



# ASK DAILY DEVOTIONAL

January 2025



# Welcome from the editor

For just under eight and a half years, the TLM Global Fellowship was blessed by “The Bridge” devotions every day of the week. It started as a vision in the heart of Marta Risko and she was responsible for gathering devotions and sending them out. Her contacts with former missionaries and TLM people were of course very important in providing high quality devotions for such a long time. Together with her role as Country Leader of Hungary, it was a huge effort to send out fresh devotions each month! Thank you Marta!

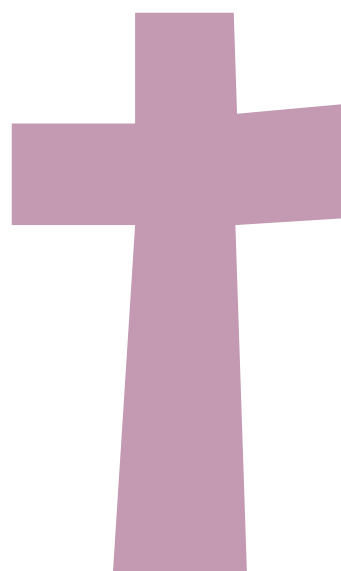
In the Country Leaders meeting in New Delhi in November, it was decided that we would launch the ASK Daily Devotional from the beginning of 2025, following a recommendation from the Spiritual Ministry MAWG. We will follow the structure in the ASK Prayer Diary and each country will provide five devotions for the week.

For this first edition of ASK Devotional Diary we will follow:

1-5 January	The Global Fellowship
6-12 January	India
13-19 January	New Zealand
20-26 January	World Leprosy Day
27 January-2 February	The Leprosy Mission Shop

We pray to the Lord that Scriptures and thoughts will be a blessing for all of us and that it also will stimulate our prayers for the work of TLM in different countries.

## Allan Ekstedt



**Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.**

**Isaiah 43:19**

New Year! New You! – At this time of year, headlines like this are common in Newspapers and magazines. Encouraging us to have a fresh start and 'be better; do better' this year.

As we stand at the beginning of a new year, we also stand at the dawn of a new six-year strategy. How do you feel? Excited? Scared? If I am honest, I am a bit of both. Waves of doubts filled with fear can overwhelm the heart as we contemplate the unknown of what lies ahead. We really are **the generation that can end leprosy** – stopping transmission, reducing disability, ending discrimination – but my goodness! What a journey we have ahead of us – it won't be easy.

As I read Isaiah 43:19, I am encouraged and emboldened by God's promises. He is doing a new thing – even in our ministry. He will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. He will be with us every step of the way. My part, like yours is to hold His hand, listen and obey His word and commit TLM's mission and our part in that to Him.

As you read these words today, will you trust God to take us forward on this new journey? He has called us to this work, He will equip us. Hallelujah! Ask God to show you what He wants you to do in 2025, in your own life and in this new strategy.



**Jannine Ebenso** is Head of Knowledge Management & Learning at the International Office. She previously served as Global Disability Advisor. She is married to Bassey.

## Prayer

Lord, in this new year help me to remember your promises and remember who you are. Help me to remember your faithfulness to TLM and to me. Let that be the source of my hope and joy. I commit our new strategy into Your hands. Amen.



**The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labour. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.**

### **1 Corinthians 3:8-9**

As we begin this new year, I'm reminded of what a blessing it is to be united across the world in this wonderful Fellowship of Christians, working together to serve God, serve each other and serve persons affected by leprosy. I am also reminded of God's amazing faithfulness, which we celebrated in our 150th year.

However, I am also very aware of the huge challenges that lie before us as we embark on our ambitious new TLM Global Fellowship Strategy, and how easy it would be to become overwhelmed by the enormity of it all.

Amidst all of these thoughts and emotions, the Bible passage in 1 Corinthians 3, is a welcome reminder that these feelings stem from 'an inflated view of our own importance'! Perhaps all we need is to understand that all of us are utterly dependent on God. One plants a seed, the other waters it, but God makes it grow (v6). Planting and watering are important, but they are relatively easy. Only God can do the difficult bit and make plants, people and His Mission grow.

Yes, we all have a role to play and we will be rewarded (v8), how encouraging is that! But, as if that is not enough, you and I are privileged to be God's 'co-workers' (v9). God has chosen not to do it on His own. He chooses to use you and me! How does that make you feel?



**Jo-Anne Thomson**, Head of Fundraising Development. Before this, she worked for 9 years in TLM Trading UK. Originally from Guyana, Jo-Anne is married to a Scot, who is a Church of England Vicar, and has two daughters (aged 29 and 26).

## Prayer

Lord, thank You that we are fellow workers with You, and that it is You who makes things grow. Keep us from overestimating our importance. Help us to keep focused on You and to guard the unity, values and purpose of Your Mission. Amen



It is January 2025, the start of the 2025–2030 TLM Global Fellowship strategy! A renewed Global Fellowship journey to build a world in which there is no transmission of leprosy, in which there is no new disability resulting from leprosy, and in which no one will experience the pain of discrimination because of leprosy.

As for all journeys, along with the excitement of new discoveries, the uncertainty of the unknown and the awareness of the challenges ahead, can lead to anxiety; anxiety that the journey may turn out to be too challenging, or anxiety that our expectations may not be met.

I came across the 'Odes of Solomon', apparently written by a poet and devotee of Jesus himself during the time of Jesus which cite:

*Mighty rivers are the power of the Lord, which carry headlong those who despise them, and twists their steps, and ruin their fords, and seize their bodies, and destroy their souls; for they are swifter than lightening and faster.*

*But those who cross them in faith will not be shaken. And those who walk on them without blemish will not be perturbed; because the Lord is a sign in them, and the sign becomes the path of those who cross in the Name of the Lord.*

*Put on, therefore, the Name of the Most High, and know Him, and you will cross without danger, because the rivers will be obedient to you.*

We wrote this strategy together, in prayer. In prayer, we develop a 'path' set on His name that we committed to follow until 2030. If we cross this path in faith, we will not be shaken because we will cross it in His faith



**Clara Volpi** is Head of Operations at the International Office. Her role is to ensure that Members of the Global Fellowship have the support they need in the areas of strategy, local governance development, programming and operations.

## Prayer

Let's pray that, along this 6 years journey, we will keep praying together, and collaborate in His name; if we do so, we will be able to see a firm, secure, and easy path, even in the mist of turbulent waters.



We often hear about the great names and remarkable stories of faith—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, and others. But what about those who are perhaps less well-known?

- Ruth and Naomi: Ruth, a Moabite widow, chose to leave everything behind for what she believed was right. While her sister returned to her people, Ruth remained with her Jewish mother-in-law, Naomi, faithfully following the true God. She acted with integrity and faithfulness, not knowing where her journey would lead. (Ruth 1–4)
- The blind man from birth: A man who lived his life begging outside the temple, labelled a sinner by society because of his blindness. Even after being healed, he faced judgment from the religious leaders of his time. Despite the risks, he boldly spoke the truth to them. (John 9)
- Gideon: Living in an impoverished Israel under Midianite oppression, Gideon was full of doubts and questions—even when God appeared to him. He repeatedly asked God for reassurance before stepping forward in faith. (Judges 6–8)

None of these individuals had all the answers. They didn't know the "how" or the "when," and at times they weren't even sure about the "what." Yet, God blessed them, healed them, and granted them victory. He saw their hearts and gave them the strength to pursue what was right, enabling them to become a blessing to others despite their challenges.

May the work of TLM continue to be blessed by God. May God bless everyone—whether seen as big or small in human eyes—who plays a role in this mission with a faithful heart, overcoming doubts, opposition, and difficulties to do what is good.



**Damaris Villanueva**, Head of People and Safeguarding at The Leprosy Mission International

## Prayer

May God bless the drivers, guardians, cleaners, field workers, nurses, assistants, helpers, personal assistants, administrators, volunteers, fundraising speakers, desk workers, remote staff, and individuals affected by leprosy. May He bless all who contribute, each in their unique way. Amen



### Reading: Mark 10: 46 – 52

This is a very familiar passage and I have no doubt you have heard many sermons from this passage.

This incident of Jesus healing the blind Bar-Timaeus made me realise two points.

Firstly, Jesus stopped and spoke to the crowd, "call him". Until then, those in the crowd were indignant and scolded him for making such a disturbance. But when Jesus spoke to them their attitude towards the blind man and their outlook on the situation changed. They went to the blind man and said kindly, "Have courage! Get up! Jesus is calling for you."

Bar-Timaeus knew Jesus was near him. The crowd was near Jesus but did not recognise Him.

It is also true, when we know and walk closer to our Saviour, that our attitude and our outlook changes towards others and the situation around us.

Secondly, I want to share that the LORD spoke to Bar-Timaeus and asked him, "what do you want me to do for you?" Often in our actions with others, we tend to assume what they want and act upon it. The Lord is also teaching us to develop an attitude of conversing with others so we know what they want.

The same Jesus who was near the blind man and the crowd in Jericho is also always near us, and only waiting for a shout. He is so near to us and wanting to speak to us. It is me; it is us; we fail to see Him or hear him.



**Gladstone Worthington**, Head of Finance at The Leprosy Mission International.

## Prayer

O Jesus Christ, teacher and healer, you heard the cry of the blind beggar, when others would have silenced him.

Teach us to be attentive to the voices others ignore, that we might respond through the power of the Spirit to heal the afflicted and to welcome the abandoned for your sake and the sake of the gospel. Amen.



### **There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28**

Throughout the Bible, God reveals His deep concern for those who are marginalised. Jesus sought out the outcasts, healed the afflicted, and restored dignity to those rejected by society. His life and ministry remind us that every person is made in God's image and is worthy of love, respect, and opportunity.

Yet, in our world today, people affected by leprosy continue to face exclusion and discrimination. They are overlooked in decision-making, denied access to education, employment, and healthcare, and often endure isolation and stigma. These challenges make it difficult for them to participate fully in social, economic, and cultural life.

Scripture reminds us that God cares for the oppressed and calls His people to act on their behalf. Proverbs 31:8-9 urges us: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Defend the rights of the poor and needy." As followers of Christ, we are called to work for justice, inclusion, and dignity for all.

TLM India seeks to answer this call through its Community Empowerment initiatives. By building the capacity of individuals affected by leprosy, advocating for just policies, and providing sustainable livelihood opportunities, TLMTI creates pathways for marginalised communities to thrive. This reflects God's heart for justice and inclusion.

When we empower others to live with dignity, we reflect the love of Christ to a watching world. We become His hands and feet, standing in the gap and ensuring that no one is left behind. Challenges remain, but we trust in God's promise: "The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed" (Psalm 103:6).



**Tina Mendis**, with 30+ years' experience in leprosy, disability, and community development, specializes in skills training, livelihoods, and inclusion, overseeing TLMTI's Vocational Training Centres and Community Empowerment Projects.

## Prayer

Lord, you are the defender of the oppressed and the healer of the broken-hearted. Open our eyes to see the needs around us and give us courage to act. Help us to bring hope, dignity, and inclusion to those who are marginalized, reflecting Your love in all we do. Amen.





**When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. And behold, a person affected by leprosy came to him and knelt before him, saying, ‘Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.’ And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, ‘I will; be clean.’ And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Matthew 8:1–3**

The story of Jesus healing the person affected by leprosy reminds us that willingness is crucial for healing. Despite societal pressures and rejection, the courage of the person to approach Jesus was met with His willing heart and healing touch. Healing requires willingness from all—patients, caregivers, communities, and health systems.

Stigma often isolates people, leading to hesitation or denial in seeking care. The patient’s plea in Matthew 8 challenges us to meet patients where they are, offering encouragement to overcome barriers. Jesus not only healed physically but restored dignity, addressing discrimination and rejection.

For healthcare providers, leprosy work often lack appeal, and burnout or stigma can hinder willingness. Yet Jesus, who is our model physician, teaches us to offer our service willingly, trusting God to multiply our efforts (Exodus 35:21). Compassion and expertise are our offerings to the Lord.

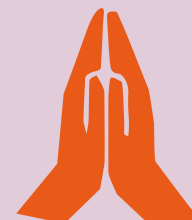
Healing extends beyond clinics and willingness must pervade the health systems, funders and policymakers. Leprosy communities must break stigma and create acceptance, like the friends in Mark 2 who carried the paralytic to Jesus. Willingness to advocate, conduct pertinent and appropriate research, promote hope and inclusion. Proverbs 31:8–9 calls us to defend the rights of the poor, advocating for policies and care systems that reflect God’s heart for the marginalised.



**Dr Joydeepa Darlong**, Head of knowledge Management at The Leprosy Mission Trust India. Joydeepa has been with TLM for 24 years, serving as a clinician and researcher.

## Prayer

Lord, teach us to have willing hearts like Yours, responding with compassion, courage, and action to bring healing and hope. We are willing Lord, In your Name, Amen.



## **The Lord was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. Genesis 39:2**

There are many leadership lessons from the life of Joseph. Despite being sold into slavery and imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit, Joseph maintained his integrity and demonstrated exceptional leadership skills.

Joseph was gifted with the ability to interpret dreams, and he used this gift to serve others and bring glory to God. He remained committed to his values and beliefs, even under pressure Joseph recognised the danger of putting himself in compromising situations. Joseph understood the power of accountability, he trusted in God and allowed the truth to be revealed in its own time.

Joseph's decision to forgive and reconcile with his brothers is a powerful example of the transformative power of forgiveness. Joseph shows us that true greatness comes from serving others with humility and kindness, even in the face of adversity. When Joseph was promoted to a position of power and influence in Egypt, he remained faithful to God and continued to serve Him with his whole heart.

When we extend forgiveness and grace, we become agents of reconciliation and healing in a broken and hurting world. We become more like Christ, who came to restore our broken relationship with God and with one another.



**Dr. Helen Roberts**, Ophthalmologist & Superintendent working with TLM India for 35 years; currently based at TLM Hospital, Vadathorasalur, Tamil Nadu.

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, keep us from falling under your grace and mercy, to wait upon your time and restoration amidst our daily struggles and adversity. Amen



**And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all. Luke 6:17-19**

Jesus' ministry was about spreading the Good News of salvation and holistic healing of the body and mind. He was always sensitive to the needs of the people that surrounded Him. In the Gospel narrative we see Jesus healing the blind, the lame, raising the dead, casting out demons etc. He addressed the people holistically.

In our OPDs and workplaces we come across people affected by leprosy and their communities. As a leprosy-focused organisation it is possible to have a fixed vision on the leprosy related problems only. But to provide holistic healing like Jesus, we need to have a sensitive heart and an open mind to see beyond what we look for and see every day.

Like the women who touched Jesus' garments (Mark 5: 25-34), like the friends who broke the roof to bring their paralytic friend to Jesus (Mark 2:4), we may face unusual presentations and patients in our workplace. God has given us various gifts, talents and medical specialty skills. We should be ready to use them for His glory and to transform the lives of people.



**Dr Famkima Darlong**, Head of Health Program at The Leprosy Mission Trust India. Fam has worked for TLM for 24 years and is an Ophthalmologist.

## Prayer

**Lord, thank you for the various gift and talents that you have given us. Give us heart to make an impact in the lives of people we serve and bring healing and honour to YOU. Amen**



**Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. – Galatians 6:9**

Today, we gather to pray for India, a nation grappling with the persistent challenge of leprosy. This ancient disease, often misunderstood and feared, continues to cause suffering and isolation for countless individuals. As followers of Christ, we are called to love our neighbours, particularly those who are marginalised and suffering.

The passage from Mark 12:31 reminds us of the importance of compassion and empathy. Jesus, in His earthly ministry, often reached out to the marginalised, including those with leprosy. He touched them, healed them, and restored their dignity. This powerful act of compassion and healing echoes through the ages. Jesus' touch, breaking societal barriers and medical limitations, offers hope to those affected by leprosy. His example inspires us to reach out to the marginalised and to work towards a world free from suffering.

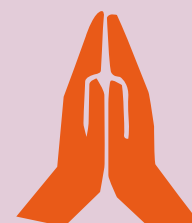
Let us pray for India, especially the staff at The Leprosy Mission Trust India, working tirelessly to eliminate leprosy. May God grant them wisdom, strength, innovative ideas, human and financial resources and great partners to provide effective treatment and care. May the love of Christ shine through their efforts, bringing hope and healing to those affected.



**Nikita Sarah** is the Head of Advocacy and Communication at TLMTI. With a deep-rooted passion for social justice and a strong commitment to eliminating leprosy, she leads the organisation's efforts in raising awareness, influencing policy, and mobilising support for people affected by leprosy. Nikita's work involves strategic communication, advocacy campaigns, and building strong partnerships with government, civil society, and international organisations.

## Prayer

**Let us pray for India, where the burden of leprosy remains significant. May God empower healthcare workers to diagnose and treat this disease early, preventing unnecessary suffering and disability and may His healing touch be upon all who suffer. May communities be educated about leprosy, reducing stigma and encouraging early treatment. Let us pray that through early detection, effective treatment and community empowerment, India can move closer to a future free from leprosy. Amen**



**This is why I speak to them in parables: “Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: ““You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. Matthew 13:13–14**

## **The Art of Listening: A Ministry of the Heart**

In my role at The Leprosy Mission, as I engage with our Supporters, I embrace listening as more than just a skill; it's a calling, a ministry woven into each day. Listening—truly listening—is transformative, but it's rare. Many hear words, yet few reach for the heart behind them. Christ teaches us that hearing isn't enough; He calls us to listen with an open heart, embracing the thoughts and emotions that others may not even voice.

In Matthew 13:13–15, Jesus tells us, “Though hearing, they do not hear or understand.” Here, He points to the profound gap between hearing sounds and truly engaging with one another's spirit. Listening well requires us to step beyond words, to walk a mile in someone else's shoes, and to bring empathy into every interaction.

When we listen with genuine intention, something remarkable happens; we create a bridge of understanding. This deep, empathetic listening honours the dignity of others and offers them a place of trust. It heals misunderstandings, bridges divides, and allows God's love to flow freely.

This kind of listening is sacred—it's where ministry happens. It's how we connect, uplift, and remind others that they are seen and heard. May we cultivate this heart-led listening, letting Christ guide us as we honour others with our full presence, love, and understanding. Amen.

**Nadia Paul** has served as the Supporter Engagement Manager at The Leprosy Mission New Zealand since 2019. Originally from South Africa, Nadia now resides in Auckland with her beloved family. With a heart for ministry and compassion, she lives by the mantra: “Love God, Love People.”

## **Prayer**

**Lord Jesus, grant us hearts that truly listen. Help us go beyond hearing to deeply understand and empathise with others. May we connect with love, bridge divides, and reflect Your compassion. Teach us to listen as You do—honouring every person, embracing their journey, and offering Your healing presence. Amen.**



**What are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honour. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority. Psalm 8:4-6**

Having just reflected on the majesty and glory of God in creation, the Psalmist asks the question, “why should God think about and care for mere mortals?”

It's easy for us to compare ourselves to others and feel inadequate or less than someone else, but this Psalm tells us that we're crowned with glory and honour and that God has given us authority over all things. The writer of Hebrews quotes these verses (2:8-9) adding, “we have not yet seen all things put under their authority. **What we do see is Jesus.**”

Jesus is our standard. Jesus is the One who reveals God to us. God who loves and accepts us as we are. God who says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” (Jeremiah 31:3) God who looks at you and sees you as so valuable that Jesus gave his life so you could know the fullness of life that only God can give.

Why does God care about us? Ephesians 2:10 gives us an answer: “We are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”

Our glory and honour come from our relationship with Jesus. In him we are always adequate. Through him we can be and do all we are created to be and do.

**Kathleen Gavin**, a member of the TLMNZ Board, worked as a physiotherapist in India, Nepal & Bangladesh from 1981-1996. She lives in Omokoroa, NZ with her husband, Bruce.

## Prayer

**Dear God, thank you that you think about us, that you know us and that you have a good plan for our lives. Help us to always look to Jesus as our standard and example of how to live, loving others as he has loved us. Amen.**



**Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10**

In New Zealand, there is a Maori whakatauki (proverb), 'Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou ka ora ai te iwi.' Translated into English, 'With your bread basket and my bread basket the people will thrive.'

As with the Bible verses from Ecclesiastics, this proverb speaks to supporting one another, and through the sharing of resources and knowledge, ensuring the increased wellbeing of all people involved.

One of the pure joys of working together is the sharing of gifts, experiences and perspectives. For New Zealand, situated at the bottom of the world, this shared global connection is vital. We have complementary strengths, a common mission and a relationship of trust. Together, the support and encouragement we offer each other and the communities we serve helps us to overcome challenges and, in doing so, increases our sense of wellbeing and resilience.

God has not asked us to carry life's burdens alone. When we rely on ourselves, the journey can be more difficult and harder to reach a resolution. God has created His people to help one another. Our shared faith draws us together and as we pray for each other, the burdens are lifted, and the journey is less difficult with the resolution easier to reach.

As we start this year of 2025, and we journey ever closer to our audacious 2035 Goal. This is the time to increase the leverage of our individual strengths and our shared belief in God to support and encourage each other in our work and our faith.



**Gillian Whitley** is TLM New Zealand Country Leader and has worked with the Mission since 2007. She lives north of the city of Auckland in a small coastal and rural community where God's beautiful creation abounds.

## Prayer

**Dear God, thank you that you think about us, that you know us and that you have a good plan for our lives. Help us to always look to Jesus as our standard and example of how to live, loving others as he has loved us. Amen.**



## **"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus", Galatians 3:28**

In a world rife with discrimination based on gender, religion, ethnicity, and social status, we, as believers, are called to embody the inclusivity of Christ. Genesis reminds us that every individual is created in the image of God, each possessing inherent worth and dignity. This foundational truth lays the groundwork for a community that reflects God's love—one that embraces and uplifts the marginalised.

During a recent trip to Papua New Guinea, I met a remarkable woman whose story is a testament to resilience and faith. A survivor of domestic violence and leprosy, she faced the harsh realities of triple discrimination—being poor, female, and affected by leprosy. Yet, she emerged not as a victim but as a beacon of hope in her community, working as a health volunteer to help diagnose leprosy and referring victims of gender-based violence to safe houses.

Her journey resonates deeply with the message in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This verse calls us to embrace an inclusive faith that transcends societal divisions. Just as Christ accepted and uplifted the marginalised, we too are called to love and support one another, creating a community where every individual is valued.

Let this woman's story inspire us to be change agents in our own circles. As we work to defeat leprosy, let us ensure that no one is left behind. In a world that often thrives on division, may we cultivate a spirit of inclusion and acceptance, empowering those impacted by leprosy and discrimination. Reflect on how you can uplift those around you, remembering that we are all united in Christ. Together, we can transform lives and foster a community that truly reflects God's love and grace.

**Jasleen Kler**, International Programmes Manager at TLMNZ, has worked for the mission for over 9 years. She lives in Auckland with her husband Prashant and their two children, Adriel (7) and Aviyah (4).

## Prayer

**Jesus, we come to You today, asking for Your guidance as we strive to be a community that breaks barriers of stigma and discrimination. Empower us to love others as You do and be voices for the voiceless. May our actions reflect Your grace, compassion, and unity. Amen.**





**“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**  
**2 Corinthians 12: 9–10**

God told Paul that his strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Our weaknesses can lead us to greater dependence upon God. Our weaknesses lead us into God's greater strength and power, delivered through His grace.

It's his reliance and trust in God, in spite of the circumstances he was going through, that enabled him to walk stronger in faith. God is the author and finisher of our faith, not ourselves, and it is the Lord who will keep us from falling.

1 Peter 1:6–7

“In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

**Diane Simpson**, Cure One Administrator, TLMNZ

## Prayer

**Abba Father, May Your glory and praise shine through our weaknesses. We fight the good fight, lifting our prayers to You through challenges, infirmities, insults, hardships, difficulties, and persecutions. For when we are weak, then we are strong in You. We place our trust in You as we carry out the work before us. May it bear fruit, gleaning a harvest and continuing the vision birthed by our founder, Wellesley Bailey, in 1874. Amen.**



**The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:24**

As we come to World Leprosy Day, I am once again hugely encouraged by how far God has brought The Leprosy Mission. Inspired by his Holy Spirit, we have set ourselves some highly ambitious goals as part of our new Global Strategy for 2025–2030. In recent years and through some challenging times the Lord has continued to sustain His Mission, as he has done for the last 150 years.

Paul's message to the Thessalonian Christians is one of encouragement; he petitions them to persevere and to keep up the good work and commitment to God despite the persecution they were suffering. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they have all been called by God for His service. Furthermore, that God will not just leave them to it; God is faithful to His promises and He is faithful to those whom He elects. What wonderful words of encouragement!

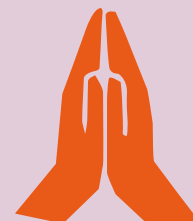
Sometimes when I look through my human eyes at the challenge of Defeating Leprosy and Transforming Lives, the task can feel daunting. You may be feeling the same way about a task or ministry to which God has called you to at this time. If so, be encouraged that God has specifically elected you. He doesn't need to engage you in His ministry, He can do it all without you, and yet He chooses to involve you, at this time, for His purposes. I pray that this you are inspired by this thought and that it gives you another perspective on the work and ministry you are doing.



**Brent Morgan**, is the International Director of The Leprosy Mission. Prior to this, he served as the Country Leader for TLM New Zealand. He lives in London with his wife, Tracy.

## Prayer

**Father God, inspire us, your people with the tasks and ministries to which you have called us. Thank you for your promise that we will never lack the means to fulfil them, in accordance with your will, and to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**



**Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:1-3**

What comfort it is to know we are being cheered on in our faith, cheered on in living out our faith, cheered on in the work to help those affected by leprosy?

The race to end leprosy is similar to the race of living out one's faith. The race to end leprosy is in sight, but we must stay the course and keep going, throwing off any thing that distracts us from the task at hand. Barry the baton was handed around the world, like a relay race, reaching Delhi in Nov 2024 for the 150 year celebrations.

As followers of Jesus, we are to keep the main thing and keep our eyes fixed on him. We can get bogged down by conflicts, sickness, mental health, and so many other things but in Christ we are set free. In Christ we can persevere, in Christ all sin that entangles us can be wiped away. Jesus who called you, will hold you now and forever.

Jesus is the ultimate example of knowing joy amidst terrible persecution. He was murdered by being hung on a cross, such a shameful way to die. And yet he is now glorified in heaven with his Father, who is now our Father by way of adoption in Christ.

And because we are adopted in Christ, the Spirit empowers us to not grow weary or lose heart but to persevere and stay the course set out before each one of us.



**Odele Habets**, Board member of the TLMI, previously on TLMNZ Board for 12 years; TLMNZ Project Officer; volunteer physiotherapist; owner of a Hand Therapy clinic. Currently Senior Pastor of Albany Baptist Church, New Zealand

## Prayer

**Dear Jesus, by your Spirit help us to run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Jesus, you experienced such strong opposition and hardship, help us to remain strong in you. Help us to find joy even amidst the most difficult situations. May those with leprosy today know your love and plan for their lives. Fill afresh with your Spirit each person that works and ministers in your name so that they may not grow weary or lose heart.**

**Amen**



**May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13**

I am writing this shortly after returning from our Members' Meeting in New Delhi, where we launched our new Strategy for 2025-2030 and celebrated TLM's 150th Anniversary. It was wonderful to meet many of you once again in person but also to know that so many others were joining us remotely for the Celebration Event and Wellesley Bailey Awards and the Service in the Cathedral of The Redemption. I brought home with me a copy of Janet Walmsley's book 'When Hope Came' – the story of the McKean's in Northern Thailand (which I had the pleasure of visiting some twenty years ago) and the work of Trevor and Heather Smith in particular.

Isn't HOPE what our Mission is all about? Wellesley Bailey, 150 years ago, had hope that he could make a difference to those he met with leprosy and, 150 years later, hasn't that hope been fulfilled? Could he have dreamt that, in 2024, we would be an international body of 27 Member countries providing treatment and care in sixteen countries across Africa, Asia and the Pacific with Australia, New Zealand and countries across Europe helping to raise some £40m globally.

Isn't the new Strategy – approved back in July and launched in November – one of hope with a vision of leprosy defeated and lives transformed with our strategic direction of a world with zero transmission, zero disability and zero discrimination with Christ at the centre.

As we keep another World Leprosy Day, let us never lose that hope.



**Colin Osborne** has been supporting the work of The Leprosy Mission for over fifty five years and is currently Chair of the Global Fellowship Board.

## Prayer

**Heavenly Father, we thank you that we are a Fellowship of Member Countries helping to fight the disease of leprosy and caring for those affected by the disease. May we never lose hope that one day the world will be free from this disease. Through our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.**



### Reading: Luke 5:1-11

This bible passage will be familiar to many, and over the years I have heard many sermons that focus on the amazing catch of fish. However, up until recently, I had never given much thought to the mundane task of preparing to fish. One of the most important skills of these fishermen was making and mending their nets. In those days, the nets were made of linen, thus, they had to be cleaned and dried each day, or they would rot and wear out. So, much of the fishermen's day was spent tending to these nets, in order to successfully catch fish.

I do not think it was a mistake that Jesus was drawn to fishermen in his search for disciples. I mean, he could have found other carpenters like himself, but he did not. Instead, he chose fishermen, disciples that understood what it means to have the patience to undertake the mundane tasks, which may or may not reap instant benefits.

If you think about it, the leadership or governance of any Christian organisation, and in our case, The Leprosy Mission, is much like those fishermen disciples. So much of our time is spent tending to the nets in order to fish for men and women. For example, preparing budgets, instituting programmes, creating strategies, making investment decisions. These are tasks that are often forgotten when the net full of men, women and children are pulled into the boat of Christianity.

So, let us remember that even Jesus understood the necessity of the tasks which others may think are mundane. Let us make, mend, and clean our nets with joyful hearts, knowing God is using our labour to further His kingdom.



**Gordon Brown**, TLM International Treasurer

## Prayer

**Our Heavenly Father, please use us as we go about serving You. As we make, clean and mend the nets of The Leprosy Mission, may we do so with joyful hearts in order that those affected by leprosy can catch a glimpse of your risen Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.**



### Reading: Mark 2:1-12

This amazing story is so relevant for us and what we hope to achieve as a Global Fellowship. We see that the Pharisees who held power and status had access to Jesus but blocked the way for others. The man with a disability had no access to Jesus. He was left out. We know first-hand that people affected by leprosy continue to be marginalised from family, friends and faith communities.

For this man to see Jesus, three things happened:

1. Social rule breaking. The friends acted in solidarity with the man with a disability. And this was in a context and culture that saw disability as sin. I'm sure these actions were unconventional and challenged many social norms of the day.
2. Collective pursuit. It took teamwork to support this man to overcome the barriers that he faced to see Jesus.
3. Radical action. To challenge the power and physical structures, the actions of the friends were quite extreme. Can you imagine how odd it would've looked to have people ripping up a roof and lowering a man with a disability down into a crowded space?

We often focus on the outcome for the man with disability. But what about the friends? In doing what they did, they also saw Jesus – up close and in a new, unique and powerful way. What a fantastic calling we have to walk with those who help us see Jesus in new and unique ways!



**Helen Fernandes** is Vice-Chair of the TLM Global Fellowship Board. Helen worked with TLM in Niger and Australia and now works for Global Mission Partners.

## Prayer

**Dear Heavenly Father, please continue to guide us and strengthen us in our work. Show us what structures we need to tear down to enable people to access community and know Jesus. Show us how to work together with shared vision. May we know You in deeper ways. Amen**



### Reading: Mark 2:3-5 and Luke 5:18-26

There's a Bible story about a man being lowered through a hole in the roof, you've probably heard it more than once! Often storytellers focus on the paralysed man, but what about his friends? I think they deserve a special mention too.

Here's a quick recap ... Many folks had crowded into a house in Capernaum to listen to Jesus. There were so many people inside, they could scarcely breathe, let alone swing the proverbial cat. Outside hundreds were peering in through the windows, striving to hear what Jesus was saying.

Suddenly, the ceiling started to crumble. Dust and plaster fell into the crowded room. The house owner was worried, especially when he saw four faces peering down through a hole in his roof! Perhaps he yelled at them to stop? 'That's my roof, what do you think you're doing?'

But it was too late, these devoted friends had climbed up the outside stairs carrying their paralysed friend. They had broken a hole in the flat roof, big enough to lower down their friend on his sleeping mat, right into the middle of the room. They were determined to bring their friend to Jesus to be healed. The men had their friendship and their faith in Jesus, and nothing was going to stop them!

Their faith was rewarded with a miracle. Jesus healed their friend who was able to walk out of the house on his own two feet. He went home praising God and telling everyone what had happened. And all because friendship found a way!

**Judith Merrell**, a member of The Leprosy Mission Shop team.

## Prayer

**Thank you, Lord, for those friends who pick us up and support us during the tough times, and lend us a little of their faith when ours is dwindling. Through our work, Lord, helps us to be a friend to those with leprosy, bringing them to you for help, hope and healing. Amen**



**Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11**

I have just come back from a short evening walk. We hadn't gone far when we heard a very loud, very strident honking noise and it wasn't the sound of angry car horns! Looking up, we saw about twenty geese flying in an impressive V formation directly above our heads. It is said that by flying in this formation, the geese can travel about 70% further than if each bird flew alone. For the geese, the feeling of community and the shared sense of direction and purpose makes the journey swifter and easier, and of course there's safety in numbers.

As a bonus, the flapping wings of the geese at the front creates an uplift for those at the back. And when the lead goose tires, it can take a break and go into a position further back while another goose will go to the front and take up the role of leader. Sometimes, it pays to take turns with the tough tasks and share leadership responsibilities.

And what about the honking? Well ... apparently the geese at the back honk loudly to encourage those at the front to fly fast and fly well. In other words: Keep going, you're doing a great job!

Here at TLM, maybe those of us who work as part of a team can learn something from a flock of geese – encourage one another, share the tough tasks, work together.

**Judith Merrell**, a member of The Leprosy Mission Shop team.

## Prayer

**Lord, help us to work as a team with a shared sense of purpose and direction, ready to encourage each other and to work together to bring your love and healing to those affected by leprosy. Be with and encourage our colleagues around the Global Fellowship today. Amen**





### **There is a time for everything... a time to weep and a time to laugh. Ecclesiastes 3:1&4**

Many of us will be reading this devotion today with sadness in our hearts – personal sadness, sadness for our friends and family going through difficult times, sadness that leprosy continues to cause such suffering or sadness about the climate change or conflict in our world. And of course it is right and fitting that we acknowledge this sadness, weeping with those who weep. I recently met a young woman affected by leprosy who had been hospitalised in Nepal because of a painful leprosy reaction. She had been separated from her six-year old daughter for many months because of her treatment. I'm not ashamed to say that we cried together, as I felt her sadness.

However, we were also able to laugh together, looking at funny things on our phones and joking about my lack of ability to speak Nepalese. Laughing together in the midst of her sadness felt so good. The medical professionals, and Proverbs 17 v22, tell us that laughter is good medicine and reduces stress.

So, however difficult a day we are facing, let's look for the funny things that are going to happen as well. Laugh at the odd things. Laugh with your colleagues and friends.

There is a time to weep, but there is also a time to laugh. May God give you laughter today.



**Amanda Norman** is the CEO of The Leprosy Mission Shop in the UK. She has worked for The Leprosy Mission for four years. She previously worked for the University of Cambridge and All We Can, the Methodist Relief and Development charity. Amanda is married to Andrew, an Anglican priest and has two adult daughters.

## Prayer

**Dear Lord Jesus, thank you that you understand our sadness and our joy. We ask that you will give us hearts to weep with those who weep, but also eyes to see the many joyful and amusing things that will happen today, so we can also laugh with those who laugh. Amen**



**When I called, you answered me; you greatly emboldened me.**

**Psalms 138 v 3**

Nearly half of the psalms are attributed to King David. Psalm 138 is one of the last of King David's psalms and I imagine him looking back over his long and eventful life. He says "When I called, you answered me; you greatly emboldened me." What are some of the times when David might have called on the Lord?

As a boy fending off lions and wolves to protect his father's sheep? When he fought Goliath with only his sling shot? When he was asked to play his harp to soothe King Saul? When he was chosen to be King ahead of all his older brothers? When he had to run for his life to escape King Saul's jealous rage? When his friendship with Jonathan came under strain? As King leading the Israelites into battle? When he was confronted about his scandalous failings in committing adultery with Bathsheba and having her husband killed to try and cover it up? When his son was ill and then died? Later in life when the Lord said he would not be the one to build the temple?

And what about us? As we look back on the events of our lives, when have we called on the Lord? How has the Lord answered us?

David's conclusion is that in each situation, the Lord has indeed answered him, but not in the way he originally expected. The Lord did not always intervene to change the circumstances with which he was confronted. His answer was often to give David the strength and courage to face his circumstances.



**Amanda Norman** is the CEO of The Leprosy Mission Shop in the UK.

## Prayer

**Dear Lord Jesus, thank you that you hear us when we call to you. Thank you for the many times that I have called to you and you have answered me, giving me the strength and courage to deal with whatever I am facing. Today we pray especially for people affected by leprosy that you would give them the strength they need for the particular challenges they face. Amen**



### Reading: John 13:33–36

Reading these verses I was particularly struck by Jesus saying “You cannot go where I am going” and the fact that Simon Peter queries this. Jesus tells Simon Peter that he can’t come now, but will follow on later. As we look back at the conversation, it’s easy for us to hear the words and understand that Jesus was talking about his death and resurrection, and also about the ultimate promise of eternal life.

It occurs to me that, like Simon Peter, I cannot go where Jesus is, at least not yet. What I can do is to follow my own path in loving God and loving others. And so we have Jesus’s new command, to love one another. This is added to the two great commandments: to love God and to love others as we love ourselves. And so, in our everyday living, we are called to love God, to love others and to love one another as a fellowship of believers.

Each of us will show love to others in our own way, through prayer and service, and using our God-given gifts and talents. But however and wherever we are called to serve, may we also love each other and encourage one another in our faith, so that we may be a witness to others.



**Stuart Green** is Chair of The Leprosy Mission Shop in the UK. He lives with his family in Derbyshire where he is a lay leader in his local church.

## Prayer

**Lord God, we thank you for loving us, and we ask you to help us to love you more everyday. Guide us in the right path for our lives so that we can serve others with love. And help us to build up your worldwide family of faith. Amen**

