

# One Voice

Your weekly  
prayer resource

tearfund

## Love in God's neighbourhood: why charity doesn't start at home

Tearfund's Gideon Heugh and Dr Ruth Valerio explore how we can live out Jesus' answer to the question, 'Who is my neighbour?'

Jesus didn't come up with the term 'love your neighbour'. He was commenting on a Jewish law that predated his birth by centuries. The command to 'love your neighbour as yourself' is first found in the Old Testament book of Leviticus.

The command raises the question of 'Who exactly is my neighbour?' – a question that by Jesus' time had already been fiercely debated by Rabbis for generations.

When a religious expert asked Jesus what his answer to this question was (Luke 10:25-29), he was asking where Jesus stood in this debate.

### Who is my neighbour?

The traditional interpretation of 'love your neighbour' was that it applied to the people of Israel. In other words: 'we need to look after our own', or 'charity starts (and ends) at home'. Yet Jesus defines who our neighbour is not by tribe, race, nation, or even religion, but by need.

We can see this being put into practice in the feeding of the five thousand (Matthew 14:13-31). The disciples want to send the hungry people away, essentially saying 'let them take care of themselves'. But Jesus says, 'You feed them.'

After telling the parable, Jesus instructs the religious expert to 'Go and do likewise.' (Luke 10:36-37)

Jesus' ultimate answer to the question 'Who is my neighbour?' is therefore to say 'You are the neighbour.' It becomes a call to action – a rallying cry to the church to go out into the world and be neighbours to whoever is in need.

So it turns out that charity does start at home – because it starts with us, and the steps we take to be God's hands and feet in the world.

## Please pray

All-loving, ever-present God,  
We pray for our neighbours –  
for the people we know and love,  
and for the people we have never met.

We pray for our neighbours –  
for the people across the street,  
and for the people on the other side of the world.

We pray for our neighbours –  
for the people who look and sound like us,  
and for the people who couldn't be more different.

We pray for our neighbours –  
for everyone who is struggling,  
for everyone who is being marginalised and oppressed.

Help us God to be good neighbours –  
to look outward instead of inward,  
to follow Jesus' call to take action.  
Amen.

For a more in-depth understanding of the answer to the question 'Who is your neighbour?' taken from across the Bible, we've asked Gideon and Ruth to write a longer version of this article. **[You can read it at www.tearfund.org/OVneighbour](https://www.tearfund.org/OVneighbour)**. We hope it inspires you and your church in how you can pray and support our global sisters and brothers.

## A note from...

'The idea of breaking down barriers and expanding borders is central to the Biblical narrative. An ever-widening inclusion is at the heart of God's story – a narrative of broadening our definition of "neighbour" to ultimately include all of creation.'

**Dr Ruth Valerio, Director of Global Advocacy and Fundraising**

# A call for justice

**As Christians, our faith compels us to speak up and take action against injustice and oppression. The Bible is clear in its teaching on this, that God stands for justice (Isaiah 61:8) and that this is God's requirement for us also (Micah 6:8).**

But it can be hard to know where to begin. Or to know how we can make a difference – especially with issues that seem overwhelming and longstanding, such as racial injustice.

Through our work at Tearfund, we see how racism destroys relationships, and broken relationships cause poverty and suffering.

If we want to bring an end to extreme poverty, we also need to address racial injustice. We need to remove barriers that stop communities of colour from living the life God intended for them (John 10:10).

We can all play our part in this.

Join with us by praying this prayer throughout your week and listen to how God responds.

## Please pray

Lord, open our eyes  
to injustices around us –  
especially those we have overlooked.  
Lord, grant us your wisdom in how we respond and seek change.

Lord, open our ears  
to injustices around us –  
especially those we have ignored.  
Lord, grant us your humility to stop and listen.

Lord, open our hearts  
to injustices around us –  
especially those we have accepted.  
Lord, grant us boldness to challenge the status quo.

Lord, let your kingdom come.  
In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Marc Romyr-Antoine, who leads Tearfund's work in Haiti, has written a Bible study on Esther, to help you explore how you can use what you have to make a difference. It's great for personal reflection, or it can be used in your church small groups. We hope it challenges and inspires you in how you can tackle injustice. **[You can find it at www.tearfund.org/OVEsther](https://www.tearfund.org/OVEsther)**

# Where potential blossoms: the garden with hope written all over it

Tearfund's local partner in Mali, JEM, bought a hectare of land in a community where poverty was rife. They split the land into 100 plots, then worked with the local church and the village chief to allocate them to women in need. The results were astounding: families not only overcame hunger, but they were able to earn an income too.

Yakene\* felt trapped at home before she was given a plot of land. Opportunities for women to earn a living and support their families were rare in her village.

'I didn't do anything before: I stayed at home and did nothing but cleaning,' Yakene shares. 'I couldn't even buy a pair of shoes for my children, and they didn't eat well.'

## A great blessing

Families weren't just given land, but training was on hand too. Yakene and other women were taught how to farm in a way that would care for their plot for years to come. They were also taught farming techniques that would help them be more resilient to changing weather patterns – particularly long droughts – caused by the climate crisis.

'This garden is a great blessing for the whole village and for my family and me in particular,' says Yakene.

'With the vegetables that I produce on my plot, my situation has improved a lot: I earn some income from the sale of vegetables, which allows me to live better and to buy clothes for the children... I am happy.'

## Why women?

'Community gardens like this are a great response to how we can tackle poverty as it offers a way for families to become financially independent and change their futures,' shares Kossi Agbo, who oversees Tearfund's work in west Africa.

'It also shows the importance of including women. In Mali, men are the main breadwinners, and women often stay at home to raise children and look after the home. It can be incredibly lonely.'

'This community garden shows how women can play a vital role in lifting their families out of poverty when they are empowered to do so. By giving women like Yakene this opportunity and equipping them with what they need, they are able to reach their God-given potential.'

This garden has turned life around for Yakene's village. And it doesn't stop there.

## Faith for the future

Yakene is working with JEM and her church on ideas to improve water access for the different plots. They are currently exploring how they can install a borehole, which will allow them to draw water from the ground with a solar-powered pump. This will make farming much more efficient for them.

‘Now the people in the village are happier: the children are doing well, we are eating better and we are reassured. We hope that the future will be even better, especially when access to water in the garden will be easier and more abundant,’ shares Yakene.

This opportunity has reinforced to Yakene the love that God has for her and her community.

‘When a person comes to help you in the name of God, it is because that person knows God and has compassion for others,’ Yakene says. ‘God himself is compassionate and he is good. We see these characteristics of God with the action of JEM.’

### Please pray

- Thank God for how this plot of land has transformed the lives of 100 households.
- Lift up the plans Yakene and her village have to develop the garden further.
- Pray for more opportunities in Mali and around the world for women to be included so they can lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

*\*Name changed to protect identity*

## Pray for the world



The UK government has put out a statement outlining cuts to its foreign aid budget, but is yet to receive parliamentary approval for its plans. Tearfund has joined together with more than 200 charities to condemn the decision to slash aid. Ask God for the UK government to reverse the decision. Keep in your prayers people in poverty who this decision affects.



Recent forest fires in Nepal are the worst-recorded in more than fifteen years. They have led to devastating air pollution levels, which has left communities struggling to breathe. Pray for healing for those affected by the smoke. Praise God for the recent rainfall in some districts that are helping to stem the fires. Ask God for an end to the fires in Nepal.



Keep in your prayers the people of India as they face a catastrophic surge of coronavirus cases, which has overwhelmed hospitals. Thank God for the oxygen and other assistance that countries around the world are sending to India to help alleviate the crisis. Ask God to comfort those who are mourning the loss of loved ones. And pray for an end to coronavirus.

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