

ONE VOICE

TOGETHER IN PRAYER FOR AN **END TO POVERTY**

THE FULLNESS OF LIFE

Jesus famously offered his disciples life ‘to the full’ (John 10:10). This has also been translated as life ‘in all its fullness’ and life ‘more abundantly’. But what does it mean to have an abundant life? Gideon Heugh reflects the link between Jesus’ extraordinary statement and our relationship to the world around us.

How alive are you?

If it’s possible to have life to the full, it also must be possible to have a life that isn’t full. Life, but less abundantly. Perhaps it’s possible to have a life that’s closer to empty than full. In fact, I’m pretty sure that I’ve felt like that at times during my life. Maybe you have as well. So how do we make sure that our lives are abundant – that we are fully alive?

The key lies in our relationships, and in the one who restores them.

At the heart of a broken world there are broken relationships. In a life that seems less than full, this is one of the first things we should look to. And this doesn’t just mean relationships with other people. For an abundant life, we need to look to our relationships with God, with creation, and with ourselves – as well as with others.

Jesus is able to offer life to the full because he is able to bring harmony to all these things. ‘Through him all things were made’ (John 1:3), and through him all things are remade: he is the great healer and restorer, the one who is ‘making everything new.’ (Revelation 21:5)

This is why we at Tearfund are so passionate about working through the local church. We know that it is the restoration of relationships that will enable people to lift themselves out of poverty.

This Lent, we will be taking a deep dive into these themes in our free devotional. It’s called ‘Alive’, and it’s full of reflections, prayers and poems that will help us to realign our relationships and re-wonder our hearts. We can’t wait to share it with you.

A prayer of preparation for Lent

Lord Jesus,
This Lent – repair my relationships, renew my heart,
restore my hope, revitalise my spirit, and return my whole being to you.
In your precious name, amen.

A NOTE FROM...

'Amid the busyness of modern life, Lent is the perfect opportunity to tune ourselves back to the frequencies of God. Only when we do this can we fully embrace his good gift of life. Our prayer here at Tearfund is that people all over the world can experience this.' **Gideon Heugh, Tearfund**

Get your free devotional at www.tearfund.org/lent_2020

A LOVE THAT LASTS

On her four-week placement with Tearfund Go in Cambodia, Kate Millar saw the power of loving people for the long run.

'You can count the seeds inside an apple, but only God knows how many apples will grow from one seed.' I sat there, listening to the sermon on our very first morning in Cambodia, exhausted from the journey and apprehensive about the month ahead. I felt so unequipped and out of my comfort zone, unsure of what was to come.

But as the words of the sermon were spoken, for a moment my worried thoughts and frantic prayers faded to the back of my mind. It was like God was saying to me, 'See what I am doing here in Cambodia. I am planting seeds, and I know what fruit will come from them. You may not see it immediately, but trust that I know what I will make grow.' This was the beginning of one of the biggest lessons God taught me during my time in Cambodia.

The power of youth

On my four-week placement with Tearfund Go I lived and worked alongside The Cambodian Hope Organisation (CHO). CHO, one of Tearfund's partner organisations in Cambodia, is based in Poipet, a city on the border with Thailand. Poverty is everywhere, and human trafficking is a huge problem.

When I had the chance to talk to Mr. Chomno, the founder and director of CHO, I couldn't help but catch his excitement for the vision God has given him. He would beam with joy when speaking about CHO's school projects: Safe Haven School and School on a Mat. 'Children are the future of Cambodia,' he would say passionately.

CHO's mission began with a call from God to rescue children who had been trafficked. Through God's provision, they set up a safe house where the rescued children could be supported, protected and rehabilitated. This place was named Safe Haven, and, before their eyes, God began to bring transformation to the lives of the children.

A new approach

There came a point when Mr. Chomno felt a nudge from God to do something different. The safe house was changing the lives of individual children, but its impact was limited. It was too expensive to sustain long-term and didn't deal with the root causes of trafficking in Cambodia.

Mr Chomno saw that if the whole of Cambodia was to be transformed, then the roots of the problem needed to be dealt with. This was when CHO's mission changed from short-term rescue to long-term prevention.

So how do they do this? CHO seeks to tackle the root cause of trafficking, which is poverty. When people are in poverty, their need creates desperation. In the hope of money and a better life, this desperation can lead to people unknowingly allowing their children to be trafficked.

CHO's projects focus on anti-trafficking education and providing skills that empower families to generate their own income. These projects exist to help the people of Cambodia lift themselves out of poverty, addressing the heart of the problem.

Long-term change

In Cambodia, I learnt that we won't always see immediate change from our actions. Poverty isn't something that can be 'quick-fixed'. Instead we need to faithfully invest in loving people. At CHO, their projects invest in people's lives, showing love in practical ways.

For the month I was in Poipet, God showed me people who are devoted and faithful, investing in their communities, striving to bring sustainable change from the roots upwards and praying as they do it. When I was with CHO, I was blessed to be able to take part in their work and see the value of being part of such a long-term vision.

Now, back home in Scotland, I want to bring this God-centred, long-term vision into my life here. How can I do that? I can make changes to live more sustainably. I can invest in friendships in an intentional way. In its simplest form, it's about being patient and steadfast and loving people for the long-run. It's about taking the seeds God has given me and nurturing them so that he can bring fruit.

PLEASE PRAY

- Pray that CHO will continue to see God bringing fruit from their work as they break the chains of trafficking.
- Pray for strength, wisdom and learning for our current Tearfund Go volunteers serving alongside partners.

PEACE FOR OLUCHI

Trauma. We use the word to describe the effect of an experience that was horrifying, shocking, terrifying. It can range from something an outsider might find insignificant – to something so awful, it's hard for others to hear.

In the wake of conflict and disaster, often the deepest scars are those we cannot see. As we respond, it's essential that we address the toll on people's emotional and mental health.

Oluchi's story

'Life was good with my husband,' says Oluchi*.

Oluchi lives in Nigeria – a country where internal conflict is pushing people deeper into poverty. She is a widow with six children. Two are at university, one is at teacher training college, and the three youngest are still in school. Oluchi cares about education. Before the violence that forced them to leave their home, she was a primary school teacher – before the trauma and sadness of events that shook her world.

Then the conflict came to Oluchi's village. Armed men attacked and her husband was killed.

In a moment, Oluchi's life looked different. 'We were living well and in harmony with [our neighbours] before the violence that displaced us,' she says. A violence that also changed Oluchi. 'Life was very challenging,' she said. 'I harboured bitterness and anger.'

Weary and heavy laden

For a long time, Oluchi found it difficult to sleep. Hope seemed lost.

'Thank God that I attended the trauma workshop,' says Oluchi. She was one of 37 widows who attended. Through the sessions, Tearfund staff talked through these painful experiences and support the women in the aftermath of the violence that had cost them their loved ones.

One of the things discussed was the idea of forgiveness. Over and over, the Bible calls us to forgive – as we have been forgiven. Not because forgiveness is deserved, or as a costly and self-sacrificing attempt at holiness, but for a deeply significant reason:

Forgiveness heals the forgiver. It brings restoration and peace.

Rest

Unforgiveness negatively affects our mental and physical wellbeing. Across whole communities, it can lead to social, spiritual and economic problems. 'After we went through the session on forgiveness,' Oluchi says, 'I have chosen to forgive those who killed my husband.'

'I can now sleep well,' says Oluchi. She has her hope back. 'I believe that my tomorrow and that of my children will be better than today,' she says. 'God has been gracious to us (my children and I) through thick and thin. I will serve the Lord as long as I live.'

PLEASE PRAY

- Thank God for Oluchi's peace. Pray that he will continue to bring comfort to her and to others like her who have been through such traumatic experiences.
- Praise God that he does heal – minds, bodies and nations. Lift up those who are facing conflict and fear. Ask God for hope and rescue for them.
- Pray for our partners who are providing support to people in the aftermath of conflict and trauma – that they would have courage, energy and protection as they work.

**Name has been changed to protect identity*

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

 Please pray for Zimbabwe, where people are struggling to feed their families in the midst of a huge drought. Although in some parts of the country it has finally begun to rain, the damage has already been done. Please pray that it's not too late for crops and livestock to recover; for our local partners as they respond to this crisis; and for continued rain.

 Time is running out for political leaders in South Sudan to reach an agreement to form a new government. They have until the 22 February to do so. Please pray that a solution will be found, and that a unified government will be formed that will bring lasting peace to the region.

 As the Coronavirus spreads it is affecting the work of our local partners in east and southeast Asia. They are unable to make plans; travel restrictions mean it is hard to reach communities in need or plan training events. Please pray for a vaccine to be found, healing for the sick and provision for those in poverty who are becoming more marginalised by restrictions in place.