilding.

God has placed a beautiful potency within each of us. Where there are issues weighing on your heart, ask God to reveal what you have in your hands that could make a difference.

Gideon Heugh

Day 36: Soul food

Wednesday 24 March

‘So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.’

Ezra 8:23

Fasting is an opportunity to reshape and reorder our desires. I’ve never found it easy. But, I’ve found that the discomfort from fasting reminds my soul that I want to enjoy God more than anything else. And it makes me more thankful for all that I have, and more attentive to the struggles of those for whom hunger is not a voluntary choice.

How can I fast?

- Choose what to fast from – something you’ll miss. Food is the most common, but you can also fast from TV, or social media.
- Choose how long you’ll fast for. Maybe you could fast for Holy Week? Challenge yourself but don’t be unrealistic. You could start with just one day.
- Use the time you would have spent preparing and eating food, or scrolling through social media, to focus on God. Spend time in prayer, reading the Bible and worshipping. When you notice you’re longing for whatever it is you’re fasting from, remind your soul that you long for God more.

Clark Buys

Clark is a part of the Theology Team at Tearfund UK.

Day 37: The impossible possible

Thursday 25 March

‘Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”’

Matthew 19:26

Sometimes I think that we as Christians think too small. We forget that God isn't just someone who loves us, he is the supreme creator of the universe! He literally made everything we see! And yet, too many of our prayers stop at praying for an upcoming exam, the healing of a relative, or a good day at work. Those aren't bad things to pray for, but what would happen if we thought bigger?

One of things I love to read are biographies of great Christian leaders from the past. They always seem to inspire me. George Muller is a particular favorite (if you don't know his story – look it up!). The one thing in common is that they all ask God for **BIG THINGS!** Not just the improbable—but the impossible!

We serve a God who loves doing the impossible. He is the God who rained fire from heaven, split the seas, saved Daniel from the Lion's den, and released us from sin. I challenge you to pray bigger. How would you like to see God change the world?

Matthew Schroeder
Marketing Director, Tearfund Canada



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Do you want to use your God-given skills and abilities to build God's Kingdom? Check-out our volunteer page! We regularly are in need of volunteers from all sorts of backgrounds to help us on our mission to end extreme poverty.

www.tearfund.ca/volunteer

📷 In Liberia, farmers are using new farming techniques to increase their crops in the midst of a changing climate.

Day 38: Paving the way

Friday 26 March

**“I baptise you with water.
But one who is more
powerful than I will come.”**

Luke 3:16

I love John's humility and his ability to redirect the attention he receives back towards Jesus. At the point of his greatest following, when even tax collectors and soldiers are seeking his advice, John steps off the pedestal and points to Jesus. He says more than just 'no – I am not the Messiah'.

John explains that though he doesn't have the status even to be Jesus' servant, amazingly, God has given him a role: to pave the way for Jesus' mission.

John knows who he is because he knows who he is not. He's comfortable saying 'no' to the crowd because his confidence is found in Jesus' status, rather than his own. He's humble but purposeful.


Today, whatever we find ourselves doing, we can follow John's example by remembering our role is a gift from God, and by seeking to glorify Jesus as we do it.

Lord, thank you for graciously inviting us to play our part in your world and for including us in your purposes. When others place expectations on me, help me to follow John's example and find my status in you. Help me to step off any false pedestals and point to Jesus. Amen.

Rev Ken Benjamin
Ken works for the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity.

Day 39: Speaking miracles

Saturday 27 March

 Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

John 11:44 ESV

At this point in the gospel, Jesus was in his final days. His disciples would have seen countless miracles and heard many sermons. Yet, Jesus still says that they need some extra help believing.

The crazy thing is that even after such miracles—close your eyes and think of someone literally being brought to life—not everyone believed! Or perhaps if they did, they were amazed for a while but then the routine of life slowly dampened this experience.

How often do we do the same? We see God doing the miraculous in our lives, and then start worrying again. We forget how incredible he is. **“Lord I believe – help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24).** Today ask God to help you see him with renewed faith. That you would believe.

Lord, remind me of who you are. Incredible, powerful, loving, just. Lord, help me to feel your presence in a new way. Lord when I doubt, help my unbelief! Amen.

Gabriel Vitalicio
Graphic Designer, Tearfund Canada

Day 40: The gardener

Sunday 28 March

‘Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him.”’

John 20:15

Here we see Mary, grief-stricken, confused and bewildered standing outside the tomb. She wanted to prepare Jesus’ body for burial – a final loving act, but it isn’t there.

Ironically, she ends up asking Jesus, not knowing who he is, where the body has been hidden, so that she can do something, anything for him. With hindsight, how crazy is her request? The living, resurrected Jesus is standing right before her and she is wanting to anoint his dead body! How often do we ask God for what we want, for what we think is good, when he is offering us so much more? He is offering us redemption!

My prayer for us is that next time we feel that God isn’t hearing our prayers, when we are confused and bewildered, that we will be able to listen in the stillness and hear God calling our name. He is offering us more than we can dream or imagine.

Helen Reimer
Board Chair, Tearfund Canada

Week seven: The story of resurrection

W 'In the dark night of the
soul, bright flows the
river of God.'

John of the Cross



📷 The refugee camps in Cox Bazaar are one of the worst places to live. But even here, this group of boys find a way to distract themselves.

Day 41: Everyone gets to play

Monday 29 March

“I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him.’

Acts 10:34-35

I love sport, but playing it? Well, that is another matter. At school I remember being thrilled when I was finally picked for the team. As it turned out it was the last time too, but I was just excited I got to play.

The good news is that there is a place for everyone in the kingdom. Regardless of our skill, talent, personality or, for that matter, our past, Jesus has already chosen us. We're in! Our name is permanently on the board.

Because you and I are all individually and wonderfully made, it means we never need to compare ourselves to each other. Neither do we need to compete for Jesus' attention. We are enough. What's more, he is never disillusioned with us because he never had any illusions about us in the first place. It's just a case of turning up to play.

Dear Lord Jesus, I am so grateful to you that I don't need to win your attention each day and that I already have it. Thank you for loving and accepting me as I am, flawed and broken. Help me to love and accept others, too, knowing you have no favourites, only family. Amen.

Andrew Stewart-Darling
Andrew is the Senior Pastor at Stour Valley Vineyard Church.

Day 42: Made new

Tuesday 30 March

‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!’

2 Corinthians 5:17

My dad often talks about what happened when he became a Christian. On the surface actually nothing happened: he still looked the same; his family knew who he was when he walked in the room; and his life continued. But at the same time a remarkable transformation took place: he stopped drinking and swearing and his anger problems disappeared. He was physically recognisable but he was a new man!

This is the transformation that only Jesus Christ can bring, and it is a promise and a hope that we carry with us into every situation.

As you take time this Lent to prepare yourself for the events of Holy Week and Jesus’ death and resurrection, can you reflect on how Jesus has brought newness into your life? Where have you seen transformation? Thank God for those things and ask him to continue that work in you.

Creating, sustaining, redeeming God, I thank you that in you all things are made new. Thank you for where I have seen that in my own life. I ask you to continue that work in me and, in so doing, enable me to bring new life to others. Amen.

Dr Ruth Valerio
Ruth is Tearfund’s Director of Global Advocacy and Influencing.

A group of women and children are sitting on the ground in front of a traditional thatched hut. The women are wearing colorful clothing, and the children are dressed in simple clothes. The background shows the wooden structure of the hut and some trees.

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📌 Your gifts provide mothers with training and support so that they can earn more and take better care of their families.

Day 43: Lectio Divina

Wednesday 31 March

‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.’

Luke 4:18

‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’ (Luke 4:18-19)

Lectio Divina (Holy Reading) is an ancient Christian Bible meditation practice (originating from the Hebraic tradition of the Shema), which involves listening with the heart. It allows us to focus on the text we are reading, to slow down and hear what God is wanting to say to us through the passage. Join with us as we meditate together on Jesus’ mission – and what this means for us today.

1. *Find a still, silent space. Become aware of God’s presence.*
2. *Begin by reading the above scripture a few times to familiarise yourself with it.*
3. *Read the text again, this time notice a word or phrase that catches your attention.*
4. *Meditate on this.*
5. *Ask God why he chose to highlight this word or phrase. Have a conversation with him about this. You may want to journal this interaction down.*
6. *Rest in God’s presence.*

Lucie N’guessan

Lucie is Tearfund’s West Africa Communications Officer.

Day 44: Game changer

Thursday 1 April

“My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

Matthew 26:42

I missed out on a lot in my childhood; I grew up with several organs that didn't work properly. But the biggest thing I missed out on was God. I only met him in my 20s.

I'd love to say the hardship stopped there, but it didn't. I've learnt that following God doesn't lead to a simpler, or less painful, life. There were moments I could have walked away. But I knew what it was like to be surrounded by darkness and not have a relationship with God. That would be even more unbearable.

I also knew, deep in my bones, that God understood. He had been through it already. He had chosen to endure torture and death so we would never be alone.

Through Tearfund's work with local churches, people around the world discover this life-giving relationship. People find out they're not alone and they're loved. And through the support of our church partners, they are able to lift themselves out of poverty and reach their God-given potential.

*Thank you Jesus for choosing to go to the cross.
And thank you for sitting with me in the brokenness.
Teach me how I can be this light to others. Amen.*

Rachael Adams

Day 45: A broken hallelujah

Friday 2 April

‘And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.’

Matthew 27:50

‘Love is not a victory march. It’s a cold and it’s a broken hallelujah.’ John Cale

I can’t tell you what John Cale was thinking of when he wrote this line (for the music fans about to correct me, it actually wasn’t Jeff Buckley or Leonard Cohen). But it makes me think of Christ. Because love’s arms were not raised in triumph; they were stretched out on the cross.

Love is strong because it is vulnerable; it overcomes because it serves; it is powerful because it does not strive for power.

Love doesn’t climb ladders to get ahead; it gets stuck in at ground level. Love is not desperate for the dawn; it sets up camp in the dark night of the soul and builds a fire.

Love does not dominate, segregate or accumulate. Love would rather get nailed to a cross in a posture of inclusion than take up a sword to conquer.

Love wins because it is willing to lose.

Dear Jesus, thank you for love. For your love. For the love that sustains the universe. Help us to follow your example of love. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 46: Waiting for God

Saturday 3 April

'The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it.'

Luke 23:55

Holy Saturday is where many of us live our lives: waiting for God to speak. During this last year, it has felt like an extended time of waiting. Like the disciples did, we are wondering, where is God at work? God never went away. He is here and he is moving. He never left us, nor will he forsake us. Let us find a way to be present in the waiting. Please join me as we pray for an end to injustice and poverty and join in with God's plan for healing for our world.

*Come Holy Spirit, our hearts cry out for more of you.
In a world full of brokenness, show us how to use our gifts
to repair and restore.*

*Spirit of peace, fall on places of conflict around the world.
Heal divisions and hurts. Bring together families torn apart
by war.*

*Spirit of justice, anoint decision-makers with wisdom to
bring about systemic change and truth where cycles of
poverty and bias have taken root.*

*Come Holy Spirit, we let you take control. Show us how
we can build back better. Unite, bless others and renew.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

Nigel Harris
CEO, Tearfund UK

Day 47: The meaning in our burials

Sunday 4 April

‘See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come.’

Song of Solomon 2:11-12

As the Bride and Groom call out to each other in this wonderful picture of beautiful and effervescent love, there is a freshness that overcomes.

God wants to stir among us a new thing, a fresh love, and new hope. As the bright greens of the early Crocus and trilliums pop their heads from the snow and damp earth, Easter brings new life.

The dark of past days is replaced by new blooming flowers. The return of the swallows and robins from the south remind us of God’s never-ending love. As the land is turned and seeds planted, farmers and gardeners alike look to new possibilities with hope.

Lord... we thank You for new life. we pray that as you raised your Son from the dead, you will raise our spirits and trust in you once more. Thank you Spirit for breathing fresh life into our lives.

Wayne Johnson
Executive Director, Tearfund Canada

📷 An estimated 65% of women and girls in South Sudan have been sexually assaulted in the midst of war and instability. Through local churches, Tearfund is providing victims of sexual assault with biblically-based counselling and trauma care. Helping to heal deep scars and find restoration.





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